

Submission Template for the 2017 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

In your abstract, please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words), and three to four keywords. If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.

Title: Using Classroom Debates to Teach Critical Thinking

Abstract:

Hiring managers and business professors alike have recognized the importance of critical thinking skills as a driver for student and employee success. The ability to influence and persuade listeners by articulating a reasoned opinion that is supported by factual evidence, and defending against counterproposals, is at the heart of boardroom success. These skills can all be taught in business school classrooms through the use of student debates. This session gathers best practices from published material on classroom debates and has attendees participate in a debate on goal setting to see first-hand how running a debate in their class might work.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Debate, Active Learning

2) Teaching Implications:

What is the contribution of your session to management pedagogy/andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.

Critical thinking has been described as an active process that requires “reflective thinking” (Dewey, 1909, p. 9) and “logical inquiry” (Glaser, 1941, p. 5). More recently, scholars have expanded these views to suggest that critical thinking must also focus on “deciding what to believe or do” (Ennis, 1993, p. 180). Kiltz (2009, p. 10) suggests, “there is widespread agreement that critical thinking in a university environment involves students’ abilities to identify issues and assumptions, recognize important relationships, make correct inferences, evaluate evidence or authority, and deduce conclusions”. All of these definitions suggest that critical thinking is an individual competency that can be taught and one of the best ways to do this is through classroom discussion and exercises (Powley & Taylor, 2014).

The need for critical thinking skills is more important now than ever before. In an age where more jobs are lost to automation than to overseas production (Miller, 2016), our ability to think critically and creatively solve problems becomes a must-have skill for all employees. In fact, critical thinking skills topped a ranking of the most important skills for employees according to human resource professionals (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006).

Classroom debates offer a rich opportunity for critical thinking, logical inquiry, and reasoned discussions. They can be used in a variety of OB and HR content areas including ethical decision making (e.g., whistle blowing, ethical sourcing), hiring practices (e.g., affirmative action, employee rights to privacy, drug testing), goal setting and motivation (e.g., recent activities by Wells Fargo and/or Volkswagen employees provide a fruitful connection to the real world), conflict management and negotiations (e.g., professional sports lockouts, union negotiations).

The overarching learning goal for students participating in a debate is: As a result of participating in a classroom debate, students will be able to articulate, support, and defend key business decisions

Corresponding Objectives:

- Students will use appropriate analytical and research techniques to address a business problem and make a decision about which side they support
- Students will practice perspective taking by researching both sides of an argument and preparing logical and cogent arguments and counterarguments
- Students will exhibit knowledge of subject material by citing relevant facts and issues surrounding core OB topics
- Students will present logical and persuasive arguments that are supported with relevant and accurate facts and data
- Students will work as part of a team to build a compelling argument to support their side
- Students will gain experience in oral communications and practice speaking clearly, making eye contact, and confidently conveying their reasoned opinions

3) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session.

Ideally participants will sign up for the session ahead of time and will be emailed the following pre-work:

Pre-Work

A. Read:

1. Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation: A 35-year odyssey. *American Psychologist*, 57(9), 705-717.
2. Ordóñez, L. D., Schweitzer, M. E., Galinsky, A. D., & Bazerman, M. H. (2009). Goals gone wild: The systematic side effects of overprescribing goal setting. *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, 23(1), 6-16.

B: Listen to the NPR Planet Money Podcast Episode 728: [The Wells Fargo Hustle](#)

Session Outline

I am requesting 90 minutes for this session to be utilized as follows:

Introduction & outline of session – 10 minutes

- Provide an overview of critical thinking and how using debates in class can help promote students' critical thinking skills
- Outline the rest of the hour and how the debate will run

Individual work – 5 minutes

- The choice of a debate topic for this session must be something most attendees can reasonably debate without additional research. Providing the pre-work will help facilitate this debate, although drop-in attendees should still have a reasonable working knowledge of the pros and cons of goal setting.
- Individual attendees will write down the pros and cons of goal setting on their own

Team work – 15 minutes

- Assign attendees to a side and ask for 3 or 5 volunteers (depending on number of attendees) to serve as our Board
- Attendees work in teams to form their arguments, counterarguments, and decide who will speak

Mock Debate – The Board keeps time for a total of 38 minutes

- Opening Statements
 - Pro – 3 minutes
 - Con – 3 minutes
- First Advance (Pro) – 5 minutes
 - Con Rebuttal – 3 minutes

- First Advance (Con) – 5 minutes
 - Pro Rebuttal – 3 minutes

- Closing Statements
 - Pro – 3 minutes
 - Con – 3 minutes

- Board Questions – 5 minutes
- Board Deliberation & Decision – 5 minutes

Debrief – 22 minutes

- The debrief will focus on process, not content. It will be a time to review the procedures, and answer questions of the attendees regarding how this has worked in my classroom.
- I will close the session by sharing the best practices I have gathered from several good articles that outline the procedures of how to run a debate in class, as well as provide suggestions on evaluation rubrics and potential topics (e.g., Berdine, 1984; Mesch, Harris, & Williams, 1994; Moore, Limerick, & Frost, 1990; and Russell & Scherer, 1995).

4) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *Navigating the Changing Currents*?

This session helps attendees develop effective, active-learning classroom experiences for their students. More and more faculty are being called upon to “flip the classroom” and engage in “active learning”. This can be scary for faculty who are letting go of some of the control in their classroom. This session will provide a structure and framework to give faculty some comfort in navigating this changing academic environment. It allows a blending of content they should know well (i.e., choose a debate topic that is relevant and interesting to the instructor) with a new format that teaches students important skills of critical thinking, research, oral communications, and logical reasoning. Debates can be dynamic and fun. Students are engaged and actively learning, listening to their peers, and gaining the very skills that can help set them apart once they join the workforce.

5) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?

This is the first time I am presenting this work. It has not been presented at any other conference and is not under review anywhere else.

Works Cited

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