

## Oral Debate as Counterargument Winter 2014

### **Introduction:**

Professor Lazo has presented you with two readings that set up a debate on the use of “torture warrants” in exceptional cases. While not condoning the broad legalization of torture, Alan Dershowitz argues that the use of torture warrants in exceptional cases would guard against human rights violations. In response, Elaine Scarry argues that legality of torture in any form—exceptional or otherwise—would serve to normalize torture and directly conflict with the UN Convention against Torture.

### **Assignment:**

You will engage in this debate by responding to the following question:

### **Should a legal process of issuing torture warrants be implemented?**

“Team A” will answer in the affirmative

“Team B” will answer in the negative

### **Steps in the Process:**

- 1) Arrange a time to convene with your group to distribute your responsibilities and to determine additional meeting times.
- 2) Complete your Library Research Task, which will offer you more evidence from various sources.
- 3) Outline your argument, detailing claims, evidence (with key terms underlined) and counterarguments.
- 4) Practice your oral performance with your peers, asking them to offer counterarguments for your claims. You will be able to use notes during the debate, but you should be prepared to make clear claims, offer detailed and specific evidence, and articulate thoughtful warrants without the use of supplementary materials.

### **The Day of the Debate:**

Your in-class debate will be fairly informal. Each team will have 15 minutes to convene before the debate in order to collect evidence and discuss strategy. Each team will then choose two spokespersons to represent the team. Once the debate begins, the format for the debate will be as follows:

- 1) Opening Statement—Team A (2 minutes). This will be in the form of an **arguable thesis**.

Opening Statement—Team B (2 minutes). This will be in the form of an **arguable thesis**.

- 2) One minute for both teams to collaborate (team members will offer textual evidence for further counterarguments).
- 3) Response to Opening Statements—Team A (4 minutes)  
Response to Opening Statements—Team B (4 minutes)
- 4) One minute for both teams to collaborate
- 5) Response to Preceding Arguments—Team A (4 minutes)  
Response to Preceding Arguments—Team B (4 minutes)
- 6) One minute for both teams to collaborate
- 7) Response to Preceding Arguments—Team A (4 minutes)  
Response to Preceding Arguments—Team B (4 minutes)
- 8) One minute for both teams to collaborate
- 9) Concluding Statement—Team A (2 minutes)  
Concluding Statement—Team B (2 minutes)

- For each response, spokespersons will present an argument using textual evidence in order to support the team's primary claim. (quotations must be cited using both page and line numbers). Keep in mind that the best arguments will be supported by the strongest **warrants**.
- Spokespersons will also be responsible for transitioning between ideas—between a counterargument and the presentation of a new claim.
- A panel of three student judges will decide the winner based upon quality of evidence, succinctness of warrants, clarity of argument, and rhetorical persuasiveness.

**A successful individual performance will:**

- Clearly articulate claims, evidence, and warrants
- Exhibit responsiveness to counterarguments
- Cohere with the other group members' arguments while offering various, complementary perspectives that support the group's position

**A successful group debate performance will:**

- Transition well between individual segments, leading to a general cohesiveness of argument

- Produce a strong rhetorical effect by exhibiting a balanced use of ethos, logos, pathos