

In-Class Debates in ECO302/303

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Outline

- Overview of ECO302/303
- Making a case for In-class debate
- Implementation of In-class debate
- Share approach/experience with debates in ECO302/303
- Evaluate the success of debates in ECO302/303
- Gather feedback and suggest improvements

Back Story for ECO302/303

- TA for World Economic History at Uni of Warwick during PhD
→ 'Organically' introduced debate into existing tutorials to improve engagement
- Lecturer for World Economic History at Warwick during/after PhD
→ Restructured all economic history tutorials around debate
- Lecturer for British Econ History, Quantitative Econ History, Interwar Econ History at Cambridge
→ Restructured supervision material around suggested debate topics
→ Delivered small group supervisions utilising debate as Clare Fellow
- Arrived at UofT 2017/18 and developed ECO302 World Econ History before 1914 & ECO303 World Econ History after 1914 in 2018/19

Characteristics of ECO302/303

- Enrolment:
 - ECO302 (Fall) - 24 students, ECO303 (Winter) - 37 students
- Student type:
 - Politics and Economics Specialists, Econ Specialists, Double Majors Commerce/Econ
- Contact:
 - 2 hour lecture and 1 hour tutorial per week
- Assessment:
 - 35% Final Exam, 15% Rough Essay, 20% Final Essay, 20% Live Debate, 10% Online Debates
- Challenges?
 - Numerous Journal Readings, Essay Writing, Participation/Engagement, Economics vs. History, Grading Hours/Tutorial Hours

Topics covered in ECO302

- Lectures 1 & 2 - Intro & Tools for Quantitative Econ History
 - ▶ Introduction, Growth Theories & Tools, Models of LR Growth
- Lectures 3 & 4 - Pre-Modern Growth
 - ▶ The Great Divergence, The European Miracle
- Lectures 5 & 6 - The Industrial Revolution
 - ▶ What Caused The Industrial Revolution? (Supply & Demand)
 - ▶ Technology, Agriculture, Proto-Industry, The Industrious Revolution
- Lectures 7 & 8 - Empire and Exploitation
 - ▶ Triangular Trade, The British Empire, Dependency Theories
- Lectures 9 & 10 - The Standards of Living Debate
 - ▶ Real Wages, Anthropometrics, Child Labour, Inequality
- Lectures 11 & 12 - Victorian Failure & Success
 - ▶ British Failure?, Rise of the USA, The Neo-Europeans

Topics covered in ECO303

- Lectures 1 & 2 - Intro & Tools for Quantitative Econ History
 - ▶ Introduction, Growth Theories & Tools, Models of LR Growth
- Lectures 3 & 4 - Globalisation
 - ▶ First Wave Globalism and the Neo-Europes, Globalism & Imperialism
- Lectures 5 & 6 - Interwar Instability
 - ▶ Econ of WWI & WWII, The First Great Recession, The Great Depression, The Post-War Settlement
- Lectures 7 & 8 - Japan/Korea, China, India & Asian Resurgence
 - ▶ The Japanese Economic Miracle, The East Asian Developmental States, The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis
- Lectures 9 & 10 - Latin American Success & Failure
 - ▶ The Washington Consensus, The Lost Decades, ISI & SLI
- Lectures 11 & 12 - African Development: Institutions vs. Geography
 - ▶ The Resource Curse? Legacy of Slave Trade? The Death of Distance?

What are the Learning Outcomes for ECO302/303?

The short-term objective of acquiring knowledge should be tempered with the long-term goal of training the mind to think analytically and critically. (Vo and Morris [2006])

Short-Term

- 1 Engage students in the readings (Historiography matters too!)
- 2 Have students retain more of the course content (key events in Economic History)
- 3 Develop a more nuanced understanding of the subject (why events occurred using Economic Theory)
- 4 Expose them to a variety of viewpoints on controversial subjects

Long-Term

- 1 Critical thinking in economics
- 2 Creativity and learning new skills

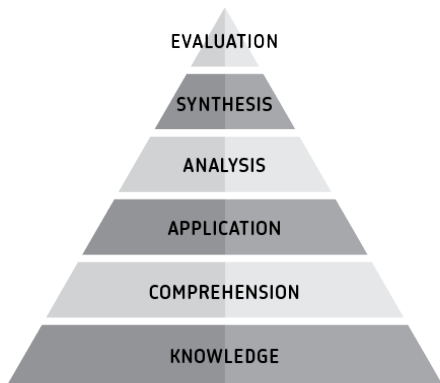
Making a Case for Debates

The value of the debate element in the educational process emanates from the premise that teaching (focusing on the transmission of knowledge) and educating (focusing on the transmission of long-term skills and attitude) are two sides of the same coin. To the extent that stimulating critical thinking on the part of the learner is an essential part of the mind-cultivating process, debating definitely has a role to play in collegiate education. (Vo and Morris [2006])

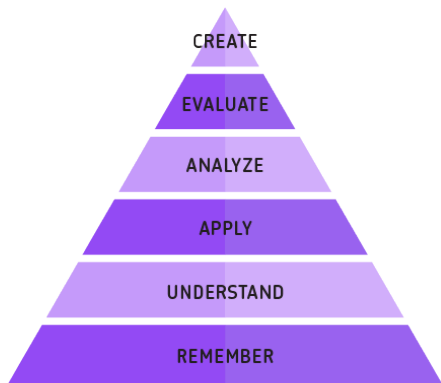
Why turn to debating?

