

**Discussion Guide for Campus Debate Watch Events**

Talking politics can be difficult, particularly in these hyper-partisan times. The goal is to discuss the debates in ways that are simultaneously robust and productive.

This guide for campus debate watch events is envisioned in three parts: before, during, and after. Below, you will find both instructions and recommended questions. Don't skip setting up group agreements! The questions are here as guidance; you do not need to ask every question.

**Start of the Event/Pre-Debate (30 minutes)**

Welcome, circle around and exchange names and role on campus (e.g., class level, political engagement).

Explain the role of the facilitator(s), the process for the debate watch including timeline and goals. Make sure participants know that the discussion will last for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes after the debate.

Set group agreements. To do this, have them written on several sheets of paper for each table and/or put them up on a screen and keep them visible. Ask the group to review and give you a thumbs up that they will adhere to them.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone's voice matters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disagreement is fine, but please don't personalize it</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidentiality: It's ok to share ideas, but not what individuals say</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We all share responsibility for the success of this group</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are offended, say so and say why</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share "airtime," don't dominate</li> </ul>

*Questions*

1. What brings you here? Why is tonight's debate important to you?
2. Are there any questions you hope the candidates will be asked? What are they?
3. What connects you to this election or these debates? Describe your participation, if any, in this election season.

**During Commercial Breaks (no set time)**

*Questions (optional)*

1. What are the highlights of the debate so far?
2. Are candidates answering the questions to your satisfaction? Why or why not?
3. Were there questions or follow-up probes that you were hoping to hear or hoping the moderators will get to?

**Post-Debate Discussion (60 minutes)**

1. How would you describe your reaction to the debate (probes might include, "hopeful," "frustrated," or "inspired")?
2. What are your key takeaways from the debate?
3. Did you hear anything tonight that surprised you or that was new, that you didn't already know?
4. What candidate statements, if any, resonated with you?
5. Were the moderators effective? What, if anything, could they have done differently?

6. What, if anything, was left unaddressed for you?
7. Has the debate changed your thinking on particular issues or topics? Which ones, and in what way?
8. (Suggested closing question) Will you vote in 2020? Registering to vote and voting this year might be complicated by changing election laws and options around mail-in and early voting. Do you have the information and plan you need to vote this year?

**Debrief the Process**

How did our discussion go for you? What worked, and what might you do differently next time?

THANK PARTICIPANTS FOR THEIR TIME.