

2019

# Debate for Civic Learning

S Bodnar-Deren

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

E Coston

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

D Mthethwa

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

*See next page for additional authors*

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## Recommended Citation

Bodnar-Deren, S#, Coston, E#, Mthethwa, D#, Pelco, L. E.#, Peron, E#, Pyles, M#, and Swecker, T#. (2019). Using debate pedagogy to promote civic learning across the disciplines. Panel presentation at the Teaching and Learning Excellence Symposium, Virginia Commonwealth University: Richmond, Virginia. #Contributed Equally.

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# Debate for Civic Learning

**Keywords**

civic learning, debate, pedagogy, higher education, teaching

**Disciplines**

Civic and Community Engagement | Higher Education

**Authors**

S Bodnar-Deren, E Coston, D Mthethwa, L.E. Pelco, E Peron, M Pyles, and T Swecker

# Debate for Civic Learning



## Panel Presentation

Teaching and Learning Excellence Symposium

Virginia Commonwealth University

April 26, 2019

**Recommended citation:**

Bodnar-Deren, S<sup>#</sup>, Coston, E<sup>#</sup>, Mthethwa, D<sup>#</sup>, Pelco, L. E.<sup>#</sup>, Peron, E.<sup>#</sup>, Pyles, M.<sup>#</sup>, and Swecker, T<sup>#</sup>. (2019). *Using debate pedagogy to promote civic learning across the disciplines*. Panel presentation at the Teaching and Learning Excellence Symposium, Virginia Commonwealth University: Richmond, Virginia. <sup>#</sup>contributed equally.

## *Debate for Civic Learning*

### Course Overview

#### The Basics

Course name	<b>Geriatrics: Demystifying a Population (PHAR 666 elective course)</b>
Discipline(s)	School of Pharmacy – Doctor of Pharmacy (4-year entry-level clinical doctorate program)
Course level	Third-year pharmacy students (P3s)
Enrollment	N=25 in Fall 2018
Faculty instructor	Associate Professor Emily P. Peron, PharmD, MS, BCPS, BCGP, FASCP, FCCP
Faculty contact	<a href="https://app.pharmacy.vcu.edu/epperon">https://app.pharmacy.vcu.edu/epperon</a>
University	Virginia Commonwealth University

#### Description of the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

The debate activity is introduced within the first month of the semester, and debates are held in-class during the last few weeks of the semester. Each team is made up of 4-6 students to allow everyone to take on meaningful preparatory and speaking roles; therefore, the number of teams - and the number of class sessions set aside for the debates themselves - depends on course enrollment. An online number generator is used to randomly assign students to teams, topics, and sides (i.e., pro or con). Throughout the semester, students are expected to work together outside the classroom to conduct a literature review and develop a thorough understanding of the controversial issue to which they were assigned.

Given 50-minute class periods, only one debate between two teams per class period is possible. In light of the short class periods, students have limited time to prepare between each round of arguments. As such, each team must submit a document ahead of time that summarizes relevant research to support their side. These documents are shared with the opposing team before the scheduled debate so each team can anticipate their opponents' opening arguments and begin to craft rebuttals. The debate timeline allows for opening arguments (up to 5 minutes per group), rebuttal preparation (5 minutes), rebuttal arguments (up to 5 minutes per group), concluding remarks preparation (5 minutes), and concluding remarks (up to 3 minutes per group). Any remaining time is yielded to allow for audience questions. Debates are moderated by a faculty member, and other students and faculty are invited to attend.

#### Description of the learning assessment and results for the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

Faculty in attendance provide feedback via a rubric, which results in a team score of up to 36 points. Using the open-ended questions on the rubric, students evaluate each team's performance on the day(s) during which they are not themselves debating; by doing so, they earn an addition 4 points, for a total of 40 points. In total, debate performance is worth 15% of the final course grade. There are no debate winners or losers. Optional surveys have been administered to student participants in the past to evaluate the impact of this debate activity on relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These surveys are also useful to garner feedback on the learning activity and logistics. Survey responses are also used for quality improvement purposes and adjustments to the debate activity are made accordingly.

#### The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.

The first time incorporating the debate activity into the course structure was the most time-consuming and uncomfortable for me as an instructor. After that first offering, I was encouraged by positive feedback from students and colleagues. From year-to-year, the debate topics change and guidance documents for students are updated, but the activity itself has become more manageable. Introducing the activity early and prompting students to think of it often is key; otherwise, it is an activity that is easily put on the back burner throughout the semester. Overall, students seem to benefit from the conducting a literature review, synthesizing arguments, and debating in a controlled environment. As pharmacist, they will have to do these things on a regular basis and in settings that are much less comfortable (e.g., on rounds in the hospital in front of an inter-professional team).

## *Debate for Civic Learning*

### Course Overview Template

#### The Basics

Course name	<b>DENH 327 Clinical Dental Hygiene I- Service-Learning</b>
Discipline(s)	School of Dentistry/ Dental Hygiene Program
Course level	300 Level
Enrollment	16
Faculty instructor	Tammy Swecker M.Ed. BSDH Associate Professor
Faculty contact	tkswewecke@vcu.edu
University	Virginia Commonwealth

#### Explanation for why *Debate for Civic Learning* was chosen for this course.

Clinical Dental Hygiene I (DENH 327) has two segments including a weekly seminar and clinical sessions. Both segments reinforce the knowledge and clinical skills learned in DENH 301, Dental Hygiene Theory I. In this course, students apply basic instrumentation and patient treatment skills in a clinical setting. Seminars reinforce clinical knowledge and provide opportunity for students to problem solve and critically discuss and assess clinical experiences. The course builds on foundational knowledge and provides students with the learning experiences to deliver competent, evidence-based clinical dental hygiene services to patients. It fosters professional growth in a setting that gives students the opportunity to develop and use the basic knowledge and dental hygiene skills.