- Historical precedent
- Educating vs. Teaching
- Active vs. Passive Learning
- Novel pedagogical technique in Economics
- Easily employed to satisfy all stages of Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy



1956



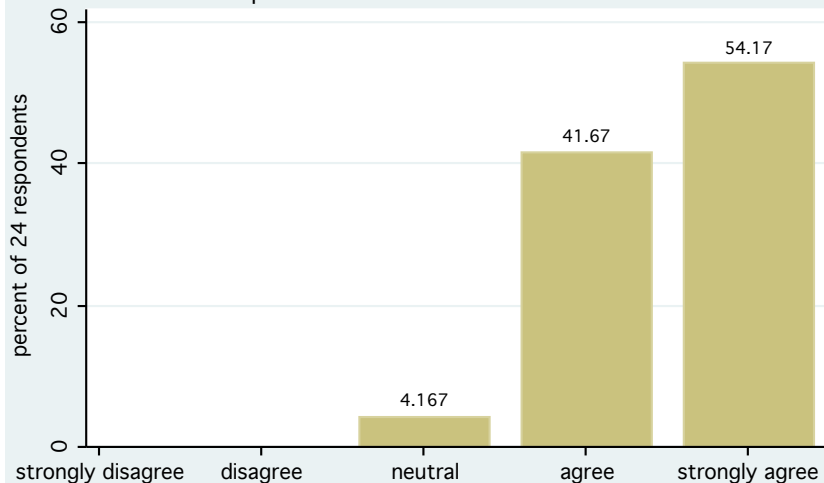
2001

⇒ Debating is an ideal pedagogical tool for learning outcomes!

Do debates help them understand the course content?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

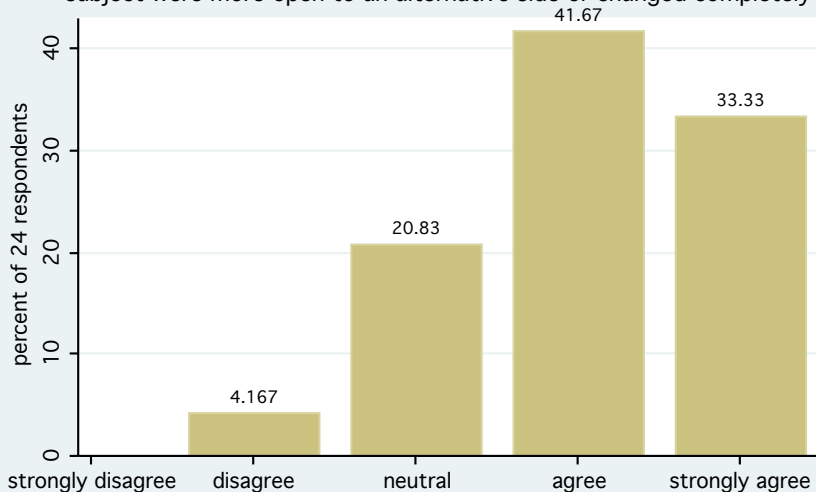
Having participated in debates I believe they helped me understand the course content



Do debates help them understand subject complexity?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

Having participated in the debates I found my views on the subject were more open to an alternative side or changed completely



Critical Thinking via Debates

'Well known' components of higher order thinking (Keller et al. [2001]):

- 1 **Analysis**
- 2 **Synthesis/Evaluation**
- 3 **Creation**

How is this achieved in my debates?

- Students **analyse** journal articles on both sides of a major debate in economic history and examine facts
- Students **synthesize** economic theory with empirical evidence into coherent argument supporting one side of the debate
- Student debaters are challenged by student audience and tutorial instructor on the arguments they produce to **evaluate** flaws
- Students in audience **evaluate** each others arguments in online debate
- Students **create/formulate** thesis and arguments based on debates

Evidence debate works in Economics?

