

HIST 2112 – DR. CHURELLA

THE DEBATES: STRUCTURE AND GROUND RULES

Each Student will be assigned a debate topic and the name of a historical personage associated with that topic. When you receive your assigned topic and character, you will need to do the following:

FIRST, go to the web page corresponding to your topic. Locate your character. You will see immediately your character's stance on the issue under discussion. Read the biography of your character. As you do so, think about some preliminary questions. What factors helped to shape that character's life, attitudes, and opinions? Why does the character believe and act the way that he/she does? Remember, your goal during the debate is to become that character. The debates are about your character's opinions, not your own. In fact, you will probably learn more by acting out beliefs that are not your own than by finding a character with whom you agree. Finally, remember that these are historical figures and products of their times, not ours. J. Edgar Hoover could not possibly have anticipated the 9/11 terrorist attacks, for example.

SECOND, read ALL of the "General Overview" material that is linked to the web page for this topic. This will help you to understand the issue under discussion, the way in which the participants related to one another, and the historical context in which the debate is taking place. If you wish to do further research on your character. Just make sure you are using good sources created by reputable scholars in each field. The material may cause you to develop strong opinions regarding a particular topic. That is fine, but remember to focus on your character's attitudes toward those events, rather than your personal feelings.

THIRD, read the biographies of all of the other characters, both those on your side and those on the opposing side. Get to know these people. Remember that they held strong and sincere opinions about the issues under debate. They were NOT apathetic, so you should not be apathetic either! Be forceful, enthusiastic, even emotional, but remember to control those emotions and avoid relying on stereotypes. In other words, be passionate but be rational, and respect the opinions of others.

FOURTH, each debate team will need to meet at least twice to prepare for the in-class debate. In those meetings, each team should do the following:

- Determine which presenters will cover each of the broad thematic components of your argument. In other words, one presenter (in character) might want to stress the possibility that civil liberties have undermined patriotism during the Red Scare, while another might want to emphasize (in character) the possibility that civil liberties jeopardize national security.
- Make certain that every person has a speaking role, of equal duration and importance. It is important that every member of the debate team participates equally in the debate. No one should be in a situation where they say “Well, my colleague covered that issue already, so I won’t be able to say much else about it.”
- Determine the order in which each character speaks. Each character’s presentation should logically follow the words of the previous presenter, and set the stage for the presentation that is to follow.
- You will also need to discuss ways to anticipate the arguments put forth by the opposing team, and think about ways to rebut those arguments. **THAT IS WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO READ ALL THE MATERIAL!**

FIFTH, on the day of the debate:

- Each speaker on the first team will introduce himself or herself **AS THEIR CHARACTER** – this should take between 30 seconds and 1 minute (and remember, you can only tell us about your life up to that historical moment, as you will have no way of knowing what will happen to you ten or twenty years later).
- Each character on the first team will then have no more than 5 minutes to state their main argument. You will be acting in character, but you will need to phrase your arguments in your own words, as if the historical figure is speaking extemporaneously through you. It is not appropriate or acceptable to read quotes from your character’s speeches! To avoid the temptation to do this, each member of the team is allowed to bring in **ONE** index card containing the main points your character would emphasize. Use your card wisely, as it will be the only supplemental material that you will be able to use during the debate!

- While the members of the first team are giving their presentations, each member of the second team will be evaluating the performance of the first team. Each student will have his or her assessment of the other team's debate count toward his or her grade for the project.
- After every person on the first team has spoken, we will move on to the second team. Each member of the second team will give their presentation, following the guidelines listed above.
- While the members of the second team are giving their presentation, each member of the first team will be evaluating the performance of the second team. Each student will have his or her assessment of the other team's debate count toward his or her grade for the project.
- When everyone on the second team has spoken, participants on each team will ask questions of the members of the other team, and rebut arguments that members of the other team have made. Members of the audience may ask questions as well.
- Finally, each member of each team will rank the members of their team, based on their perceived level of effort in planning and implementing the team's debate.

Assessment

Individual performance:	50%
Team performance:	25%
Quality of your assessment sheet:	15%
Ranking provide by your teammates:	10%