

BPBE 400

Structured Controversy Guidelines

Structured Controversy is a cooperative learning activity that is organized as an informal debate. By the conclusion of the Structured Controversy, you should be able to:

- Develop and use strategies for finding reliable sources of information
- Effectively summarize a source of information
- Evaluate the credibility of a source of information
- Acknowledge the multiple perspectives that inform a controversial issue
- Determine your own evidence-based stance on a controversial issue

Students will be assigned to small groups of 4 people for this process.

Step One:

Your group will work together to identify the focus, or topic, of the Structure Controversy (it must be related to the course theme of feeding 9 billion people). As part of this, your group will also develop a resolution statement (“be it resolved”) that will guide your individual preparations for the Structured Controversy process (for example: “Be it resolved that the social assistance program should be dismantled and replaced by a basic income so that all families can afford to meet their nutritional needs”).

Step Two:

Each group member will prepare for the Structured Controversy by finding, reading (listening, or watching), and summarizing 2 – 3 sources that provide different perspectives on the “be it resolved” statement. Perspectives can include individual (role-based) perspectives, group perspectives, or disciplinary perspectives. It should be your goal to identify evidence and arguments that you can use in support of at least two perspectives regarding the issue, as you will need to be prepared to speak to those perspectives during the Structured Controversy exercise (it is okay for you to bring copies of your support materials with you to use during the Structured Controversy). *It is essential that you come to the Structured Controversy class period well prepared.*

Step Three:

A class period will be dedicated to the Structured Controversy exercise. During the exercise, you’ll be expected to present and/or argue for at least two perspectives on the issue that the group has chosen. The purpose of Structured Controversy is not to “win” a debate, but to uncover the various perspectives and arguments pertaining to the issue in question.

Rules of the Game

1. The purpose of this exercise is not to “beat” your team members, but to uncover the many perspectives and arguments pertaining to the question/controversy.
2. The purpose of this exercise is to learn more about the scope of the topic that you have chosen in relation to the theme of “feeding 9 billion people.”
3. One person speaks at a time. **There is absolutely no interrupting by any other group member when someone has the floor.** You may take notes on what is being presented by colleagues with another perspective, and you may address these issues only when it is your turn to speak.
4. **Time frames will be strictly adhered to.** Your job is to state your argument or present your evidence in as clear and concise a manner as possible.
5. You are allowed to refer to your reading/support materials, but remember you have only a short time (3 – 4 minutes) to present your perspective.
6. Every person must speak at least once during both rounds.

Instructions and Time Allocations

Activity	Timing
1. Discussion with team about your personal stance on the issue	5 minutes
2. Reflection and preparation	3 minutes
3. Each team member summarizes one perspective on the issue, and the evidence that supports that perspective	4 x 4 minutes each = 16 minutes total
4. Discussion / debate about the merits of the evidence supporting each perspective	10 minutes
5. Reflection and preparation	3 minutes
6. Each team member summarizes a different perspective on the issue, and the evidence that supports that perspective	4 x 3 minutes each = 12 minutes total
7. Open discussion – informal	5 minutes
8. Meet back and debrief with large group	15 - 20 minutes
9. Completion of individual reflective template	5 minutes

Written Reflection (Individual)

After the Structured Controversy exercise, you will be required to submit a written reflection on the experience. Guidelines for this written portion of the assignment are:

- Summarize the supporting evidence and arguments for at least two perspectives on the issue discussed by your group during the Structured Controversy exercise
- Outline your own personal opinion on the resolution, including a description of the evidence that supports your opinion
- Describe whether or not your opinion changed during the Structured Controversy process. Did you change your mind? Why or why not?

The reflection should be 1 – 2 pages in length.

Grading Rubric

Criterion	Mark Allocation
Written assignment	
Effective summary of at least two perspectives on the issue	/2
Personal opinion is supported by adequate evidence	/2
Change in opinion (or not) is supported by adequate evidence	/2
Evidence of critical reflection and assessment	/2
Effective structure, tone, and polish in writing	/2
Engagement in the Structured Controversy exercise	
Peer evaluation average	/5
TOTAL /15	