For six weeks at the end of the DENH 327 semester, students are assigned off campus rotations in clinical practice settings in underserved areas. In these settings, students are exposed to patients of varied ethnic, socioeconomic, and demographic backgrounds as well as special patient populations not typically encountered in the School of Dentistry clinics. While continuing clinical education, students have the opportunity to make oral health care more accessible to marginalized groups. Throughout this unique learning experience, students are exposed to the benefits of potential practice in Public Health Dentistry. Many of the clinics where the students provide dental hygiene services are Community Health Centers. Community Health Centers are nonprofit organizations that provide primary health care, dental services, health education and wellness outreach in medically underserved communities and for vulnerable populations.

#### Description of the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

Health care delivery is a multi-factorial dynamic system. It requires numerous diverse-providers with varying degrees of education and backgrounds to work together to provide comprehensive care. Higher education trains healthcare professionals in silos with minimal interaction with other disciplines. Service-learning provides some opportunity for student clinicians to interact intra-professionally; however, as patients become more medically complex the need for inter-professional education is paramount. Students need to learn to work to the full extent of their education and training and explore the margins of their practice. In doing so the current workforce needs to learn new skills and new ways to collaborate in order to have effective inter-professional relationships through sharing of skills and knowledge. Effective interdisciplinary collaboration enhances patient and family centered goals and values, provides mechanisms for continuous communication among caregivers, and optimizes participation in clinical decision making within and across disciplines.

The failure to value oral health and understand that the oral cavity is the gateway to the body has for too long hindered people's ability to achieve overall good health. This failure can negatively affect anyone, but it is particularly devastating to low-income individuals who lack dental coverage or for those who don't seek or receive regular dental care. Almost 8,000 people in America die annually of oral and pharyngeal cancers every year. The number one reason children miss school is due to oral pain. Even with the Affordable Care Act in place, more than 100 million Americans still do not have dental insurance. The bottom line is although healthy teeth and gums are essential for good overall health; the oral cavity has never really been considered a part of the body by many insurers and third-party payers. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 108 million Americans lack dental insurance. Many individuals with dental insurance can be considered underinsured due to the high copays with limited yearly benefits.

America is more ethnically and culturally diverse while access to care is an increasing problem. Children from lower-income families are twice as likely to have tooth decay while Mexican-Americans are disproportionately affected. Caries is one of the most common diseases found in humans but it is preventable. Emergency departments are overrun with primary care visits,

dental care, which detracts from its mission of treating true emergencies. How does the health care system meet the needs of access to care while maintaining quality? How does rural America receive treatment when specialists are hours away? What are areas of collaboration where healthcare disciplines can work together to meet the increasing need? How do we make America healthier in a "Wants versus Needs" society? What is the role of the healthcare system in leveling the social determinants of health? The debates pertaining to healthcare are endless. Students need to recognize their role as healthcare providers no matter the profession in order to address the ever-changing health care needs of our country.

The activity is introduced during orientation, and debates are held in-class toward the end of the semester prior to service-learning rotations. Each group is made up of 4 students to allow everyone to take on meaningful preparatory and speaking roles. Class periods are 50 minutes, therefore one debate per class period is possible. Throughout the semester, students are expected to work together outside of classroom time to conduct a literature review and develop a thorough understanding of the controversial issue to which they are assigned. In light of the short class periods, students have limited time to prepare between each round of arguments. Each group is asked to submit a document summarizing relevant research to support their assigned side and, so each team can anticipate their opponents' opening arguments, these documents are shared with the opposing team before their scheduled debate.

### **Description of the learning assessment for the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.**

The classroom debates are exercises designed for students to strengthen team building, listening skills, evidence-based analysis of an issue, professional advocacy, oral health advocacy and oral presentation.

A debate is a 'serious discussion of a subject in which many people take part', 'especially one in which several people with different opinions about something discuss them' and often 'to try to make a decision about something'. In considering clinical practice, there is rarely agreement about the *best* means for addressing access to care in today's healthcare system. Utilization of debate creates a civil arena to have disagreement pertaining to policy, inequities and defend clinical decisions. These debates are structured to bring about change in philosophy about a healthcare policy or delivery to address the ever-changing oral health care needs of America.

Debate is a pass/fail component of the course and feedback is provided via a rubric. All full-time faculty are invited to grade the debate. Students in the audience are also invited to grade the debate.

#### **Debate Topic 1:**

A BSDH is an appropriate professional minimum requirement to meet the ever-changing dental health needs of Americans.

