

Debating Solutions to Environmental Issues

(Debate: 45 marks; 6% of your grade in the course)

Worth: Total: 10% of your final grade; the weight of the components varies (see below)

Date Assigned: Week of October 23rd 2017

Date Due: Weeks of November 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th (as needed)

REMINDER: Attendance is **MANDATORY** for **all** weeks of this assignment. You are to sign up for a debate topic, and time slot and to attend and participate in debate discussions. Otherwise, you will not be able to take part in a debate and will not receive marks for it.

Introduction

One of the most important skills to learn while at university is to think critically. A second important skill is to be able to communicate your thoughts and ideas effectively to a group of people. The objective of this assignment is to help you develop these skills further.

When studying environmental issues there is often not a single solution to resolve a problem. Different perspectives can be adopted: as discussed during lecture, some may rely on our inventiveness, while others may require a major shift in our way of relating to the environment. You are continually exposed to these different ideas and you must, given your current paradigm, critically analyze these ideas and present them in a debate. In this exercise you will be provided the opportunity to review an environmental issue/topic and form an argument to present in a debate format during your tutorial period.

Assignment

You will form a group which will need to propose a solution to one of the following major issues:

1) Climate change costs for Canada could escalate to billions of dollars by 2020, and even more by 2050. What kind of approaches and which perspective would best limit these costs? Using money from a tax on all goods and services derived from the use of fossil fuels, or investing in technologies that produce near-zero emissions of greenhouse gases?

2) The health of Canada's oceanic waters is a major concern, as well as the state of its fishing stocks. Which of the following approaches would best allow the recovery of Canada's marine resources: transitioning the fishing fleet to small, family-owned boats, or investing in aquaculture?

3) The forestry industry has been going through a decline in Canada. Which of following is the best approach to make this industry more sustainable in the future: investing in equipment and harvesting techniques that are less disruptive of forest ecosystems, or shifting instead our efforts to conservation and the valuation of goods and services other than timber?

4) Agricultural production in Canada is now more similar to industrial production than to natural ecosystems, leading to many environmental challenges. What can be done to make this activity more sustainable? Scaling down production so that it only serves local communities, or producing only entirely organic foods?

5) As a society, Canada has placed an immense stress on its aquatic systems. What can be done to reverse the trends of degradation and deterioration? Force polluters, through regulation and enforcement, to clean up, or emphasize approaches that lead overall to a reduction of water consumption?

6) While mineral and energy resources are important in, and for, Canada, their extraction and use can have major environmental impacts. What can be done to limit these impacts? Invest in technologies that will limit them, while adopting tougher environmental regulations, or simply abandoning this sector and re-focus the Canadian economy on the development of high-value goods and services (e.g. computer technology)?

7) The choices and behaviour of Canadians living in cities have profound environmental implications, as most people in Canada now live in urban environments. Would cities be more sustainable by adopting a compact form that favours walkability, or by investing in improving public transit between the downtown cores and the suburbs?

8) Biodiversity worldwide has decreased significantly in recent times. What can be done in Canada to reverse this trend? Could areas rich in wildlife be completely closed to public access in order to preserve biodiversity, or should efforts instead focus exclusively on species for which there are reasonable chances of protecting them?

You will present your solution during a debate with another group, who is defending an opposite perspective.

Assignment

Week 1 – Date: Week of October 23rd – Group Contract

1. In your tutorial period, your TA will propose a list of debate topics to the class where you and your classmates will choose the debate topics that will be later argued. The weeks during which each subject will be debated, will be randomly selected. In groups of 4-5, your group will sign up

for one of the topics provided, sign up for which side your group wants to defend and sign up for the appropriate debate time slot.

2. A group contract amongst your group members must be completed, signed and handed in to your TA before leaving your lab session. The elements that your “Group Contract” are stated below. **You will receive full marks (2% of your grade in the course) for submitting the contract, but 0 (zero) marks if you do not submit one.**
3. Your TA will record the composition of each group, and the position they will be defending for the debate.

Debates – Dates: Weeks of November 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th; as necessary (45 marks)

1. Your debate! **(45 marks; 6% of your grade in the course)**
2. Participate in debate discussions and ask questions to the presenters **(2% of your grade in the course)**.

You must bring and complete every week the *Debate Evaluation Form* for your participation to be recorded.

Group Contract (2% of your grade in the course)

Working as an effective member of a group is a challenge for most individuals. The aim of the group contract is to ensure the success of your group. The contract should set the parameters and guidelines your group will follow in order to resolve conflicts.

You must prepare a group contract. The contract should be no longer than 2 pages. It must contain the following information:

- Names and contact information for all group members
- Guidelines for scheduling group meetings
- Guidelines adopted for conduct as a member of the group
- Conflict resolution scheme: this may become the most important part of your contract. This is the procedure you will follow if a conflict arises.
- Peer evaluation scheme: what tools will you use to document the contribution of each group member, if this becomes an issue at the end of the project
- Signature of all group members

Your contract will be returned to you if it is felt that something in it needs to be further addressed. You are required to fix any issue brought forth by your TA or your instructor as soon as possible

Make sure that everyone has a copy of the contract, with the signatures, before submitting it!

Debate (45 Marks)

As a group, you and your group members are to prepare a presentation for your debate that will occur in the designated week. During your debate, you and your group will be presenting your case to the class and will be evaluated as a group by your TA and peers. The format of your debate should meet the following requirements:

- A formal statement stating your side of the argument, i.e. the solution you propose.

- **Three to five** points supporting your position
- An affective formal closing statement that briefly summarizes your points and position.
- The presentation should be no more than **5 minutes**.
- You may use visual aids to support your arguments.

Once you and your group members have presented your case and point, you are to respectively listen to your opponent's position and arguments. When they have finished their presentation, your group members and your opponents will be given five minutes to get into a debate in a mature manner where one person is to speak one at a time. This will be supervised by your TA, who will determine who will get to reply to points made. After your time of debate has ended, your fellow classmates will be given an opportunity (five minutes) to express their opinions towards the issue, or to ask questions.

Hints to having an affective argument for your debate:

- Speak clearly and loudly
- Make eye contact with your opponent and your classmates
- Behave in a professional manner when arguing with your opponent
- Have your arguments prepared prior to your presentation
- You and your group will be evaluated as a group by your TA and will therefore receive a group mark based on your presentation and cooperation as a group.

Marking scheme of the Debate

- Students will be evaluated by their peers and by their TA during their presentation.
- Students are to evaluate their peers with the "Debate Evaluation Form" that is attached.
- Students will be marked as a group and their mark will be based on the average of ALL evaluations.

Your debate will be graded as indicated in the attached marking scheme.

The debate represents 6% of your grade in the course. Your mark will be based on the evaluation by your colleagues and your TA. Half of your debate mark will come from the average of the evaluations completed by your colleagues, and the other half by the evaluation completed by your TA.

All the members within a group will receive the same mark

EARTH SC/ENVIR SC/GEOG 2E13 DEBATE EVALUATION FORM

Evaluation Category	Group Evaluation: Evaluate on a scale of 0-5				Group Members:
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	
1. Was the team presentation well organized and effective?					Group 1:
2. Did the team make its presentation interesting to the class?					
3. Was the team perceptive to the weak points on the opposite side?					Group 2:
4. Did the team appear to work as a team?					
5. How effective was the formal statement?					Group 3:
6. How effective were the group's points?					
7. Was eye-contact made and was the team speaking loudly and clearly?					Group 4:
8. Did the team appear to know the subject?					
9. Was the team able to answer questions effectively?					
TOTAL (/45)					

Name: _____

Student ID #: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____