

The materials here were prepared by Dr. Mike Davis & Dr. Paul Mabrey during the Fall 2020 semester at James Madison University for a co-taught interdisciplinary class in the Medical Humanities on COVID-19 in Perspective.

PUBLIC DEBATE ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

The public debate assignment is an opportunity for you to showcase the knowledge, skills, and attitudes you have developed these months in living and studying the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The public debate is structured to emphasize that no issue or controversy is simply two-sided, or true or false. Rather, public controversies are often considered “wicked” because they are ill-defined, involve multiple publics and perspectives, often involve contradictory values and evidence, and are usually difficult if not impossible to resolve.

For this public debate, you will be assigned a specific perspective to represent and COVID-19 controversy to engage. Throughout the activity, you will need to roleplay from within your perspective based on the course readings, discussions, and additional research you have conducted. Keep in mind that you may or may not agree or even be aware of the perspective role you have been assigned, and that is ok. Your goal is to represent how that person, public, or perspective might think about, engage, and advocate on the controversial topic you have been assigned.

While this is an individual assignment, you are welcome and even encouraged to discuss the positions and research with others in the class - especially those who might share the same perspective as you (but on a different controversy) or be involved in the same controversy (but from a different perspective).

Below is the basic structure for how we will divide up the class and the structure of the public debate. Details on perspectives, controversies, and specific speech/question assignment expectations will be announced shortly.

STUDENT PUBLIC DEBATE ROLES

Controversy 1: Local governments should enact a mask mandate that requires individuals to wear masks at all times when interacting with others in public for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stakeholders for Controversy 1:

doctor
small business owner (restaurant)
small business owner (local gym)
resident (pro-mask usage)
resident (anti-mask usage)

Decision Makers for Controversy 1:

Mayor
City Council Member
President, Chamber of Commerce
Chief of Police
City Council Member
Mayor
Superintendent of Schools
City Council Member
President, Chamber of Commerce
City Council Member
City Council Member

Controversy 2: James Madison University should conduct all classes remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stakeholders for Controversy 2:

university medical director
faculty member (large lecture)
faculty member (chemistry lab)
student (pro-virtual)
student (anti-virtual)

Decision Makers for Controversy 2:

Provost
University President
Mayor of Harrisonburg
Chair, Faculty Senate
Vice President for Administration and Finance
JMU Board of Visitors Member
Provost
University President
JMU Board of Visitors Member
Provost
University President

Controversy 3: College sporting events should be suspended during the COVID pandemic.

Stakeholders for Controversy 3:

student athlete (scholarship)
fan
university medical director
student athlete (non-scholarship)
head football coach

Decision Makers for Controversy 3:

NCAA Board of Directors
Athletic Director
University President
NCAA Board of Directors
Conference Commissioner
Athletics booster
NCAA Board of Directors
Athletic Director
Conference Commissioner
University President
NCAA Board of Directors

PUBLIC DEBATE FORMAT (same format for each controversy)

Stakeholder perspectives [Due Wednesday October 7th by 12pm noon]

Stakeholder perspective: 4 minute position speech (uploaded video speech on canvas board)

Cross-examination

Questions [Due Thursday October 8th by 12pm noon]

Questions from Decisionmaker students (one per student on canvas board)

Answers [Due Friday October 9th by 12pm noon]

Answers from Stakeholder perspectives (answer all relevant questions on canvas board)

Decision Maker perspectives [Due Monday October 12th by 9pm]

Decision Maker 1: 2 minute decision speech (uploaded video speech on canvas board)

Decision Maker 2: 2 minute decision speech (uploaded video speech on canvas board)

Decision Maker 3: 2 minute decision speech (uploaded video speech on canvas board)

Decisionmaker 4: 2 minute decision speech (uploaded video speech on canvas board)

Decisionmaker 5: 2 minute decision speech (uploaded video speech on canvas board)

Decisionmaker 6: 2 minute decision speech (uploaded video speech on canvas board)

Stakeholder student reflection [Due Tuesday October 13th by 9pm]

Stakeholder perspective: 1 page single-spaced reflection (uploaded to Canvas assignment)

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

This is the discussion thread where you should post your stakeholder position speeches for Controversy 1. The speeches should be 4 minutes long and lay out the position your stakeholder advocates on the controversy. Your speech should be evidence-based, from within the perspective you are assigned, directly engage the controversy, directly or indirectly engage the other stakeholders and decision-makers, well-organized, and delivered effectively. Stakeholder speeches are due Wednesday October 7th by 12pm noon.

