

Prison Debate Assignment – SOC 100 and PSY 100

Readings:

“Does the Stanford Prison Experiment Help Explain the Effects of Imprisonment?” (for Debate 1)
Benko, Jessica. 2015. The Radical Humaneness of Norway’s Halden Prison,” *The New York Times*, March 26. (for Debate 2)

Overview:

The class will hold two debates (each between two teams) on overlapping topics related to the readings and the film *The Stanford Prison Experiment* (screened on Wednesday, November 28 at 12:30pm in M1113). Students will be placed onto teams, each of which will receive one of the following debate positions. In the SOC 100 class before the debate (Monday, December 3) students will receive 20 minutes to prepare their opening argument. Each team should come up with **three arguments supportive of their position**. The arguments should **refer to the readings** from the class.

Independently of the argument they are preparing, all students are expected to complete both readings, and will be quizzed on their familiarity with the reading on Friday, November 30. The debate will take place on **Wednesday, December 5** in Sociology. This assignment will be graded on a 10-point scale, with 3 points for the quiz, and 7 for participation in the debate. All students are expected to be active participants in the debate, on their teams and as audience members. Students will be graded on their participation. The format of the debate follows.

Debate 1:

The results of the Stanford Prison Experiment help to explain the effects of imprisonment and should inform US prison policy; social context is more important than personality in determining the behavior of prisoners and guards.

Vs.

The Stanford Prison Experiment was not realistic enough to teach us anything about real prison life; personality is more important than social context in determining the behavior of prisoners and guards.

Debate 2:

Prisons should aim at rehabilitation and follow a humane model more similar to Norway’s system than the current system in the US.

Vs.

Prisons are places of punishment; people who violate the law should be removed from society for the safety of society and to serve the cause of justice.

Debate format

Opening Statements and Clarification

Position 1 Opening statement with three arguments 5 minutes

Position 2 and audience Asks clarifying questions 2 minutes

Position 2 Opening statement with three arguments 5 minutes

Position 1 and audience Asks clarifying questions 2 minutes

Rebuttal

Position 1 Repeats their opponents' arguments and tells what is wrong with the positions 3 minutes

Position 2 Repeats their opponents' arguments and tells what is wrong with the positions 3 minutes

Audience Asks any questions and/or adds points to the positions' arguments 2 minutes

Summary

Position 1 Summarizes their position by addressing the opponents' counterpoints and explains why their argument is best 3 minutes

Position 2 Summarizes their position by addressing the opponents' counterpoints and explains why their argument is best 3 minutes

Audience Asks any questions and/or adds points to the positions' arguments 2 minutes