

YES, FROM THE EVIDENCE IT LOOKS PRETTY LIKELY TO ME THAT WE'RE CAUSING GLOBAL WARMING ON A HORRIFIC SCALE. BUT WITH SCIENCE YOU DON'T NEED TO ARGUE. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO WINS THE DEBATE:-- IT'S ABOUT REALITY. BY JUST WAITING A LITTLE LONGER, WE'LL GET TO SEE WHO WAS RIGHT. IT FEELS UNETHICAL, BUT I FIND MYSELF WANTING TO KEEP QUIET ABOUT THE SCIENCE JUST TO KNOW FOR SURE. AS TERRIBLE AS IT SOUNDS, THE STATE OF THE WORLD ISN'T REALLY MY RESPONSIBILITY. I'M JUST THRILLED TO GET TO WATCH. IF THE SCIENTISTS ARE RIGHT -- AND IF WE KEEP PEOPLE FROM UNDERSTANDING JUST A LITTLE LONGER -- WE'LL ENJOY QUITE A RIDE. AND PRAGMATICALLY, ON THE OUTSIDE CHANCE THAT THEY'RE ALL WRONG, I GET SAVED THE EMBARRASSMENT OF HAVING SPOKEN UP.



HOW TO QUESTION EVERYTHING AND ARGUE WITH EVERYBODY

Amber Bennoui

Julian Halbertsma-Black

HI, I'M AMBER

- As you may have inferred by now, I have laryngitis and will only be contributing input when someone is extra-wrong
- I'm currently enrolled at Simmons College and am majoring in both physics and math
- I argue quite frequently...I believe this qualifies as experience
- My mother is a lawyer

WHAT IS THIS? I DON'T EVEN...

- In short, this is not your traditional debate class
- If you're not already familiar with xkcd, you will be by the last class
- No physical fighting

INTRODUCE YOURSELVES

- Name
- Grade
- Area in which you reside
- Something about which you'd like to argue

SYLLABUS REVIEW

- The syllabus is posted on ESP's website
- There will be a some research-based homework which, while not required, will assist you immensely in preparing for debates
- We suggest printing out a copy for reference

MIT HSSP

How to Question Everything and Argue with Everybody

Syllabus, Spring 2010

Instructors: Amber Bennoui and Julian Halbertsma-Black

Room: 1-273

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Description:

In this course, we will teach you how to think logically, spot mistakes, formulate opinions and change those opinions in the event of new information. This should allow you to rationally carry on (and win) a debate or argument about any issue while avoiding common fallacies.

This isn't your politician's debate course; sounding elitist and condescending is not only acceptable but it is encouraged!

Weekly Schedule:

April 17th –

- Introductions
- Icebreaker debate
- Review the syllabus
- Deductive reasoning in popular culture
- Guided debate
Are law enforcement cameras an invasion of privacy?

April 24th –

- Formulating arguments
- Choosing a side
- Deductive reasoning in popular culture
Famous presidential speeches
- Debate and discussion
Is global climate change man-made?

May 1st –

- Introduction to logic and logical fallacies
- Structured rebuttals
How to eliminate ambiguity by word choice and sentence structure
- Debate and discussion
Should animals be used for research?

May 8th –

- Classical rhetoric
- Rhetoric in popular culture
- Famous historical debates
- Debate and Discussion
Should cigarette smoking be banned?

May 15th –

- Topics to avoid
- How to lose
- SOMEONE IS WRONG ON THE INTERNET!
- Debate and discussion
Should English be the official language in the United States?

Recommended Reading:

Heinrichs, Jay. *Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can*

Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion. New York: Three Rivers, 2007. Print.

Hirschman, Albert O. *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy*. Cambridge,

Mass.: Belknap of Harvard UP, 1991. Print.

MEDIA CLIPS WILL BE SHOWN

- We intend to incorporate popular culture in our curriculum
 - Please have the permission slip signed by the next class so that your parents can give you consent to watch certain media (nothing that bad but we're required to do it for any clip above PG rating)

CLASS BREAKDOWN

- As you already know, this class is two hours long
 - The first half will consist of lecturing and reviewing the debate from the previous class
 - The second half will consist of debating each other
- There will be ten minute break in between BUT if you exceed that, we will start the debate without you
- You do not need to ask us to go to the bathroom



ICE BREAKER DEBATE

Is the rock alive?



While rocks aren't alive, The Rock is alive.

APPLICATION RESPONSES

- The most common point was that the use of cameras is acceptable in public places, where people have no assumption of privacy
- While this may be true, and is a good place to start your argument, it is not, in itself an argument
- In addition to saying that there is a line between security and invasion of privacy, one must explain where the line is

BASED ON MY ANALYSIS, I BELIEVE
THE GOVERNMENT FAKED THE PLANE
CRASH AND DEMOLISHED THE WTC
NORTH TOWER WITH EXPLOSIVES.



THE SOUTH TOWER,
IN A SIMULTANEOUS
BUT UNRELATED PLOT,
WAS BROUGHT
DOWN BY ACTUAL
TERRORISTS.

THE 9/11 TRUTHERS RESPONDED
POORLY TO MY COMPROMISE THEORY.

APPLICATION RESPONSES (...CONTINUED)

- Many responses included examples of unacceptable placement for cameras (changing rooms, bathrooms, in private residences).
- This is a good start, but does not elaborate sufficiently. In general they only provided a couple extremes
- Finding the precise line between acceptable and unacceptable surveillance requires examples regarding the gray area in the middle

APPLICATION RESPONSES (...CONTINUED)

- Some of the better responses said that cameras are acceptable wherever their job could be done by a police officer.
- This gives a specific yardstick by which to measure camera locations.
- Try to think of examples or other benchmarks you can use, as well as ones with which you disagree

APPLICATION RESPONSES (...CONTINUED)

- It is important to predict the arguments your opposition may make, but you shouldn't make those arguments for them
- Prepare a rebuttal but do not use it unless your opponent uses the argument you foresaw
- They may not think up of the argument even if it seems obvious to you – don't hand it to them

APPLICATION RESPONSES (...CONTINUED)

- Most important in this sort of question is the debate between privacy and security.
- Arguments about net neutrality and airport security have the same basis.
- There are several such dichotomies that underlie the majority of debates and arguments—freedom v. safety, personal responsibility v. government providence.
- Recognizing the basic debate behind a question is important in taking a position and formulating arguments

GOOD RESPONSES

- Took a clear position
- Used outside information, often the constitution, to back up their argument
- Used analogies to similar situations
- Described where the line between beneficial and invasive is, not just that it exists

INTERMISSION
(RUN AROUND THE
BUILDING FOR 10 MINUTES)

DEBATE DU JOUR

- Are law enforcement cameras an invasion of privacy?

MONTY PYTHON'S ARGUMENT CLINIC

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQFKtl6gn9Y>