



## Lara Schwartz

### Topics

Common Reads/FYE, Culture and Society, Diversity and Inclusion, Education

### Travels From

District of Columbia

### Bio

Lara Schwartz teaches at American University School of Public Affairs, where she founded and directs the Project on Civil Discourse. She specializes in civil discourse and campus speech, constitutional law, civil rights, politics, communications, and policy. Drawing on her extensive experience as a legislative lawyer, lobbyist, and communications strategist in leading civil rights organizations, Lara brings an advocate's-eye view to her work. She has been honored with a School of Public Affairs teaching award and serves as a Faculty Fellow in the Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning. Schwartz emphasizes collaborative learning and universal design in her teaching. She is the co-author of *How to College: What to Know Before You Go (And When You're There)* with Andrea Malkin Brenner. Schwartz came to teaching from a career in advocacy. She served as Director of Strategic Engagement at the American Constitution Society for Law & Policy, where she focused on access to the civil justice system and judicial nominations advocacy. As Courts Matter director at Media Matters, she identified and corrected misinformation about the legal system. As Vice President of External Affairs at the

American Association of People with Disabilities, she engaged with media, Congress, and the executive branch in advocating for workplace protections and health care. Schwartz was Legal Director at the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest civil rights group advocating for the LGBT community. There, she promoted hate crimes legislation, financial protections for families, workplace protections, and equality in military service. Lara worked in litigation at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher, and Flom and Gilbert, Heintz, and Randolph. She also served as a law clerk to Judge Ronald Lee Gilman on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit. Lara has testified in legislatures, appeared on national and local radio and television programs, and written op-eds published in national papers and local papers of record. She is a graduate of Brown University, where she earned an AB in English and American Literature *magna cum laude*, and Harvard Law School, where she earned a Juris Doctorate *cum laude* and was co-editor-in-chief of the Harvard Negotiation Law Review.

## SPEECHES

**Simple Approaches to Tough Conversations: Civil Discourse in the Classroom** Educators increasingly face significant challenges in facilitating intellectually-rigorous classroom conversations. Norms of civility have eroded; students don't always know the difference between bias and expertise, or objective truth and opinion; and social media often leads to ad hominem attacks. Bias incidents and controversial speakers add fuel to the fire. This talk will explore practical ways to build a classroom experience where civil discourse thrives.

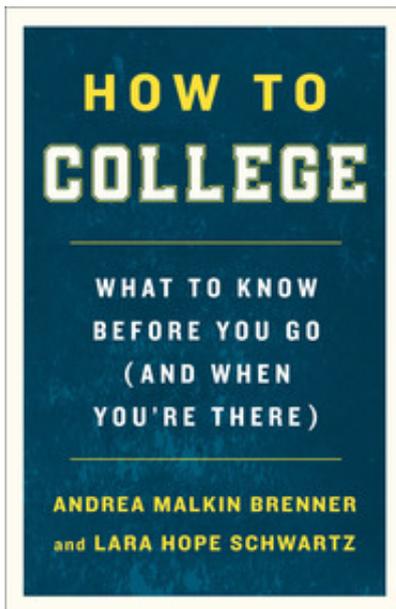
**Building our Voices: beyond freedom of speech- on and off campus** Because of their mission to expand and challenge previously-understood ideas and teach young adults to think critically, universities zealously protect freedom of speech—even when, as is the case with private universities, they have the institutional power to limit speech based on offensive content. The US Constitution's protection for freedom of speech exists to prevent government tyranny and enable citizens to wisely govern ourselves. For these reasons, most Americans are skeptical of rules that limit the freedom to speak. But freedom is only the beginning: how we choose to exercise our freedom of speech matters. In this discussion, participants will explore consider speech not only as a matter of rights, but of responsibilities.

## BOOKS

[How to College](#) What to Know Before You Go (And When You're There)

St. Martin's Griffin

How to College is here to help. Professors Andrea Malkin Brenner and Lara Schwartz guide first-year



students and their families through the transition process, during the summer after high school graduation and throughout the school year, preparing students to succeed and thrive as they transition and adapt to college. The book draws on the authors' experience teaching, writing curricula, and designing programs for thousands of first-year college students over decades.

Trade Paperback

**REVIEWS:** “Lara Schwartz is a dynamic speaker who works hard to tailor presentations to a particular audience and setting. We collaborated in mid-2018. She developed and delivered a substantive, informative, and interactive two-hour presentation to a diverse group of LGBTQ activists from across the globe. In addition to providing facts and figures, she facilitated lively conversations that kept participants engaged – and laughing! Through her attentiveness to detail, Lara manages to stimulate critical thinking while encouraging hope for a better tomorrow.”

- Meghan Simpson, Senior Program Officer, International Visitor Leadership Program