#### **Debate Topic 2:**

Mid-level providers Effect on Dentistry and Dental Hygiene

#### **Debate 3:**

Physician Supervision of a Dental Hygienist

First affirmative speech: 6 minutes

First negative speech: 6 minutes

Break- 5 minutes

First affirmative rebuttal: 3-4 minutes

First negative rebuttal: 3-4 minutes

Decision- maker questions: 5 minutes

First affirmative concluding remarks: 2 minutes

First negative concluding remarks: 2 minutes

Open discussion- participants may ask questions and discuss conclusion: 5 minutes

Final policy decision: 2 minutes

**Debates are moderated by the course director**

## Debate Scoring Sheet

Debate Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Pro or Con (circle one)

Team Member Names:

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_

### CLASSROOM DEBATE RUBRIC Levels of Performance

Criteria:	1	2	3	4
1. Organization/Clarity viewpoints and responses are outlined both clearly and orderly.	Unclear in most parts	Clear in some parts but not over all	Mostly clear and orderly in all parts	Completely clear and orderly presentation
2. Use of Arguments: reasons are given to support viewpoint.	Few or no relevant reasons given	Some relevant reasons given	Many reasons given: fairly relevant	Most relevant reasons given in support
3. Use of Examples/Facts examples and facts are given to support reasons, with references	Few or no relevant supporting examples/facts	Some relevant examples/facts given	Many examples/facts given: fairly relevant	Most relevant supporting examples and facts given
4. Use of Rebuttal: arguments made by the other teams are responded to and dealt with effectively	No effective counterarguments made	Few effective counterarguments made	Some effective counterarguments made	Many effective counter-arguments made
5. Presentation Style: tone of voice, use of gestures, and level of enthusiasm are convincing to audience.	Few style features were used; not convincingly	Few style features were used but they were used convincingly	All style features were used, most convincingly	All style features were used convincingly

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ Score = Total x 5 = \_\_\_\_\_

### The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.

Students selected if they wanted to be pro/con or jury. Articles were assigned by the course director to read that were pro or con. There were four articles for each position. Jury members were required to read at least one pro and one con article so they could ask questions to the panel.

The students were very excited and passionate about the topic. Both parties presented clear and concise cases and presented significant rebuttals and closing statements. The debates were graded as pass/fail as this is in a clinical course with percentages devoted to clinical issues. Next year, I will remove one project currently in the course and integrate more debates. I feel debates will create a more robust discussion of policy central to the dental hygiene profession and oral health policies within dentistry. I will also require students to obtain articles that support their position. Students are taught evidence-based decision making and the ability to do their own research will improve these skills. Debate is a positive addition to the course as students are provided opportunity critically analyze an issue, write logical answers and present issues as they would need to present education/information to patients, lawmakers, boards of dentistry and other stakeholders.



## *Debate for Civic Learning*

### Course Overview Template

#### The Basics

Course name	<b>HPEX 300: Health Care Delivery in the U. S.</b>
Discipline(s)	Kinesiology & Health Sciences
Course level	Undergraduate
Enrollment	240
Faculty instructor	Michael A. Pyles, PhD
Faculty contact	827-9351 mapyles@vcu.edu
University	Virginia Commonwealth University

#### Explanation for why *Debate for Civic Learning* was chosen for this course.

This course introduces students to the U. S. health care system and its many diverse components including the roles of government and public health in the delivery of health care and their impact on health outcomes, inpatient and outpatient services, health care financing, the role of technology, and an introduction to health law and health ethics. Students are encouraged to think critically about health care reform and the consequences of choosing particular courses of action in that regard. Debate is believed to be a powerful pedagogical tool that will facilitate student learning and enhance their understanding of the fundamental aspects of the U. S. health care system. In particular, debate will provide students a unique opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of course concepts via meaningful, practical discussions contemporaneous with the course. A debate format will also allow students to see themselves as current and future stakeholders in the U. S. health care system. Perhaps the most compelling reason for choosing a debate format for this course is to illustrate that there may be a number of acceptable and tenable perspectives and positions regarding health care delivery in the U. S. Toward these ends, debate is extremely useful to students as they contemplate questions pertaining to the production and distribution of health care within the context of the two broad, theoretical frameworks of market justice and social justice.

#### Description of the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

Students were prepared for two debates that took place toward the end of the course through lectures and learning exercises. They were assigned specific stakeholder roles and were allowed to explore the dimensions of those roles in activities leading up to the two debates. Stakeholder roles fell into one of two categories. Category 1 consisted of two distinct groups of elected officials: state and U. S. representatives and senators and locally elected officials (councilmen, supervisors, etc.). Category 2 consisted of citizens (e.g., parent, attorney, business owner, health care professional, clergyman, educator, fireman, homeowner, policeman and a veterinarian). The central, recurring theme throughout the course was the Iron Triangle of Health Care: Access, Cost Containment and Quality. Students were required to identify specific, applicable concepts from the course and to relate the concepts to the debate topic and to relate the debate topic to the triangle then describe how the triangle is impacted by the debate topic. It was not feasible for the students to assume different stakeholder roles for the debates due to the size of the class. It was also not possible for the debaters to engage in point-counterpoint discussions (or to have a chance for rebuttals of their arguments) for the same reason. However, the debaters were given the opportunity to argue affirmatively in one debate on one topic and negatively in the other debate on a different topic.

The topic for the first debate was the Human Papillomavirus (HPV). All stakeholders prepared speeches arguing either for or against a piece of proposed federal legislation that would require states to administer vaccinations against HPV in accordance with current CDC recommendations. Prior to the debate students were asked to discuss their knowledge of HPV in terms of the population affected, significance to the U. S. health care system and significance to the stakeholder group. In a subsequent class period, students were asked to discuss the information found on the CDC website. They were told to discuss their stakeholder position insofar as the proposed legislation is concerned, to compile a list of questions from their stakeholder perspectives and to develop an official statement from the perspective of their stakeholder group. For the actual debate, each stakeholder group presented a five-minute speech arguing affirmatively or negatively for the proposed legislation (their position was assigned by the instructor). Speeches were delivered by a total of seven stakeholder groups.

For the second debate topics were selected from a list suggested by the students. A total of eight topics were chosen for the second debate and assigned to the stakeholder groups (one topic per section of the course) and once again the stakeholder group positions on the topics (affirmative or negative) were assigned by the instructor. In the future I anticipate adding more debates (perhaps a maximum of four or five) and I will allow the stakeholder groups to select their own positions on the topics. It is my desire to continue to use the same approach for topic selection (the instructor will choose and assign topics and students will be allowed to suggest topics).

