

Unit 4 - Modern Moral Issues

Roundtable Discussion Guidelines

For our final unit in Ethics and Morality, we will be looking at some of the most pressing moral issues in our society today. For each issue, we will first look at contemporary research and the Catholic Church's teaching on the topic together as a class, and then several of you will hold a roundtable "debate" on specific topics related to the issue.

The main goal of these debates is to help you learn how to participate in a dialogue on a difficult issue, as well as to provide a space for you to explore various sides of these issues in the classroom. Too often, we merely listen to those who agree with us instead of considering different viewpoints and finding ways we may have been close-minded or even misinformed.

For this reason, you must come prepared for BOTH sides of the issue presented. Your group will be responsible for thoroughly discussing and examining both sides of the issue. The purpose of this is twofold: it helps you learn how to listen to and value those who hold positions different than yourself, and it ultimately strengthens your own position - if you know both sides of the issue well, it can only make your own arguments stronger.

Debate Format:

On the day of your discussion, you will create a half-circle with the other members of your group and lead the class in the roundtable debate according to the following (flexible) format:

- 7.5 minutes - Arguments for Side 1 (including counter-arguments)
- 7.5 minutes - Arguments for Side 2 (including counter-arguments)
- 10-12 minutes - Open Debate for Both Sides
- 5-7 minutes - Questions/Audience Participation

Note: All members of the group are expected to contribute to all parts of the debate.

Debate Write-Up:

To prepare for your roundtable debate, you must come prepared with a 2-3 page "Wright Brothers"-style write-up of the issue. Your write-up should include:

- 2-3 paragraphs summarizing the issue and each side's major claims
- 2 strongest and most convincing supporting arguments for each side, based on evidence and research (4 total)
 - To prove the strength of your arguments, you should also address any counterarguments to these arguments and include how one might reply to them
- 2-3 questions "worthy of debate" on this issue - what are some things that we should all consider when thinking about this issue, and why? What makes them the central questions of the issue?
- Sources Cited page (please cite using MLA formatting throughout the paper)

You will be graded both on the quality of your write-up (yay for you introverts out there) AND the quality of your debate (yay for the extroverts). Debate expectations will be handed out in class.

Observer's Reports:

On days you are not debating, you are still expected to actively participate by taking notes and asking questions. You will be expected to write two "observer's reports" (~1.5 pages) detailing:

- a. what you saw and heard during the debate
- b. what the most convincing arguments on both sides were
- c. which side you ultimately sided with on the issue and why

(should be the largest part of your report)

Observer reports are not meant to be formal papers - rather, they simply show me that you were engaged in the discussion, learned something meaningful about both sides, and took the time to carefully consider the moral implications of the issue.

Debate Topics and Schedule (Probably):

May 11 - Is Abortion Morally Justifiable?

May 12 - Is Capital Punishment Morally Justifiable?

May 18 - Is Drug Use (Both Legal and Illegal) Morally Justifiable?

May 19 - Is Torture (and Warfare) Morally Justifiable?

OR

Is Eating Meat Morally Justifiable?

OR

Is Pornography Morally Justifiable?

OR

Is Government Morally Obligated to Provide Healthcare for Its Citizens?