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Ethics Cup Team Manager Training

Fall 2022





Our agenda

1. My background
2. The competition basics
3. Recruiting students and building interest
4. *Practice and preparation*
5. Background knowledge (case research and ethical theories/principles)
6. Q&A



1. My background

Involved in Ethics Cup predecessor (Ethics Bowl) in US since 2004

- University coach (two time nationals finalist, four time California regional winner)
- Regional university competition organizer
- Regional high school competition organizer
- Advisor to high school teams
- High school and university level judge and moderator
- Case writing committee



2. Competition basics

A case-based competition (12 cases)

Team-based (*important*)

Coin toss and case announcement

- team A: 2 minutes conferral, 6 minutes presentation
- team B: 1 minute conferral, 3 minutes commentary
- team A: 1 minute conferral, 3 minute response to commentary
- team A: 10 minute dialogue with judges

(A and B switch roles with a new case – cases not repeated)



3. Recruiting students and building interest

The Ethics Cup pitch

- As an exchange of ideas, resembles debate — but without the adversarial elements (collaborative – building toward the best position overall)
- Integrity (allowed to defend views you support)
- Opportunity for genuine teamwork
- A humanities ‘performance’ or showcase



3. Recruiting students and building interest

Who's drawn to the Cup

- 'debate dissidents' (find conventional debate adversarial, tense -- don't feel 'quick on their feet')
- civically minded

Ideally: **at least six students participating**, allowing you to do mock/simulated Cups



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Questions so far?



4. Practice and preparation

A case-based competition: begin with wide ranging discussions among students of each case

- initial discussions: 20 minutes or so/case?

Goal: identify central **conflicts** or disputes within each case

- Among *values* (e.g.: personal liberty vs. public safety)
- Among *parties* (e.g.: medical professionals vs. patients)
- Among *goals* (e.g.: low taxes vs. minimizing public debt)



4. Practice and preparation

Focus on Presentation phase (2/3 of preparation time)

- That's where the points are!
- Strong presentations generally yield strong response and dialogue (squads don't usually 'recover' from weak presentations)



4. Practice and preparation

The most effective presentations:

- Are crisply organized, with clear direction and divisions among parts (we'll X, X, we did X)
- Are tightly focused on ethically salient questions and issues
- Provide reasons for their main claims and conclusions
- Anticipate and answer *the strongest objection* to their claims and conclusions
- Have contributions from all team members



4. Practice and preparation

Dividing up the labor

Most students cannot master the details of 12 cases.

- Appoint a case lead and case ‘second’ (or a 3-person case committee), based on student interest
- Set up meetings for these case pairs/committees



4. Practice and preparation

Work toward an overall *stance* on the case

- what's centrally important here from an ethical perspective

Offer an analysis – don't answer the study questions
'market list style'



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Questions about preparing presentations?



4. Practice and preparation

Other phases: commentary, response, dialogue

**This is a listening competition
as much as a speaking competition!**

(note taking!)



4. Practice and preparation

Other phases: commentary, response, dialogue

Commentary

- *not* your 3-minute presentation
 - make 2-3 points well, not a dozen points badly
 - critique content, not presentation/style/speaking
 - be constructive: ‘your position strengthened by’
 - objections/criticisms OK, but
 - express in a forceful, measured tone (‘unconvincing’)
 - should be balanced by some points of agreement/praise
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4. Practice and preparation

Other phases: commentary, response, dialogue

Response

- opponents may ‘throw spaghetti’ — respond to 2-3 most substantive points
- absorb constructive suggestions
- address objection(s)



4. Practice and preparation

Other phases: commentary, response, dialogue

Dialogue

- confer after each judge Q – 10-15 seconds
- focus on clarifying what you've previously said – no new ideas or arguments (judges reward teams that know their own position well, even if judges disagree with it)
- view it as an opportunity to strengthen your own position



Questions about

- **commentary**

- **response**

- **dialogue?**



4. Practice and preparation

Three keys to team preparation

1. Learn how to use conferral time effectively:

- Not the time to debate the issues!
- Identify ideas, claims, evidence to be used
- Assign roles

Managers: during practices, eavesdrop on team conferral – critique this in addition to the presentation



4. Practice and preparation

Three keys to team preparation

2. Work toward practicing under competition conditions (mock Cups/simulations).

- Strong focus on presentations initially – add in commentary, response, dialogue gradually
- Cup is ‘naked’ — no notes or materials. Reduce students’ available resources over time.
- Reduce timings: give 3-4 minutes for conferral and 8 minute presentation, then reduce to ‘game tempo’



5. Background knowledge

Three keys to team preparation

3. Nerves, anxiety, etc.

Underscore: *no one in the room is rooting for you to fail*

- judges hope for a lively, substantial exchange
- opponents hope to defeat a *well-prepared, worthy* team



4. Practice and preparation

Factual background to cases

Should students research factual background on cases?

A little, but:

- the details of the particular examples in the case may not be all that important (addressing ethical controversies, not issuing legal verdicts)
- the research should be purposeful (can get lost in the facts – which facts matter *ethically*)



5. Background knowledge

Ethical theories

Should students learn about and draw upon ethical theories (utilitarianism, Kantianism, virtue ethics, etc.) in the competition?

Maybe. Some cautions:

- Not a philosophy competition
 - You're responsible for everything you say – and ethical theory is hard!
 - Some judges will be impressed, others less so
 - Alternative ways to justify: reasons, principles, analogies
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Any further questions?



Thanks very much for your time and attention!

Subsequent manager trainings:

Nov 1: Reasoning and Argumentation Strategies in the Ethics Cup

Dec 6: Competitive Success in the Ethics Cup