**Description of the learning assessment and results for the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.**

The debates were graded using a rubric specifically designed to do so. See rubric below. For the first debate the rubric addressed the degree to which the stakeholder’s speech included four required elements: reference to market or social justice, mentioning of the roles of government and public health regarding the health of U. S. citizens, the degree to which four specific factors frequently cited as challenges to achieving social/health reform in America is discussed and the degree to which the speech states what is at stake if the spread of HPV is not addressed. One final criterion for evaluating the speeches was the degree of persuasiveness. All students were required to complete a post-debate survey. The purpose of the post-debate survey was to ascertain from the students’ information about their participation in the democratic process (including contacting their elected state and U. S. representatives and senators) and the impact of the debates on their views about the debate topics. Further assessment of learning will be determined by students’ performance on the final examination for the course which will include specific questions relating to the debates and their role in civic learning and engagement. Information about civic learning and democratic engagement was provided prior to the first debate.

VCU College of Humanities and Sciences  
 Department of Kinesiology and Health Sciences  
**HPEX 300 –Health Care Delivery in the U. S.**

**Debate Grading Rubric [40 Points]**

**DEBATE # 1 – HPV Legislation**                      **DATE OF DEBATE: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Section 1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8**

**Stakeholder Category**

1 [ \_\_\_1 Local Councilman \_\_\_2 Legislator (U. S., State) ]    2 [ \_\_\_1 \_\_\_2 \_\_\_3 \_\_\_4 \_\_\_5 ]

Your stakeholder’s group speech will be graded using the following criteria.

**Position**

Pro Position – Affirmative, clearly argued in favor of the passage of the legislation  
 Con Position – Negative, clearly argued against the passage of the legislation

**Required Elements**

- All speeches must reference
- ❖ Either Market or Social Justice
  - ❖ Mention roles of the government and public health regarding the health of U. S. citizens
  - ❖ Address the four factors frequently cited as challenges to achieving social/health reform in America (culture, interest groups, U. S. political system, path dependency)
  - ❖ Clearly state what is at stake if the spread of HPV is not addressed

**Persuasiveness**

In addition to the required elements, the speech must be persuasive. For the purpose of this debate **persuasive refers to the strength of the argument** (i.e., perception of one’s likelihood of changing their point of view, pro or con, based solely on the speech presented by the stakeholder group).

P=Poor      F=Fair      G=Good      VG=Very Good      E=Excellent      O=Outstanding

	P	F	G	VG	E	O						
	0	1	2	3	4	5						
Position Clearly Stated												
Market/Social Justice Mentioned												
Government Role in Health Care Mentioned												
Public Health Role in Health Care Mentioned												
Four Challenges to Social/Health Reform Mentioned												
Failure to Address Spread of HPV Mentioned												
	P		F		G			VG		E		O
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Persuasiveness of Argument												

**Debate Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The instructor’s reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.**

I was very excited about introducing debate as a means of civic learning into this course. From a formative perspective, it was necessary to completely rethink the objectives of the course and the specific aims of all assignments and exercises. One thing that I discovered was that to effectively incorporate debate into the course as a pedagogical tool, the course will need to be restructured or “flipped”. It appears that the best way to incorporate debate into a course of this nature is to transform the course into a hybrid structure in which students will be expected to learn basic course concepts and materials in a directed manner that includes out-of-the-classroom, self-paced learning modules consisting of lectures, reading assignments, exercises and learning activities and quizzes and examinations. The learning modules should include course content as well as information about civic learning and engagement and the democratic process. Debate would become the hallmark of the in-class component of the hybrid course. Students need to understand the goals of a course structured in this manner in order to reap the greatest benefit from such a course. It was very refreshing to use debate as a pedagogical tool in the classroom and to observe how it transforms the learning process. I am under the impression that students enjoyed the debates and using them as a learning tool. I will need to gather more information over a longer period of time to arrive at more definitive conclusions regarding debate as a tool for civic learning and engagement. I long envisioned discovering a means of making learning more dynamic and meaningful. I believe that debate is the key to achieving this. It is very important to emphasize to the students that debates should be seen as meaningful episodes of learning. Perhaps the ultimate goal for a course of this nature is to assist students in acquiring the skills necessary to engage in purposeful, meaningful dialogue with a minimal amount of emotionalism. It is my sincere hope and desire that students will leave this newly restructured course with a better and more profound understanding of the course content and newly acquired skills that will enable them to articulate their point of view for any audience and be seen as highly engaged and well-informed participants of our democratic society. The incorporation of debate in this course is an evolutionary process wherein each iteration of the course becomes an epoch of higher order learning and a more advanced example of civic learning and engagement.

# *Debate for Civic Learning*

## Course Overview Template

### The Basics

Course name	<b>LGBTQ Inequalities</b>
Discipline(s)	Sociology/ Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies
Course level	300 level
Enrollment	17
Faculty instructor	Dr. Liz Coston
Faculty contact	ecoston@vcu.edu
University	Virginia Commonwealth

### Explanation for why *Debate for Civic Learning* was chosen for this course.

This course focuses on how public policies impact the experiences of LGBTQ+ people and have the potential to improve or exacerbate the inequalities they experience. Integrating debate into the course will engage students in the politics of LGBTQ+ movement, helping them understand what is at stake in and how different groups within the LGBTQ+ community are differentially impacted by policy. Debates will focus on how different public policies impact and have impacted the direction of the movement, who benefits from these policies, and what issues remain to be addressed. As such, debates will focus on how to develop policies that have the greatest potential to reduce social inequalities.

