

Debate Assignment

Big question: How can human beings bear the inescapable suffering of life on earth?

Debate. Each of you will participate in a debate this term. I will assign you to a group and to a position (taking the position of Christians, Stoics, or Epicureans). You will be evaluated both as individuals and as a group, and you may divide the labor within the group in any reasonable way, as long as you all have a speaking part on the day of the debate. For your speaking part, you should speak *ex tempore*, from notes or an outline; please **do not read a prepared text**. In practice or rehearsal, you should time yourself so that you do not speak over your limit.

Preparation

1. After doing the required reading carefully, meet as a group to determine the main features of the position you will represent and the main features of the position you will oppose. Clearly identify all arguments and counterarguments made in the text.
2. For both the position that you will represent and the opposing positions, generate questions, criticisms, fallacies, etc., going beyond those you identified in the text. This last instruction is important because the debate in class will be more than an enactment of the debate found in the text. The format requires you to construct new criticisms of the opposing position and to anticipate new objections to your own position. Since the entire debate is limited to 55 minutes, you must decide how you can most effectively present and defend your position and criticize your opposition, all within the allotted time.

Format

1. **Opening Statements (3 minutes each).** State the main features of your own position as well as the main criticisms you have of your opposition. [1 minute of time for conferring with the members of your group]
2. **Rebuttal (5 minutes each).** Respond to the arguments in the opposition's opening statement, answering criticisms and directing new criticism to the opposition. [1 minute of time for conferring with the members of your group]
4. **Closing Statements (3 minutes each).** Informed by the arguments made throughout the debate, restate your position and dispel the opposition's criticism in a final, rousing speech.
5. **Question Period (15 minutes).** All participants as well as observers will have the opportunity to raise brief, pointed questions. Teams will have up to 1 minute to respond to each question, and team members should take turns in responding.

Self-Reflection

After the debate, write a short reflection on your performance and participation and send it to me via email. Please give a one-sentence comment on each of the following criteria:

1. Mastery of the material/preparation
2. Intellectual dexterity/ability to "think on your feet"
3. Delivery (ease in speaking from notes, speed, projection, confidence, posture, etc.)
4. Time management during the debate