Should a deaf couple be allowed to genetically screen embryos for implantation that will lead to offspring who are also deaf?
Should a deaf couple be allowed to genetically screen embryos for implantation that will lead to offspring who are also deaf?

An instructor poses this question to a whole class to introduce genetic testing. Why might this not work well?

Consider reasons around:
- Student diversity/inclusion and why students might not speak up
- The nature of the question
- The mode of asking the question

Write your answer in the chat but do not hit enter until I say go.

I’ll give you a minute of silence to think and write your answer.
Student diversity/inclusion and why students might not speak up:

• “I need time to think”
• “I’m not comfortable stating my ideas if they are minority viewpoints”
• “Is the professor looking for a “correct” answer and will it hurt me to not give the right answer?
• “I have a disability and I’m not sure how this conversation will proceed or how it will play out, I’ll wait.”
• “I don’t know how people will react and if they will attack me for what I said”
The nature of the question:

- A yes/no question may not lead to explanations and diverse views
- Do the students have any background information around the science of genetic screening, deafness, policy, religion, etc. to provide nuanced perspectives?
- The prompt seems to ask for a personal opinion, and this can stifle initial conversation
The mode of asking the question:

- Consolidation of responsibility ("someone else will answer the professor")
- Verbal question assumes verbal responses instantaneously
- Many students may need a warm-up before jumping into a question this serious and personal

“Regardless of class size typically five to eight — will account for 75-95% of the comments made in a discussion. It’s easy to be deceived into thinking that you helped facilitate a great discussion when, in reality, you had a great discussion with five students, while the majority were spectators.”

-Jay Howard

How to Hold a Better Class Discussion
Chronicle of Higher Education Advice Guide
Before diving into the entrée, let’s start with some appetizers.
Please discuss in breakout groups:

1) a type of “appetizer” activity you could do for students before the main entrée (whole class discussion)  
   *(This “warm up” activity could occur before or during class)*

2) how you will collect evidence of engagement/thinking from every student from this type of activity

Quick discussion, only 3 minutes.

I’ll suggest that the person who went to high school farthest away from Chapel Hill, please be ready to either express the ideas on microphone or write them in the chat.
Early-in-semester appetizer:

- Set ground rules and expectations about discussions
- Have a discussion about discussions, including the importance of active listening and how participation and engagement will be evaluated.

If we value active listening, then we should not penalize listeners for participation.

- Provide ungraded feedback about participation that is encouraging and inviting.
- Collect evidence of learning and thinking from every student, not just those that speak aloud.
Guidelines & Ground Rules for Dialogue

- Separate people from their ideas—avoid ad-hominem attacks.
- Speak for yourself, not others, and certainly not entire groups.
- Resist “side-barring” your conversation; get others involved.
- Do not interrupt.
- Use positive body language to help build a trusting environment.
- (For at least the first couple weeks) Let everyone speak once before you speak again.
- Direct comments to one another rather than the instructor.
- Respond to the previous comment before changing direction.
- Attempt to understand one another before simply expressing disagreement.
- Contextualize disagreements and try to identify the precise point of conflict.
- Utilize devices to ensure optimal communication, e.g., “if I understand you correctly…”
- Shoot for depth rather than breadth. Dig deeper into the topic before branching out.
- Support comments with evidence and cite course readings when possible.
- Cite classmates to acknowledge their contributions and build on their ideas.
- Consider the diverse perspectives and experiences of your classmates.
- Open yourself to the possibility of transformation.
- Engage criticism as an opportunity to sharpen your perspective.

Source: Kevin Marinelli
Pre-class appetizer

• Assign students to read about this topic (content knowledge and diverse perspectives from diversity of people) with a few specific assignment prompts. Require a submission through a homework system, discussion board, etc.

• No need to hide the activity: Include questions you will discuss during class, so students can prepare.

Plan your during class activities before your pre-class work.
During-class appetizer

• Have students answer anonymous polls (perhaps anonymous to class but not to you so you can track engagement and participation).
• Ask students to work in small groups to answer the prompt, ask each group to write their response in a google document, paper, or other form of collection.
• Use the jigsaw method to have students represent one perspective deeply and then learn about other perspectives; students turn in their own research and reflections.
The main entrée (if there is one)

- Remind students of the guidelines for discussion
- As the facilitator, set expectations for this specific discussion and reasoning
  - “keep your comments to a few sentences”
  - “if I signal you to end your comment, it is because I want to hear from a diverse group of students”
- Encourage diverse voices
  - “Let’s hear from someone we haven’t heard from yet”
  - Respond to student pre-class work and let a student know you really liked their ideas and ask them to share them.
- Serial testimony/whip around - Go around the room (or row); each student speaks (timed amount) but allow students to “pass”
- Periodically take polls to get the pulse of the whole group
- Consider pausing the conversation so everyone, including you, can stop and write/reflect, especially if heated or a microaggression was realized.
Dessert (never skip!)

Evaluation that can be part of “participation” grade

- Muddiest point (what remains unclear, what questions do you now have?)
- Answer the same prompt/s as before class and have students reflect on how their views are more nuanced, changed, or clarified.
- Discussion board post assignments
- Summary assignments that practice the kind of prompts they might see on a higher stakes test or paper.