### Description of the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

The classroom debates are exercises designed to allow you to strengthen your skills in the areas of leadership, interpersonal influence, teambuilding, group problem solving, and oral presentation. Debate topics and position statements are outlined below.

A debate is a 'serious discussion of a subject in which many people take part', 'esp. one in which several people with different opinions about something discuss them' and often 'to try to make a decision about something'. In considering the issues in this course, there is rarely agreement about the *best* means for addressing the inequalities that LGBTQ+ people are facing today. Thus, we will utilize debates as a tool for considering how various policies might be best tailored to bring about equality. In this sense, our debates are not the traditional pro/con debates that you may be familiar with, but debates about which means are most capable of producing a desired end (LGBTQ+ equality and perhaps liberation).

#### Debate Format

7-minute opening for Policy Recommendation 1

5-minute cross-examination

7- minute opening for Policy Recommendation 2

5-minute cross-examination

3-minute break – teams collect thoughts, prepare, etc.

4-minute rebuttal for Policy Recommendation 1

4-minute rebuttal for Policy Recommendation 2

3- minute break - teams collect thoughts, prepare, etc.

5-minute decision

3-minutes open discussion – anyone can ask questions

#### Debate Topics

##### Marriage Equality

**Position 1:** Same-sex marriage legislation is necessary.

**Position 2:** Marriage, as a legal institution, should be abolished.

Criminal Justice

**Position 1:** Hate crimes legislation is necessary and should be adopted by states that have not yet done so.

**Position 2:** Hate crimes legislation is unnecessary, we should not expand the reach of the criminal legal system by creating new hate crimes legislation.

Healthcare

**Position 1:** To improve healthcare for LGBT people, we should provide increased access to care through universal healthcare coverage.

**Position 2:** To improve healthcare for LGBT people, we should ensure that service providers are culturally competent.

Employment

**Position 1:** To improve economic conditions for LGBT people, we should pass comprehensive employment non-discrimination policies.

**Position 2:** To improve economic conditions for LGBT people, we improve social services for LGBT people and raise the minimum wage.

Legislating Equality: Where to Begin

**Position 1:** We should seek traditional legislative means to equality for LGBT people.

**Position 2:** We need to seek alternative means to achieving equality for LGBT people (there is latitude in which means to equality you address here- grassroots organizing, mutual aid, etc.).

**Debate Rotation**

Students are assigned to teams for the duration of the semester. Teams rotate through debate positions throughout the semester. One group is always assigned to Position 1, one group to Position 2, and one group is responsible for the cross-examination and decision making.

**Description of the learning assessment for the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.**

The debates are a major component of the graded course activity, comprising 50% of the students' final grades. With 5 debates across the course of the semester, each debate is worth 10% of the final grade.

Groups are graded using the rubric below. This is the starting point for assigning individual grades. After each debate is completed, students are asked to rate themselves and their group members individual performance in the debate. An example of this form is also provided below. These ratings are based on overall contributions to the group, regardless of the nature of the contribution. For example, it is acceptable for some group members to contribute more to research and less to the in-class discussion as long as the group agrees on the distribution of work. The group member evaluations are also included below. Individual grades are adjusted down from the group score based on low evaluations from team members.

	Debate Rubric				
	5 Points	4 Points	3 Points	2 Points	1 Point
Respect for Other Team	All statements, body language, and responses were respectful and were in appropriate language	Statements and responses were respectful and used appropriate language, but once or twice body language was not	Most statements and responses were respectful and in appropriate language, but there was one sarcastic remark	Statements, responses and/or body language were borderline appropriate. Some sarcastic remarks	Statements, responses and/or body language were consistently not respectful
Information	All information presented in this debate was clear, accurate and thorough	Most information presented in this debate was clear, accurate and thorough	Most information presented in the debate was clear and accurate, but was not usually thorough	Some information was accurate, but there were some minor inaccuracies	Information had some major inaccuracies OR was usually not clear
Rebuttal	All counter-arguments were accurate, relevant and strong	Most counter-arguments were accurate, relevant, and strong	Most counter-arguments were accurate and relevant, but several were weak	Some counter arguments were weak and irrelevant	Counter-arguments were not accurate and/or relevant
Use of Facts	Every major point was well supported with several relevant facts, statistics and/or examples	Every major point was adequately supported with relevant facts, statistics and/or examples	Every major point was supported with facts, statistics and/or examples, but the relevance of some was questionable	Some points were supported well, others were not	No major points were supported
Organization	All arguments were clearly tied to an idea (premise) and organized in a tight, logical fashion	Most arguments were clearly tied to an idea (premise) and organized in a tight, logical fashion	Arguments were tied to each other, but not in a clear, logical manner	Arguments were only loosely tied	No organization to arguments
Understanding of Topic	The team clearly understood the topic in depth and presented their information forcefully and convincingly	The team clearly understood the topic in depth and presented their information with ease	The team seemed to understand the main points of the topic and presented those with ease	The team seemed to understand the main points of the topic, but didn't present with ease	The team did not show an adequate understanding of the topic
Comments:					Total Points:

	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2	3 (Neutral)	4	5 (Strongly Agree)	Not Applicable
Attends group meetings regularly and arrives on time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contributes meaningfully to group discussions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completed work on time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prepares work in a quality manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrates a cooperative and supportive attitude.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contributes significantly to the success of the project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.

