Debate Instructions

Instructions for Debating in a Discussion.

This page will also explain how the posts will be graded. My goal is to provide you with everything to make it as simple and quick as possible for you to complete the assignment. We will do seven debates over the term. First post is always due on Thursday with second posts due by Sunday.

**1) First decide on the topic.**

I will generally always give you at least two to pick from. Sometimes more. There will be other ideas that may come to you regarding the general topics so it is fine to add your own spin on these assignments. The goal is to have a lively discussion over the few days of the assignment.

**2) Pick a side.**

Regardless of the problem there will always be two sides, even if the argument is about whether there is a problem in the first place! In most cases I will provide you with at minimum at topic and in some cases several different debate ideas sometimes with a pro and con idea for each topic listed.  For some topics I will refer you to a procon.org website to choose from the pros and cons listed there.

**3) Do the research.**

Debates are not about your opinion, they are about you presenting an argument to support your side based on evidence. I will provide you with a lot of information, some that go with the debate ideas I provide, other information that is just interesting about the general topic.  Often there will also be [procon.org (Links to an external site.)](https://www.procon.org/) debates that will help you formulate your arguments.  It is always a good source that provides pretty reliable information in debate format. You can use an argument from there, restructure it into your own words and properly cite the source.

**4)**[**Present your argument.**](https://hcc.instructure.com/courses/77536/pages/Arguments%20for%20Debate?titleize=0)

Synthesize your main points into a strong and concise argument and provide the evidence to back up your argument.  There are tools on the [Really Useful Stuff](https://hcc.instructure.com/courses/73031/pages/really-useful-stuff) page to help you formulate good sociological arguments. The debate argument should be designed to persuade other's to your viewpoint. You can post your argument as an original post, or you can post your argument as a **reply to the** **opposing side**. These are obviously more fun and what the debate is truly designed for. If responding to someone else's post, you will discuss how they presented their evidence then set up that you are presenting the opposing view.  We will not tell each other that anyone is wrong in these debates, merely disagree with their argument and provide our own stronger argument with evidence to back it up. Posts without evidence will be strongly penalized.

**5) Post at minimum three times.**

The first post must be posted either as an original post which reply's to my original prompt, or as a response to someone else as discussed above. Either way it must have it's own approach to the debate topic or refute an idea put forth by someone else. For items you are on the same side on but you believe the topic can be expanded you can use one of the other two posts to do this. The initial posts on Thursday should be only to present a new approach or refute someone else's approach. Of the three posts at least one MUST be as a response to someone else and at least ONE must discuss how the issue manifests locally and provide some ideas of solutions for your local area. You are free to comment on as many posts as you like and post as many times as you wish, but simple participatory posts that just say, "I disagree" or "I really like your post" will not be graded since these are posts that no one can respond to. Your goal should always be to further the discussion with all three of your posts.  If you are going to take the time to post, present an argument that supports your side or further develops the local solutions aspect.

**6) No religious scriptures or quotes will be used in these debates.**

While religion is an important societal component and religious beliefs may influence many of your thoughts on any of these topics, they do not belong in an academic sociological debate. You can certainly comment on the fact that a particular argument has a religious component and if you find evidence that is not a religious tome such as the Bible or the Koran, you may certainly use it. This is about respecting each other's diversity and not furthering our own agenda. For example, if you were to talk about the abortion debate, you could say that religious beliefs often influence someone's thoughts on this topic, but you would not be able to quote to the Bible to say that someone is wrong if they presented a pro-choice belief. Religious tomes are not proper academic resources, they are very important to the religions who follow them, I would never dispute that, but they are not considered appropriate academic resources. Please let me know if you are uncertain about something you want to post that might have a religious component.

**7) Make sure to use proper formats when citing references.**

While there are many ways to properly cite information, the ones that are most used in higher education are APA or ASA format. Because most of you are not sociology majors I will not present ASA format in this class. However, I will say that learning how to do proper APA citations will help you in your future education. So I will not take off if you use a different citation method as long as the reference format and in text citations are appropriate for the method you are using. While including hyperlinks in text is what is seen often in articles written online, please refrain from doing that in these posts. There are tools to help you properly paraphrase items so that you are not sending your readers away from your post for a point you are trying to make. Develop the points in your own post then cite the materials. Using hyperlinks instead of paraphrasing is just lazy and will be graded accordingly.

**8) Make sure to check for errors.**

Treat these posts as mini research papers. They should be at minimum 100 words each. Spelling, grammar, punctuation and other errors will count against your grade. I will take off up to 2 points per post depending on the number of errors. Mistakes in your references, using really long paragraphs (standard size is 5 to 7 sentences), putting links in your main argument post, writing in informal language such as texting language, etc. Will count against your overall grade.

See [these examples](https://hcc.instructure.com/courses/77536/pages/examples-of-debate-posts) for help in what your posts might look like.