**CC0003 / Ethics and Civics in a Multicultural World**

**Sem 1 AY21-22**

**Mock Debate Topic for Week 02: Conventional Morality and Critical Morality**

*Instructions*

The Mock Debate assignment is meant to give you some practice before you do the team debate project. Please review this document before your tutorial group meets in Week 02.

You’re not expected to do anything else to prepare for the mock debate before the tutorial meeting. For the team debate project, however, you *will* be expected to prepare before the date of your debate. You’ll receive your debate topic two weeks in advance of the actual debate.

The mock debate will unfold as follows:

1. The whole tutorial class will be split in half to create two teams: Red and Blue.
2. Both teams will have 10 minutes to prepare an Opening Argument for their position.
3. Red Team presents its Opening Argument (5 minutes max).
4. Blue Team presents its Opening Argument (5 minutes max).
5. Both teams will have 5 minutes to prepare a Rebuttal to the other team’s Opening Argument.
6. Red Team presents its Rebuttal to Blue Team’s Opening Argument (5 minutes max).
7. Blue Team presents its Rebuttal to Red Team’s Opening Argument (5 minutes max).
8. Both teams will have 5 minutes to prepare a Counter to the other team’s Rebuttal.
9. Red Team presents its Counter to Blue Team’s Rebuttal (5 minutes max).
10. Blue Team presents its Counter to Red Team’s Rebuttal (5 minutes max).
11. Following the debate, there will be 15 minutes of open-floor discussion involving the entire class. The whole mock debate exercise will conclude after 65 minutes.

The **Opening Argument** should provide an argument to support the assigned position. The objective of the Opening Argument is to argue for the position, not to respond to objections.

The **Rebuttal** should present objections to the opposing team’s Opening Argument. It should argue that the opposing team’s position is wrong, or that the opposing team’s Opening Argument failed to support its position.

The **Counter** should argue that the opposing team’s Rebuttal fails to refute your team’s Opening Argument. In the Counter, your team answers the objections raised in the opposing team’s Rebuttal.

Not every student is expected to speak during the mock debate. Your team should appoint at least 3 different speakers—at least one person to present at each stage of the debate: Opening, Rebuttal, and Counter. Please don’t appoint the same person to speak at different stages of the debate.

*Background: Conventional Morality and Critical Morality*

**Motion: Should social norms have a place in determining what is morally right and wrong?**

Social norms refer to “a rule or a standard that governs our conduct in the social situations in which we participate. It’s a societal expectation.” (Bierstedt 1963, p. 222) In this week’s reading, “What is Morality?” by Russ Shafer-Landau, and in the lecture, we learned that when it comes to conventional morality, social norms often play a significant part in shaping the rules and principles that come to be accepted and used to govern members’ own lives and to evaluate the actions and motivations of others. We also learned that conventional morality can vary from culture to culture and society to society, and is not necessarily accepted by every member of the group. If people’s beliefs and attitudes change over time, conventional morality can too.

Critical morality does not derive from social norms and agreements. Instead, it is a set of principles and rules that provides a standard for evaluating the actions and motivations of others, that is free from mistaken beliefs, prejudice, and irrationality. We can use critical morality to help us assess when conventional morality is flawed.

The question we will debate is: *what place, if any, should social norms have in determining what is morally right and what is morally wrong?*

*Debate Positions:*

* **Red Team** will argue, that social norms should have a place in determining what is morally right and wrong.
* **Blue Team** will argue, that social norms should not have a place in determining what is morally right and wrong.

Both teams should support their arguments with examples. Hypothetical examples are acceptable, but real-life cases would be valuable as well.

**References**

Bierstedt, Robert (1963). The Social Order, 2nd ed., McGraw-Hill, NY.

Shafer-Landau, Russ (2019). What is Morality. Living Ethics: An Introduction with Readings. (pp 3-10). New York. Oxford University Press.