TABLE 1. Students' Responses to Questionnaire on Class Debate

Statement	Course					
	Macroeconomic Principles, <i>n</i> = 31		Microeconomic Principles, <i>n</i> = 66		Total, <i>N</i> = 97	
	% Disagree	% Agree	% Disagree	% Agree	% Disagree	% Agree
1. The debate adds to my learning and understanding of this economics course.	7	83**	17	66**	14	71**
2. Generally speaking, the debate is helpful for my understanding of economic problems and issues.	7	90**	12	69**	11	76**
3. The debate makes this economics course more interesting and exciting.	7	79**	32	37	24	50
4. The debate makes me see the real-world relevance of this course better.	14	83**	9	72**	11	76**
5. The debate may help me get a better grade in this course.	7	83**	6	75**	6	78**
6. The debate may not help me get a better grade, but it helps me learn more about economics.	38	34	22	37	27	36
7. The debate helps me improve my research and paper-writing skills.	14	69*	20	46	18	53
8. The debate teaches me to think more critically.	10	72**	12	55	12	61*
9. The debate helps me learn how to analyze a real-world issue and how to draw meaningful conclusions.	10	79**	8	69**	9	72**
10. The debate makes my educational experience at Winthrop University fuller and richer.	10	52	31	32	24	38

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

Source: Vo and Morris [2006]

Evidence debate works in Economics?

Using both qualitative and quantitative data...we suggest that the class debates were an effective tool to stimulate students critical thinking on assumptions and outcomes of the textbook neoclassical model to the analysis of a real-world problem. The debates provoked discussions on human values, the role of social norms and institutions, the distribution of wealth and power, and the normative aspects of societal well-being. (Provencher and Ramnarain [2018]).

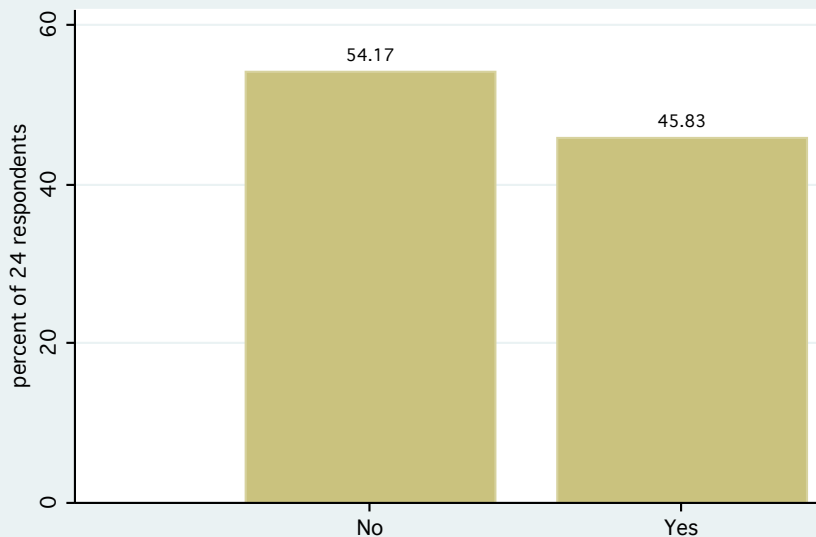
Table 3: Self-Assessment Survey Results. Percentage of Students in Strong Agreement or Agreement that a Learning Outcome was Achieved ($N = 196$).

Learning self-assessment	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)
Debate allowed me to critically analyze and interpret economic data	42	45
Debate enabled me to apply economic reasoning to the analysis of the topic under discussion	39	49
Debate helped me appreciate the limitations of neoclassical microeconomics in real-world situations	49	44
Debate alerted me to the ethical and historical dimensions of economic dilemmas	37	50
Structure and format of the debate were suitable for unpacking the central issues related to the topic	41	47

Source: Provencher and Ramnarain [2018]

How ready are most students for debates?

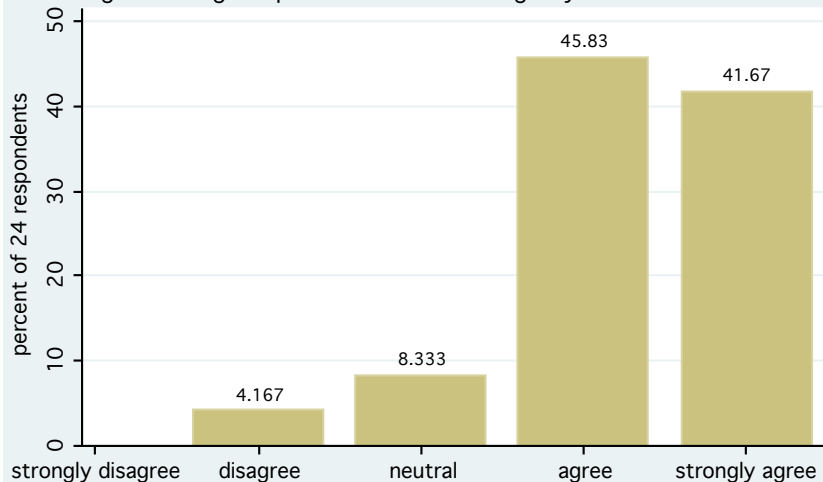
Did you have any debate experience before ECO302/303?



