

Urban Debate League – March 2017 Curriculum

We know many of you will be unavailable to coach for 2 weeks during Spring Break, so this curriculum is designed to be flexible and less extensive than other months to allow you to condense it into 2-3 weeks if need be. The topic for this month is environmental issues, and the next tournament is on Friday, March 31st.

Week 1 – Context and Key Players

- Overview for the month (10 minutes)
 - Make sure your kids know the upcoming tournament dates and about potential Spring Break absences.
 - Next UDL tournament: March 31st
 - Osterweis: Sunday, April 9th
 - Use the email invitation that should've been sent to all coaches to provide additional information:
 - Different format
 - Free breakfast/lunch
 - Novice and varsity divisions
 - YDA feedback
 - If a member of your coaching team will be available over Spring Break, let your students know that practice will continue as normal. If not, try to find a replacement coach to sub in for you or let your students know when practice will resume as normal.
- General background information (15 minutes)
 - Start by having students brainstorm potential subjects of environmental debates
 - Ex. Climate change, deforestation, pollution, toxic waste, renewable energy, water quality
 - Spend a few minutes discussing what students already know about these (or other) environmental topics and their thoughts on the current state of environmental issues in American policy debates
 - Provide any background information that's necessary – specific statistics aren't particularly important for our purposes, but just a general understanding of the scope and severity of environmental issues
- Key Players and Incentives (25 minutes)
 - Have students brainstorm the different groups that could be impacted by different environmental policies or who play a role in formulating them
 - Developed countries
 - Developing countries
 - Oil-dependent countries
 - Renewable energy companies (and their workers)
 - Coal or oil companies (and their workers)
 - Any other relevant industries, like in the case of pesticides or transportation
 - The world population
 - The average citizen of a developed country
 - The average citizen of a developing country
 - At-risk coastal populations
 - Etc.

- Now, have students spend time either individually or in groups coming up with the incentives for each particular group in the context of environmental debates. Emphasize the difference between short-term and long-term incentives, and the different incentives between groups.
 - For example, it is in everyone's best interest to combat climate change in the long-run. However, average citizens are far more likely to make decisions based on short-term incentives like job prospects or the economy because having a basic income is more salient/more instrumental to their survival in the short-term.
 - The impacts of the natural disasters caused by climate change will do much more harm to poor or at-risk groups globally, and therefore their incentives to fight climate change are stronger than richer or more developed groups that have more power to reduce environmental impacts.
 - Discuss the roles developed and developing countries have played in environmental destruction in the past why many developing governments believe it is unfair to force them to curb carbon emissions
 - Briefly discuss the implications of oil-dependency on international relations and economic stability and different proposed solutions to becoming self-sufficient – investing in renewable energy vs drilling for oil ourselves
- Activity (10 minutes)
 - Have students assume the roles of one/many of the key players discussed above. Provide examples of national or international environmental policies and have students react/respond as their player would.
 - Briefly discuss how use knowledge of incentives would be useful in debates to convince a judge why a certain policy would make a player respond in a way that supports your side

Week 2 – Climate Agreements and Government Obligations

- History of climate agreements (20 minutes)
 - See what students already know about international agreements to combat climate change
 - Provide necessary background information
 - Paris Agreement
 - Adopted by over 130 United Nations signatories in 2016, goes into effect in 2020
 - Nations agree to lower their carbon emissions by an “ambitious and progressive” NDC (nationally-determined contribution)
 - Unlike with past agreements of the type, nations get to set their own goals
 - Trump team currently deciding whether or not to withdraw from the agreement
 - Some criticisms of the agreement are that it won't have a meaningful impact on climate change (the goal is to limit global warming to 1.5-2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels but it's unclear whether this could be accomplished or whether this would be enough) and that it

would have disastrous economic impacts by raising gas/electricity prices

- Kyoto Protocol
 - UN agreement signed in 1997 to limit greenhouse gas emissions by a level determined for each country within the agreement
 - Legally binding commitments (under international law)
 - Applied almost exclusively to developed/industrialized countries
 - US Senate refused to ratify because they didn't want to sign an agreement that exempted developing nations and would harm the American economy
- Brainstorm some of the difficulties in the creation and implementation of international agreements like this, drawing on some of the inequities discussed last week
- Discuss the obligations of a government in curbing climate change (20 minutes)
 - To what degree are governments responsible for protecting resources shared with other countries, for example if a construction project was beneficial for a certain country but caused environmental problems for a different country, should the first country proceed?
 - How should governments weigh economic benefits against environmental harms?
 - Who should pay for environmental disasters in the event that culpability is unclear?
 - Is spending money on conservation or the development of renewable energies a good use of public funds?
- Activity (20 minutes)
 - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MzMhLqind3zdE0E5n_8xuYiDQeYYgicVXrY4ZDhxacM/edit
 - Play the game “Alley Debate” from the link above with the resolution “The United States should withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement”, one of the resolutions in Week 4, or one of your own.

Week 3 – Keystone Pipeline, Carbon Tax, and Practice with Arguments

- For each of the two topics below, do the following (30 minutes each)
 - See what students already know
 - Fill in any necessary gaps in background information
 - Spend 5-10 minutes brainstorming potential arguments on both sides of the issue
 - Have each student choose an argument and spend 5 minutes preparing it as it were part of a speech, with claim, warrant, and impact
 - Have students take turns presenting their arguments; allow POIs (review what POIs are if necessary)
- Keystone Pipeline
 - Oil pipeline system planned to originate in Canada and run through Illinois, Oklahoma, and Texas
 - Rejected by Obama but permitted by Trump
 - Will deliver hundreds of thousands of gallons of oil to Midwest and Texas refineries
 - Serves as path to market for oil from Alberta, Canada – it's a special type of oil that releases 17% more emissions than regular oil extraction, would contribute to climate change

- Potential for oil spills
- Would create 42000 jobs during construction period and then 35 permanent jobs
- Would contribute \$3.4 billion to US economy
- Carbon Tax
 - An additional tax of fossil fuel users intended to limit carbon emissions by disincentivizing fossil fuel usage, could be levied against consumer (on gas or electricity bills) or producers of fossil fuels
- Feel free to use a topic of your own choice or one of the examples listed below of students aren't interested in these topics

Week 4 – Pre-Tournament Practice

- Hold debate rounds on an environmental topic of your choice, preferably one that lends itself to a variety of frameworks and necessitates weighing between comp. Below are some potential topics, but feel free to use one of your own if you've already discussed this or students don't show interest. Provide whatever context is necessary!
 - This House supports movements to divest from fossil fuels
 - This House would provide subsidies for renewable energy companies
 - This House believes that climate change is the most important problem our world faces
 - This House would ban chemical pesticides
- To ensure audience participation, ask students to flow the speeches even if they're not debating. If the speakers feel comfortable, consider discussing positive feedback and constructive criticism after each speech and/or round.