As the course is focused around the specific social inequalities experienced by LGBTQ+ people, it made sense to scaffold the debates around policy changes that would reduce or eliminate those inequalities. This also meant that debates were a central and ongoing feature of the course. This allowed students to engage with a larger body of research about those inequalities than our readings provided, as they had to find outside research to support the policy positions they were arguing and defending. This not only gave them a greater breadth of knowledge, but in articulating their arguments and anticipating potential counter-narratives, they also developed a depth of knowledge that was quite impressive.

The students had some initial concerns about the debates being such a large part of the course, but really embraced them after the first debate was completed. They admitted that they were surprised at how much they liked it and how well prepared they felt. I anticipated that there might be some concerns about this and tried to minimize these concerns in a few ways. First, I built in class time for debate prep before each debate to eliminate the challenge of groups trying to find time outside class to work collectively. I also allowed groups to define their own roles collaboratively; for example, some students did more research and less speaking. Finally, I graded on a rubric that assessed the merits of each team and its arguments, rather than focusing on a debate "winner." Students said they felt that made it more like a structured discussion than an adversarial process, which was less intimidating.

I think that incorporating debate into this particular class was incredibly beneficial to student learning, and I plan to incorporate it in the future. In the future, I might consider inviting external stakeholders into the classroom to serve ask questions during the rebuttal period or to determine which policy position was most compelling. I also plan think about other ways of scaffolding the debates to build on each other, as right now only the final debate serves as a scaffolded "meta" debate, with all others being topical.

## *Debate for Civic Learning*

### Course Overview

#### The Basics

Course name	<b>Forging Cultures of Resilience (SOCY 391-902)</b>
Discipline(s)	Sociology
Course level	Upper level undergraduates from multiple disciplines
Enrollment	N=21, Spring 2019
Faculty instructor	Adjunct Professor, Dingani Mthethwa, MA and Associate Professor, Susan Bodnar-Deren, PhD
Faculty contact	<a href="mailto:edmthethwa@vcu.edu">edmthethwa@vcu.edu</a> / <a href="mailto:smbodnar@vcu.edu">smbodnar@vcu.edu</a>
University	Virginia Commonwealth University

#### Explanation for why *Debate for Civic Learning* was chosen for this course.

This course, which is driven by inquiry, links students from VCU to the Richmond Community and youth in South Africa in a shared conversation, as they explore the nature of resilience in two communities affected by a historic transition from racial segregation to inclusive democracy. These two countries have traveled parallel tracks, in terms of their Civil Rights activism. In this course, we examine the historical movements that moved both the U.S. and S.A. to confront inequalities, and how both South Africa and the United States have been always learning from each other. For example, the power of youth movements in S.A. to overturn apartheid and how it was the youth who ignited the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. In recent years, unlike during the anti-apartheid and civil rights periods of the 1960s (U.S.) and 1980s (S.A.), the current political context has been met with a sense of frustration towards the democratic process and power of social movement. This has seemingly led to a sense of apathy among the polity. This course and associated readings, discussions and debates will facilitate a cross-cultural/multidisciplinary examination of racial and social stratification, social movements and policies that examine access and opportunities in both nation-states and how young people are critical for forward movement towards equality in both spaces.

During the first half of the course, through readings and conversations with South African youth, community leaders, former anti-apartheid activists, and public intellectuals, students in the U.S. gain an understanding of the history and contemporary political realities faced by young people in South Africa. In the second part of the course, students visit neighborhoods in Richmond that are historically and currently segregated and marginalized. VCU students attend community meetings; meet with local leaders, youth, activists, and policy makers in Richmond, to gain a better understanding of the historical legacies of racial segregation and Jim Crow and how these histories create lived realities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Since the core focus of our course is how local communities confront and resist structural discrimination, our readings, discussions, service-learning activities and community meetings focus on the power and resiliency of local communities to engender resistance and change.

While these are often local issues, they are global in scope and our hope is that students in the both the U.S. and S.A. can learn from each other strategies for confronting segregation and inequality in both contexts. One way to engage students, in the notion of civic engagement in the democratic process is by integrating debates into the classroom. The classroom debates will help student to examine what has been done historically, what is currently being implemented and the possibilities of what can be done to address systemic structural inequalities in our City and nation.

#### Description of the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.

It has been over a half-century since the passing of the Civils Rights Act in the U.S. and twenty-five years since the end of apartheid in South Africa. The central questions, which guides our course, is why then, after drastic political changes do, racial inequalities persist in both the U.S. and S.A.? In addition, most importantly, what needs to be done to end racial inequality, and what best practices can we learn from each other? These overarching questions ground the discussions and debates in this course and were introduced to students on the first day of class.

On the second day of class, we divided students into five groups, which became the foundation of integrating and presenting multiple readings and perspectives. Students groups explored various aspects of structural inequality in both South Africa and the U.S. We took a scaffolding approach to build up to our final debate. Based on each week's readings and presentations (Table 1 below), which built upon knowledge previously learned, during both the S.A. and U.S. portions of the course, students were given a series of questions about leaders and associated social movements, theoretical/philosophical perspectives, and/or policies that have historically or contemporarily address structural inequality in both places.

