

2016

Active Listening "Debates" - Classroom Activity

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Recommended Citation

Derr, Victoria, "Active Listening "Debates" - Classroom Activity" (2016). *Activities and Assignments Collection*. 5.

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ENVD 4023: Environmental Impact Assessment, Fall 2015

Active Listening Debates

Purpose

To practice critical thinking, written and oral communication, and active listening skills
To identify concrete improvements to the National Environmental Policy Act

Tasks

Students will be assigned to a “Debate Group” or “Non-Debate Group” based on their Case Study Topics (see schedule).

PRIOR TO class, the Debate Group will prepare a written statement (approximately 150-200 words) that identifies one way to strengthen, revise, improve, or otherwise critique the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This can be sector-specific, and can also have implications for systematic and policy related changes based on the review of case material. The argument should provide evidence that supports the argument and should be persuasive (see examples on D2L).

DURING CLASS, the Debate Group will sit in a circle in the middle of the classroom. Non-Debate students will sit in a second circle outside this inner ring. Each Debate Group student will read aloud their statement, with all other students actively listening and discussing this student’s statement, as follows:

1. To begin, Person A will read their suggested improvement for NEPA. Immediately following Person A’s statement, any student can ask a short clarifying question to ensure that they understand the statement.
2. All non-debate students will then “Vote with their Feet” as to whether they initially “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree” with the argument made by Person A. Students will physically move to a sign that corresponds with their vote. Two students share why they have chosen their position from agree/strongly agree and disagree/strongly disagree in relation to the argument.
3. Returning to the Debate Group, Person B will summarize or restate Person A’s argument. Person B then gives one reason opposing the statement *or* one reason supporting it.
4. Person C listens and summarizes B’s reasoning. Then Person C states their position for agreeing or disagreeing with Person A’s initial statement, giving their own reasoning.
5. Person D summarizes Person C’s, and so forth, until all positions supporting/opposing Person A’s position have been given. Note that as students move around the circle, they are actively listening to the person’s reasoning before them and restating this. BUT then they give why they agree or disagree with Person A’s argument. Debate Group students can draw from any of the previous reasons in supporting their own position, but they should respond to Person A’s initial argument.

6. At the end of the Debate Group circle for Person A (about 10 minutes), Non-Debate Group students will vote again with their feet to see if anyone's position has changed. All Non-Debate Group students will identify why they have taken the position they have (why they agree or disagree), and if they changed position, what it was that they heard that influenced their thinking.

THIS CYCLE will be repeated for each student in the Debate Group.

Submission

All Debate Group students will hand in their written statement at the end of class.

Schedule

| Tuesday, Sept 29 | Tuesday, Oct 13 | Thursday, Nov 12 | Tuesday, Dec 9 |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Water, Vegetation and Wildlife Case Studies | Floodplain, Coastal, Wetland Case Studies | Social/Neighborhood, Relocation Traffic/Transportation, Historic/Archeological Case Studies | Visual Resources, Energy, Environmental Safety/Public Health, and EJ Case Studies |

Rubric for Debate Group:

| | Incomplete / Does Not Participate Respectfully | Completed, meets expectations | Completed with Excellent Standards |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| As Person A Clear Presentation of Argument – clearly articulated position, with appropriate pacing and volume, and clear responses to clarifying questions | 0-1 points | 2-3 points | 4 points |
| As Person B Respectful, active listening – restating student's arguments and positions, responding respectfully with their own position, exhibiting open-minded and thoughtful communication | 0-0.5 points | 0.75-1 point | 2 points |
| Written Summary – position clearly articulated, with supporting evidence given, and grammar and spelling correct | 0-1 points | 2-3 points | 4 points |