This is the thread where cross-examination should take place for Controversy 1. Each decision maker student is responsible for watching all of the stakeholder speeches for their controversy and asking one question to either a specific stakeholder or all stakeholders. The decision maker should post their question here by Thursday October 8th at 12pm noon.

The stakeholder students are responsible for answering all relevant questions asked to them or to the group by Friday October 9th at 12pm noon.

Questions and answers should demonstrate a command of the controversy, engagement with the stakeholder speeches and decision maker questions, reflect their specific perspective, work toward advocating and advancing their assigned perspective in the public debate, and be respectful, thoughtful, and kind.

This is the discussion thread where you should post your decision maker position speeches for Controversy 1. You should watch all of the stakeholder speeches and review all of the cross-examination for Controversy 1. The speeches should be 2 minutes long and lay out the decision and justification you advocate on the controversy from within your decision maker perspective. Your speech should be evidence-based, from within the perspective you are assigned, directly engage the controversy, directly or indirectly engage the other stakeholders and decision-makers, well-organized, and delivered effectively. Stakeholder speeches are due Monday October 9th by 9pm.

Stakeholder speech expectations

- 4 minutes in length

- Evidence-based: reference at least six qualified sources relevant to your position and perspective, including at least three sources from peer-reviewed research - though of course you can include more research as appropriate
- Perspective-based: your speech should clearly identify who you are role-playing as and that the arguments you are making are reasonably consistent with your assigned role/perspective
- Directly engage the controversy: your speech should clearly engage the assigned controversy by identifying and advocating a position within the controversy
- Directly/indirectly engage other participants: throughout your speech you should engage with the other stakeholders and decision makers, as appropriate, directly and/or indirectly; for example you might reference the perspective of another stakeholder and how you might disagree with them, but ultimately the position you are advocating should be preferred OR while it is not feasible to engage all of the decision makers for your controversy, you might allude to some of them as a group or even specifically address some that could be concerned with your position
- Well-organized: your speech should be well organized with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion; you should utilize signposts and transitions to help the audience navigate your speech; your position should be well articulated and tell a completing story through your organization
- Delivered effectively: your speech should be delivered effectively, especially for the online environment; you should pay attention to your audience engagement through eye contact, tone, and vocal cues; you should be aware of your nonverbal communication in addition to the decisions you make about word choice, imagery, etc; visual aid is not required, but could be used; be respectful and sensitive of the topics and audiences you are addressing

Decision Maker speech expectations

- 2 minutes in length
- Clearly makes decision about the controversy
- Justifies controversy decision based on the public debate that has taken place, including cross examination
- Evidence-based: provides summary and synthesis of prior debate where relevant, makes at least three appropriate references to other speakers, sources, or arguments already made in debate
- Perspective-based: your speech should clearly identify who you are role-playing as and that the decision/arguments you are making are reasonably consistent with your assigned role/perspective

- Well-organized: your speech should be well organized with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion; you should utilize signposts and transitions to help the audience navigate your speech; your decision should be well articulated and tell a completing story through your organization
- Delivered effectively: your speech should be delivered effectively, especially for the online environment; you should pay attention to your audience engagement through eye contact, tone, and vocal cues; you should be aware of your nonverbal communication in addition to the decisions you make about word choice, imagery, etc; visual aid is not required, but could be used; be respectful and sensitive of the topics and audiences you are addressing

Stakeholder reflection paper

- 1 page single-spaced
- Reflect on your participation in the public debate activity: how was your knowledge, skills, or attitude about COVID-19 impacted, if at all?; how did the public debate activity impact your learning, if at all
- Reference at least one other concept, idea, or content from another course module