**Session Title: Point/Counterpoint: Utilizing debate in the classroom to teach management, leadership, organizational behavior, and ethics**

**Abstract**

This roundtable focuses on the use of classroom debates as a method to teach theories, concepts, and issues in several management-related disciplines. Debate assists students in developing and practicing critical thinking, communication and conflict resolution while exploring timely controversial issues. The use of debates in a classroom setting allows students to work collaboratively and cooperatively, gather and apply new information while creating one side of an argument. This roundtable will introduce the use of debates in the classroom, provide sample formats, and develop a list of potential debate topics related to multiple management related courses.

**Keywords**: Debate, Ethics, Critical Thinking

**Introduction**

Debate is a powerful method of teaching students to think critically, strengthen their communication skills, and develop an understanding of multiple perspectives and arguments. The use of classroom debate provides an instructor an additional tool in teaching theories, concepts, and issues in several disciplines, including ethics, leadership, organizational behavior, and management. Further, debate engages students in a variety of ways, including developing an appreciation for the complexity of social issues, cultivating an environment for meaningful dialogue, and inspiring creative problem-solving. While the use of debates in a classroom setting to assist teaching is not new, it still presents a unique approach to develop critical thinking skills and explore unfamiliar topics as compared to more traditional methods, such as lecture. The debating of potentially controversial topics can provide a dimension of critical analysis that students may not be exposed to through traditional classroom activities (Lindauer, 1990). The presentation also invites other participants to bring their experiences and questions on this topic.

Attending this workshop, management educators will:

* Become familiar with the literature supporting the use of debate in collegiate courses.
* Be introduced to debate formats and preparation in a variety of management and organizational courses.
* Develop a list of potential debate topics applicable to a variety of business related courses.

**Theoretical Foundation/ Teaching Implications**

Through debate preparation, students must examine, and critically analyze, a topic requiring attention to argument and counterargument (Allen et al., 1997). Debate motivates students to become more engaged in their learning, foster curiosity and interest in a topic, and enhance critical thinking skills (Green & Klug, 1990; Handayani, 2016; Laroque, 2018; Anastasopoulou & Georgiou, 2012, Milson et al., 2020). To improve critical thinking skills, students must not only learn about critical thinking, but engage in it themselves (Gelder, 2005). When students are engaged in debate, they are more likely to be engaged in the topic and to think about the subject in a more critical manner. Students discover new information and apply knowledge while discussing and organizing one side of an argument (Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2012). Debates improve students’ performance on assessments related to covered topics, raise participation in and enthusiasm for class discussions, and improve instructor evaluations (Green & Klug, 1990). Discussion among students can help bridge gaps between different perspectives and viewpoints. Debate aids in preparing students for the competitive workplace, as it helps to develop important skills such as communication and problem solving (Maeda, 2015; Li et al., 2021).

Classroom debates are exercises designed to help students learn in a competitive format and examine controversial topics while strengthening “skills in the areas of leadership, interpersonal influence, team building, group problem solving, and oral presentation (Leuser, 2003). Debates are useful in any discipline on a wide variety of topics, including business, ethics, and current affairs (Giammatteo & Seagle, 2011; Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2012; Kelly, 2018). The breadth of topics that an instructor can introduce ensures students become well versed in current events (Bellon, 2000).

Debate also encourages an environment of meaningful dialogue and mutual respect between students. The competitive aspect of debate assures that success is achieved through cooperative research, argument development and practice (Bellon, 2000). It teaches students to be open to other’s perspectives and to understand different points of view. This helps to create an atmosphere of respect and understanding, where students can participate in civil discourse, while still challenging and debating each other’s ideas. Debate can also be used to inspire creative problem-solving. By engaging in debate, students are encouraged to develop innovative solutions to complex problems. This helps to build their skills in problem-solving by adopting multiple perspectives and improve their understanding of potential solutions to social issues (Johnson & Johnson, 1979).

**Session Description and Plan**

 This session will offer a short presentation followed by a facilitated discussion. will begin the session with introductions of self and the attendees. As part of the introductions, participants will be asked to share their experiences with debates, whether in the classroom or elsewhere. Following introductions, we will provide an overview of the literature of using debate as pedagogy and discuss how we utilized debate in a business ethics course and some of the results we achieved. We will then open up the session to discuss staging debates and potential debate topics. If there are more than 20 participants, we can form smaller groups to brainstorm debate topics.

**Session Timeline**

1. (10 min) Introduction of facilitators and attendees.
2. (15 min) Presentation of literature and uses of debate in the classroom.
3. (15 min) Discussion of setting up a debate assignment, student preparation, debate formats and conducting the actual debate.
4. (20 min) Open discussion of ideas for possible debate topics

**Time Requested**

60 Minutes

**Resource Needs**

Laptop, projector

**References:**

Allen, M., Berkowitz, S., Hunt, S., & Louden, A. (1997, November 19-23). *Measuring the Impact of Forensics and Communication Education on Critical Thinking: A Meta-Analytic*. National Communication Association, Chicago, IL. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED413625

Anastasopoulou, E., & Georgiou, I. (2012). Debate in the classroom: A tool to foster critical thinking. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 2*(20), 220-227.

Bellon, J. (2000) A research-based justification for debate across the curriculum. *Argumentation and Advocacy, 36*(3), 161-175.

Giammatteo, S. & Seagle, S. (2011). The effects of debate in the classroom: A case study. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies, 8*, 1-5.

Green III, C. S., & Klug, H. G. (1990). Teaching critical thinking and writing through debates: An experimental evaluation. *Teaching Sociology*, 462-471.

Handayani, R. (2016). Students critical thinking skills in a classroom debate. *LLT Journal:* *A Journal on Language and Language Teaching, 19*(2), 132-140.

Johnson, D. & Johnson R. (1979). Conflict in the classroom: Controversy and learning. *Review of Educational Research, 49*(1), 51-70.

Kelly, M. (2018). *Stage a debate in class.* ThoughtCo. https: <https://www.thoughtco.com/hold-a-class-debate-6637>

Larocque, J. (2018). The power of debate: A classroom tool to engage students. *Education Canada, 58*(3), 38-41.

Leuser, D. (2003). *Classroom debates.* <http://jupiter.plymouth.edu/~davidl/bu342/Debates.DOC>

Li, W., Huang, Y., Zhang, X., & Chen, Y. (2021). Impact of debate on student communication skills. *International Journal of Educational Research, 2*(1), 9–13. doi: 10.3390/ijer2-01-009

Lindauer, D. L. (1990). A New Approach to Team Teaching.*Journal of Economic Education (1986-1998), 21*(1), 71.

Maeda, Y. (2015). The use of debate in the classroom: A means for developing employability skills. *International Journal of Instruction, 8*(2), 131-142.

Milson, A., Jones, S., & Smith, T. (2020). Debate and critical thinking in college students. *International Journal of Educational Research, 1*(2), 20–24. doi: 10.3390/ijer1-02-020

Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning. (2012). Classroom debates. In *Instructional guide for university faculty and teaching assistants.* <https://www.niu.edu/citl/resources/guides/instructional-guide>