**Table 1. Example of scaffolding of topics, readings, presentations and debates**

South Africa	United States/Richmond (service learning East End Cemetery, Oak Grove Bellemeade green team mentorship and Southside Thriving Cities Initiative.)
Lectures: South Africa History	Lectures: U.S. history 100 years from Reconstruction to Civil Rights (Wilkerson (2010) <i>The Warmth of Other Suns</i> .)
Iris Berger (2009). <i>South Africa in World History</i> . (historical background)	Ben Campbell. (2012). <i>Richmond's Unhealed History</i> . (Historical background); Richardson. <i>Built by Blacks</i> . Brian Palmer. <i>The Afterlife of Jim Crow</i> .
Films – <i>Soweto Uprising</i> and <i>Catch the Fire</i> (apartheid period). SA leaders: N. Mandela, S. Biko, R. Sobukwe, J. Dube, A. Luthuli, W. Mandela,	James Thornhill, Jackson Ward history, walking/art tour. Focus on gentrification. Community meeting/lecture. Community mapping I
Newman and Delannoy (2014). <i>After Freedom. The rise of the post-apartheid generation in South Africa</i> . Policy review – contemporary SA Debate 1/discussion: policies in contemporary SA – land rights, housing, economic development/jobs, education	Richmond Policies: <i>Office on Community Wealth Building</i> Stoney, Levar. <i>Annual Report on Poverty reduction and community wealth building in the city of Richmond</i> . <i>VA Health Equity Report</i> (2014).  Richmond Peace Initiative – <i>Race and Regionalism</i> .  Debate 2/policy presentations - education/ housing/ transportation/ economic development/health
Civic engagement open forum: Richmond/SA community conversation with community youth, leaders and policy makers sharing the current lived experience. Where are we now and where do we go from here?	Community meeting and forum - Art Burton, Kinfolks Community and East End Food Justice Corridor. Education and Health. Community mapping and Armstrong High School
Open Forum: Community conversation with Mphophomeni community youth, leaders and policy makers, sharing the current lived experience	Wilkinson and Pickett (2011). <i>Spirit Level</i> (macro thx – linking the micro and macro; fundamental cause theory)
Itumeleng Makale (2017). <i>Up You Mighty Race</i> . (philosophical and contemporary policy proposals)	Community meeting /forum (Mosby Court) and lecture - Grace Washington: J&G Enterprise – public/private partnerships for economic development, jobs and re-entry
Open discussion, lecture and debate with SA philosopher/Tehutic. Itumeleng Makale – decolonizing education in South Africa – radical transformation	Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015). <i>Between the World and Me</i> . (theoretical/proposal)
Main debate (3) – Mock City Council meeting (details below)	

In every class student groups presented and informally debated (n=3 pre-debates) the varying positions specific to the weeks topics and issues. At the end of each class, as a group we discussed and analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of these various approaches in addressing inequalities. In order to approach/address our overarching question, we decided to focus on Richmond because of the feasibility and access of our students to witness first hand through visits, schools, discussions with community partners, and service-learning opportunities the structural inequities in Richmond. In addition to engaging in twenty hours of service in Richmond, students had the opportunity (access) to meet local community activists, policy makers, civil rights leaders and young people in the neighboring communities to ascertain their views as to what is currently happening to address racial inequality and what each stakeholder thought still needs to be done. (We provide students the opportunity to have similar opportunities and access to communities in South Africa during our study abroad course).

Using a consensus model of course development, instructors, students and community partners collectively narrowed down the myriad of past, current and future approaches to address inequality into two areas of focus that they (we) felt would be most effective to address current inequities in Richmond: housing and education policy. In addressing the problems and possible solutions to inequality in Richmond, students continuously drew on the parallel issues facing South Africa and incorporated South African perspectives into possible solutions for Richmond. Additionally, grounded in consensus pedagogy, at the end of March, the class decided to use a mock City Council meeting as their final form of debate about the best way to address racial inequality in Richmond. We collectively decided on the structure of the Council Meeting (drawing on how meetings are conducted) and decided that the Council Meeting would take place on the last regular day of classes (April 24) with the exam period (May 8) to reflect, evaluate the discuss the debate process. In addition, to having students formally revisit and address the questions that guide this course, we will solicit feedback (evaluation) on the course structure, activities and use of debate during this final meeting.



**Debate structure.**

Mock City Council Meeting – overview of participants and roles:

- Three student groups: 1) Housing policy group (6 students); 2) Education policy group (6 students); 3) City Council (9 students).
- Course instructors (2) – Mayor and Deputy Mayor
- Expert advisors/observers (2): Mr. Arthur Burton (community leader and activist, Richmond VA); Mr. Itumeleng Makale (philosopher and community leader/activist, Soweto, South Africa).

Council meeting called to order by Mayoral team. Overview of topics and process (2 minutes)

Brief presentation by expert advisors: What are the issues in their respective communities? Each advisor gets 3 mins. (6 mins).

Student policy group one (Housing) presents an overview of the issues to be addressed. The history of approaches past and present and policy proposal for future (15 minutes).

Clarification questions for group one. City Council, Expert Advisors, and Mayoral Team to ask for clarifications. (5 minutes).

Student policy group two (Education) presents an overview of the issues to be addressed, history of approaches past and present and policy proposal for future (15 minutes)

Clarification questions for group two. City Council, Expert Advisors, and Mayoral Team to ask for clarifications. (5 minutes).

**Total 40 minutes**

Break

Council convenes and discusses in a closed session to review and endorse one proposal. (15 minutes)

- The spokesperson or secretary of the council will take detailed notes on the discussion, process and recommendation (this will be handed in after class). The spokesperson will address the council & the house as to their recommendations and why.

Appeal: The group whose proposal was not endorsed gets 3 minutes to appeal the decision by Council (3 minutes).

Rebuttal: The group whose proposal was endorsed gets 3 minutes rebuttal (3 minutes).

Reconvening (closed session) of the Council: to discuss appeal and rebuttal (5 minutes).

