

Class Debate

The following excerpt from page 55 of *The Soloist* by Steve Lopez suggests a possible debate topic for use as a class activity.

“Diagnosis, prescription. That’s the history of mental health treatment, and Ragins believes it has been a colossal failure. As he sees it, we’re not even really sure what labels like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder mean, nor do we have very strong evidence that medication is the best response.”

Activity:

After a brief introduction to the basic characteristics and strategies of debate, students can make practical use of their introductory information competency session at the library by conducting research in preparation for a classroom debate.

Objective of the activity:

1. Contemplate multiple views on a controversial issue.
2. Develop skills in supporting one's opinion with facts and examples.
3. Practice oral speaking skills and impromptu responses in a group discussion.

Debate topic:

Should medication always be considered as the best treatment for people who suffer from mental illness?

All students should prepare to argue both sides of the topic. On the assigned day of the debate, the instructor can have simultaneous debates or use another strategy. The following format may be used to structure the debate:

Affirmation:

Aff. Speaker 1: Gives the opening statement, a preview of the group's 3 main points and then speaks on point #1. (Time allowed: 1:30)

Aff. Speaker 2 will speak on point #2. (1:00)

Aff. Speaker 3 will speak on point #3. (1:00)

Aff. Speaker 4 will recap on points and conclude. (1:15)

Negation:

Neg. Speaker 1: Rebuts the points brought up, gives a preview of his side's 3 main points and speaks on point #1. (Time allowed: 1:30)

Neg. Speaker 2 will speak on point #2 (1:00)

Neg. Speaker 3 will speak on point #3 (1:00)

Neg. Speaker 4 will recap on said points and conclude. (1:15)

(If a team only has three members then the tasks of Speakers 3 and 4 should be performed by the same team member.)