Twitter Thread by Marilia Coutinho, Ph.D. , the Baffled Immigrant



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1 / Who won the debate? Nobody: there was no debate. Kamala Harris would have won a debate if there was one. She is a trained litigator and masters the art of argumentation.

Why wasn't there any debate? Not between presidential candidates or VPs?

2 / Who knows. I suppose if one of the campaign managers insisted on rules the GOP side wouldn't have agreed and would proceed into yet another bout of conspiratory whining. Since it's all about perception and the perception of the average American is informed by...

3 / ... the intellectual capacity of a housefly, I assume this is what you get.

However, as someone who presided over more round-tables and presentations than I can count, let me tell you how it is done.

4 / The moderator has a fixed time for the whole thing to happen. Suppose I have two hours for the session. I give each presenter from 12-15 minutes to deliver their presentation and I have 3 pieces of paper that I show them: "10", "5" and "2" (to go).

5 / When the timer zeroes, I take the mic from the presenter whether he was done or not (yes, the ability of sticking to the allotted time is learned). I can either have presenters follow each other and open for discussion in the end or open for Q&A after each presenter.

6 / You will ask: "why one hour for presentations and one hour for Q&A?". Because you have to count the time it takes to change presenters, to introduce presenters and for assholes using their Q time to make statements.

7 / The moderator must be an authority to the audience so that when they stop someone from talking it happens.

Maybe one of the reasons I was chosen for this role is that I'm not a nice person. Nobody interrupts me (ever) and I can make anyone stop talking.

8 / That was possible even when I didn't have a microphone and that's why the moderator must be an authority: his voice must be louder and more respected than that of the asshole.

9 / When the audience doesn't participate and instead two debaters question each other, usually the rule is 3m/3m followed by 2m/2m and 2m/2m.

I rarely had problems but once in a while I had to physically grab the microphone from the speaker's hand.

10 / Who the fuck cares if they don't like it. That's how a civilized debate happens. It's also a much better alternative than running the risk of one debater jump from their seat and choke the other to death, which I kind of thought Biden would do...

11 / Does this even happen? Oh, yes. Especially with younger debaters, aka students. Once I arrived at the department to teach my class and all the students were excited. They told me the other professor had to end his class and send everybody out one hour early.

12 / Two students engaged in a verbal brawl (the kind you saw Trump do) and they ended up moving to engage in... "a physical altercation". The professor screamed and sent everybody out (aka: make it SEP, somebody else's problem).

13 / There are ways to avoid it. Once I had two students escalate their animosity. I interrupted the class and assigned each of them a seminar with their argument for Friday. I bought time - they were satisfied.

14 / At other times students, audience or debaters tried to interrupt me. Just once... I have my "auditorium angry professor voice" and when I say "I am not interrupted by anybody, EVER", it magically happens.

15 / And no, you don't have to beat anyone. In fact, if you do, you are not only fired but charged with a legal wrongdoing and prosecuted. Pretty bad for your c.v.

16 / As you can see, it is not rocket science. In fact, it is easy as fuck. All it requires is a little experience. Like me, there are thousands of people who know how to do that. Today, there is this thing called "sound control" which allows the moderator to mute a speaker.

17 / It couldn't be easier.

"But then it's boring and people like a brawl". No, they don't. Most spectators turned stopped watching the first debate before the first 15 minutes because they couldn't understand anything.

18 / THAT is boring. It's horribly boring. And annoying. The sound of Trump's voice is irritating at any pitch and his interruptions makes the spectator want to jump into the screen and strangle him.

19 / Not being able to strangle Trump into silence is frustrating. Frustration + annoyance + being bored to death = not watching the debate. Therefore, there was not debate.

Quod erat demonstratum.

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