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

**Sem 1 AY21-22**

**Mock Debate Topic for Week 03: Ethical Egoism and Climate Change**

*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.

You will not receive a grade for your performance in the mock debate. It is only a practice exercise. Still, your active participation in the mock debate is expected, and it will count toward your grade for participation in class (10% of the final grade).

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:**

Taking Sunday afternoon drives for fun in a private vehicle (as opposed to taking public transport, cycling, etc.) would contribute more to carbon emissions than is necessary. If an individual were to take such a drive, they would only be maximising their own self-interest.

Yet, as Walter-Sinott Armstrong points out, whether or not an individual takes such a drive, they would not have any significant effect on carbon-emission levels in the ongoing climate crisis.

“Global warming is more like a river that is going to flood downstream because of torrential rains. I pour a quart of water into the river upstream (maybe just because I do not want to carry it). My act of pouring the quart into the river is not a cause of the flood. Analogously, my act of driving for fun is not a cause of global warming.

[…]

My fundamental point has been that global warming is such a large problem that it is not individuals who cause it or who need to fix it. Instead, governments need to fix it, and quickly. Finding and implementing a real solution is the task of governments. Environmentalists should focus their efforts on those who are not doing their job rather than on those who take Sunday afternoon drives just for fun.” (Armstrong 2010, 335, 344)

**Motion:**

Given **only** that it would maximise their own self-interest, an individual is **morally** **justified** in taking Sunday afternoon drives for fun.

**Debate Positions:**

* **Red Team** will argue that an individual taking Sunday afternoon drives for fun is **morally** **justified**.
* **Blue Team** will argue that an individual taking Sunday afternoon drives for fun is **not** **morally justified**.

**References:**

* Armstrong, Walter Sinott. 2010. “It’s Not *My* Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations.” In *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings*, eds. Stephen M. Gardiner, Simon Caney, Dale Jamieson, & Henry Shue, 332–346. New York: Oxford University Press.
* Broom, John. 2012. “Private Morality.” *Climate Matters: Ethics in a Warming World*. New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co.
* Plumwood, Val. 2012. “” *The Eye of the Crocodile*. Canberra: ANU E-Press.
* Shue, Henry. 1993. “Subsistence Emissions and Luxury Emissions.” *Law and Policy* 15(1): 39–60.