

Debate Assignment

On Friday, July 8, the class will participate in oral debates on the following resolution:

Resolved: That the World Trade Organization (WTO) should modify the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement abolishing all patent protection for software.

You should imagine that the debates have been organized by the WTO and that your audience is composed of staff members who will be advising their bosses on policy decisions. Thus, the debates will be judged primarily on the cogency and relevancy of your arguments rather than on technical debating skill. As in a traditional debate, however, the affirmative side has the burden of proving its case; the negative must simply refute the resolution and need not propose any action on its own. The affirmative side does need to offer an alternative to patent protection, or make the argument that no protection is needed.

Each debate will occur between two 2-member teams and will proceed according to the following model, which was used (with longer time periods and some cross examinations) for the Lincoln-Douglas style debates:

4 minutes	opening statement from affirmative side
6 minutes	opening statement from negative side
4 minutes	first rebuttal by affirmative
4 minutes	rebuttal by negative
2 minutes	final rebuttal by affirmative

For the opening statement, the time may be used by one team member, or the time may be split between statements by both team members. Similarly for the rebuttals, either a single team member or both may present. However, both team members must present at least once during the debate. Each team will also have two minutes of team discussion time, to be spread out during the breaks between speakers.

You are free to use any materials or format you like for your side's presentation. You should not use computer projection (such as PowerPoint slides). While there is no doubt that using such tools can improve the quality of a presentation, the setup time and the likelihood of encountering technical problems make it dangerous—as past experience bears out—to allow their use in a situation with tight time constraints.

I am hoping to handle sign-ups by having everyone sign up on a piece of paper on Wednesday. Please find yourself a partner, or I'll randomly assign you a partner.

Each hour-session (1 PM-2 PM, 2 PM-3PM, 3 PM-4 PM, etc.) will consist of two 20-minute debates. You are required to attend both debates during your own session so that every debate has an audience. Based on the size of the class, we'll know how many sessions are needed.

Some tips:

1) One of my former teaching assistants, Sam King, created a sample debate. You may wish to take a look at the debate at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jh54kMFmadY&t=1s>

Note that the debate is on a different topic (privacy rather than patent protection), but Sam's presentations, for both the affirmative and the negative should provide a good template for how you may wish to prepare for your debate. You do not have to speak as fast as Sam does in the debate – in fact, if you do, the TAs and I will likely not capture all of your arguments.

2) Evidence is really important. We are going to be grading the debates based largely on the quality of evidence that you provide, along with the quality of your argumentation.

3) **Do not forget to build deontological and/or utilitarian arguments to support your position.**

4) The first affirmative statement should be prepared ahead of time. Likewise, probably 2/3 of the first negative statement can be prepared ahead of time. The remainder of the debate will be based on the arguments made by the opposition, and rebutting the opponents' attacks on your positions.