Re-adjournment of full Council: Council votes (n=9) in open forum, where each council member explains why his/her chosen position better addresses the complex issues of structural inequality. (10 minutes).

Mayoral team makes an official declaration and adjourns meeting (1 minute)

Meeting officially closed.

After the close of the meeting, students will be given 15 minutes to write a reflection from the following – guiding question:

- If this was a real council meeting, how would this be different?
- What did you learn from this activity that you didn't know (about yourself, the strength and weaknesses of democratic process)?
- Has the debate and associated foundational work/activities changed your or perspective on the problem and how to address the systemic inequality?
- As a result of the debate what do you feel you need to learn/know more?

During our designated final exam date (5/8), students will address the essential question of the course: What is the capability of a democratic process to address the issues of racial inequality? Is our current democratic system truly a government of the people? What do the experiences in both current U.S. and S.A. teach us about democracy? Moreover, most importantly, does racial equality depend upon government action?

**Description of the learning assessment and results for the *Debate for Civic Learning* activity.**

The grading for this project is multi-faceted as we have been grading students throughout the “scaffolding” process, using an Observation Based Evaluation (OBE) process. This method of evaluation was chosen by the instructors, to assure that students get continual feedback and grades throughout the course, and to not overly penalize students who were not present for any of the preliminary debates/discussions/presentations and those with excused absences for the final debate (those students will be provided an additional writing assignment).

For the debate itself, the two policy groups (education and housing) had four weeks to prepare their policy proposal (written) and presentation. The policy groups received detailed instructions as to what was needed to be incorporated into their policy

proposal and presentation. Students were instructed that they must define the problem, provide an overview of what has been done, what is being done and what is being proposed (why are you proposing this). The proposals can be targeted or holistic – they can include some of the things put forth by the community leaders with whom we have met (for instance, Art initiatives in housing or education or the Food Justice Corridor. Students were instructed to also include how South African counterparts are addressing the issues – is there anything that can be incorporated. Each team will develop a presentation with written Executive Summary that addresses the aforementioned.

- Each group is required to turn into the instructors, an Executive Summary of their topic (past and current policies – what works and what has not worked) and their policy proposal (future) and any visuals used for the presentation. The Executive Summary must include explicit references (with citations) to course content (community meetings, conversations and readings). The presentations will be graded via a rubric that addresses quality of the presentation, persuasiveness of the argument (proposal), and evidence (course and outside content). Individual students will be handing in a written statement of how they individually contributed to the presentation and all group members evaluate each other (this evaluation is turned in individually) and students were instructed that all comments are confidential.

The Council group, who did not have to prepare a formal proposal and presentation, were given a comparable assignment. Each student had to individually research both issues and a-priori come up with a written document that substantiates their position (support for education or housing proposal) of the project. This was done so that each Council member could make an informed decision. Each member of the group was required to write up a 5- to 6-page document (with citations) that outline both the problems in each domain and the pros/cons of the two student selected policy positions. After the policy presentations, members of Council will deliberate and decide which proposal to support. On the evening of the debate, the Council members will collectively prepare a brief statement (written and verbal) completed in class about why they chose that proposal (using course content, associated community discussions, service-learning experiences and supplemental research).

In total, the debate and supporting documents are worth 20% of students' final course grade.

During the week following the debate, students will be asked to fill out an anonymous on-line survey to formally evaluate the debate and how the debate activity helped them to grow as learners, members of an informed community and synthesize course objectives. Students will also be asked to provide feedback to the instructors about what changes can be made to improve the activity (and course).

### **The instructor's reflection on integrating debate for civic learning into this course.**

This is our fifth year teaching this course. The course objectives and associated service/civic learning activities which seek to incorporate active participation by local community members in Richmond and in South Africa, have continually been a challenge. This course has many moving parts and each year course content and pedagogical approaches emerge organically. This is both a positive and negative. It is positive in so much as it gives voices to those who are most affected by institutional inequality (voices which are not often heard first-hand by university students) allowing students to experience the complexity of both lived realities of people and the nuanced realities of addressing the issues of racial inequality through formal and political means. It is a complicated course to teach, as community work rarely follows a strictly formulated course outline and syllabus. This course has produced a number of authentic projects that highlight the power of a shared conversation and resiliency in both South Africa and in Richmond, from the production of a series of music videos, documentaries and art installations in the U.S. and S.A. This work requires that both students and instructors take a "leap of faith", something that is difficult for many to do. Using the structure of debate (while incorporating consensus pedagogy), has given us a structure to the course that was greatly needed. The work however, to move from debate conception to implementation has been very time consuming and difficult. We have however found it to be rewarding and believe that it will provide consistency in the course design and implementation. While formal student feedback is forthcoming, our teaching style is one which is continually reflexive and informal feedback from students assert that using debate has challenged them to not only think critically but interrogate complex problems in a way that is accessible and has empowered them to see themselves as agents of change.

Integrating debate in our course has forced us to be more organized and deliberative in our course design and implementation, which we have previously found challenging. One of the biggest benefits of integrating a debate in our course was that the debate provided a "container", where we can practically observe students' thinking and formulation of ideas. Not only did the debate-based instruction enhance critical thinking, creativity and self-directed learning; it became an effective evaluation tool of the students' analytic decision-making and communication skills. In a course like this, where we are incorporating a multiplicity of theoretical and philosophical perspectives with the lived realities of citizens, it is difficult to organize and assess the learning that has occurred. When you incorporate a concrete activity, such as debate-based learning, we (as instructors) can observe the students' critical thinking, analytical skills, and synthesis of various perspectives through a hands-on experience.