

PHI 169 – CRITICAL REASONING – FALL 2014

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DEBATE PARTICIPATION AND GROUP PROJECT REPORT

Sixty percent of your final grade will depend on your performance in a debate (30 %) and in a group project report (30 %). This document explains what is expected from you in the debate and in the project report. **Please note that the final project report is due Dec 17.**

The class is now divided in small groups, with three or four members. Each group has been assigned a topic—for example, capitalism and economic inequalities; vegetarianism and animal rights; Ferguson. In assigning you to a group and a topic, I have tried to accommodate your preferences as much as possible.

Preliminary Research. Each group will conduct independent research about the assigned topic. This will involve:

- (a) consult materials in the course website, the internet, the library or the news;
- (b) identify arguments supporting different positions, for example, arguments in favor of vegetarianism and arguments against it, or arguments in favor of the War on Terror and arguments against it;
- (c) summarize and scrutinize these arguments;
- (d) compare conflicting arguments; and
- (e) develop awareness of the underlying ideological assumptions.

Each group will share its research findings with the rest of the class and with me in two stages: a debate and a final project report.

Debate. The debate will consist of a general presentation about the assigned topic, along with a critical discussion. More precisely:

First, the group will present the topic to the class in a clear and accessible way. At the discretion of the group members, the presentation could be supplemented by powerpoint slides, videos, handouts, etc.

Next, the members of the group will engage in a critical discussion among themselves about a specific claim. For example, the claim under discussion could be whether people should stop eating meat. Some members of the group will defend the claim that people should stop eating meat, and the other members will defend the opposite claim. The critical discussion should offer a balanced account of the arguments for and against a certain position.

Finally, there will be questions from the rest of the class followed by replies from the group members.

Each debate—presentation; critical discussion; Q&A—will last approximately one hour. The debates will begin in mid November.

Debate schedule.

DATE	topic	participants
Nov 17	Ferguson	Dzhenet, Anaie, Sydney, Marfre
Nov 19	Ferguson	Kristle, Vivian, Francis, Bradley
Dec 1	Capitalism	Richard, Miguel, Saikou, Ahmeth
Dec 3	Vegetarianism	Stephanie, Abigail, Mary, Jan
Dec 8	Abortion	Nana, Rona, Tariq, Bintou

If your name does not appear in the table above, please contact me ASAP.

Project Report – DUE Dec 17. The project report will be a written version of the debate. The group will write a report in which, first, the general topic is introduced, and second, the different arguments for and against a specific claim are summarized and scrutinized. The report should strive to be as objective as possible. The report should be accessible by anyone who is interested in the topic. Length is set to roughly 20-25 pages, but quality is more important than quantity.

For inspiration, look at the BBC's discussion about the death penalty, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/capitalpunishment/>

Look also at the slides about how to write the final paper which were presented in class on Wednesday December 10th.