How comfortable are most students with debates?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

After reading the syllabus but before the first debate I felt debates would be a good change of pace and an interesting way for us to learn content



Suggested Implementation from Literature

- 1 Full Debate Format (Vo and Morris [2006]) → Tutorial
 - ▶ Select an appropriate debate topic at the beginning of term
 - ▶ Divide the class into debate teams
 - ▶ Provide outline with major debating points to guide team members in their research and deliberations
 - ▶ Require each team member to work separately to investigate the debate topic and write a short paper to synthesize position
 - ▶ Ask members of each team to work together to come up with the best arguments and support for their teams position
 - ▶ Let the opposing teams debate near the end of term
- 2 Constructive Controversy Format (Johnson et al. [2000]) → Lecture
 - ▶ Divide class into small groups (4-6 students)
 - ▶ Teams of 2-3 'opposing' students per group
 - ▶ Short time to research & construct arguments
 - ▶ Discuss and synthesize positions together
 - ▶ Repeat after switching sides or swapping teams between groups

Structure of Debate

Phases suggested by literature generally :

- Constructive (A, N)
- Rebuttal (A, N)
- Conclusion (A, N)
- Resolution (Audience/Moderator)

Phases suggested by Pernecky for economics debates (Pernecky [1997]):

- Affirmative Constructive
- Negative Constructive
- Rebuttal: Interactive
- Class Interaction: Questions of Participants and Comments

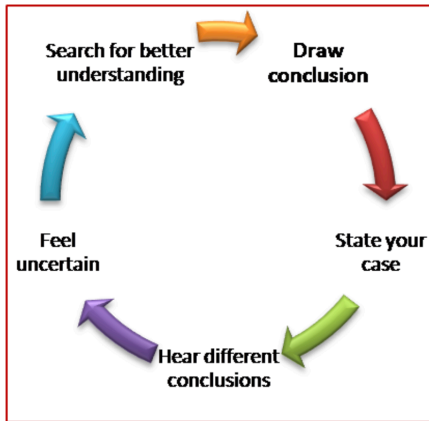
Debate vs. Constructive Controversy

STRUCTURE	TIME
Affirmative Opening Statement	5 minutes
Negative Opening Statement	5 minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal	4 minutes
Negative Rebuttal	4 minutes
Crossfire	3 minutes
Moderator Questioning	3 minutes
Affirmative Closing Statement	3 minutes
Negative Closing Statement	3 minutes
Prep Time *	2 minutes
Judges' Feedback & Comments **	4 minutes
TOTAL DEBATE TIME	30-40 minutes

*Debaters may use prep time throughout the round at their discretion.

**Some qualifying competitions may choose to omit this part of the debate.

Constructive Controversy Cycle



Source: <https://www.reaganfoundation.org/education/scholarship-programs/great-communicator-debate-series/debate-resources/>

Grading/Feedback

Assessment of debate (Vo and Morris [2006]):

- The debate score should be an average of an individual and team scores for the debate
- Each student receives an individual research debate paper score
- Each team receives a debate performance score that will apply equally
- Primary criteria are the quality of arguments, the creative use of course material, and the ability to articulate ideas

Assessment of debate (Pernecky [1997]):

- Assessment is based on the use of theory, the extensiveness of the research, and the overall arguments, including rebutting
- Assessment is based on individual evaluation of performance
- Best to minimize intervention try not to point out mistakes in front of the class during or after the debate but rather in writing

Initial Debate Setup in ECO302/303

Before tutorials:

- Primary debate questions are chosen
- One journal article is chosen to represent each side of the debate
- Secondary questions are chosen that will help debaters focus ideas
- Additional articles or book chapters are chosen to broaden debate

Introduction tutorial:

- Students are given a handout for each tutorial debate with questions
- Students select the debate topic they will take
- Using an online signup (google sheets), students select side of the debate and the resulting teams of 3-4 are generated
- Students are asked to introduce themselves and chat with team

Example Tutorial:

<https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/51639/files/1214298/>

Structure of Debate in ECO302/303

Phases in ECO302/303 tutorials:

- 1 Team A presents its arguments, with 5 mins taken per student, followed by Team B
- 2 Team A is allowed to pose a challenge to the other teams main arguments and Team B can respond
- 3 Team B is allowed to pose a challenge to the other teams arguments and Team A can respond
- 4 Audience (non-presenting students) are allowed to pose questions to either team
- 5 Students in audience engage in an online debate with one another concurrent with live tutorial debate
- 6 Instructor 'cleans up' and summarizes the results of the debate

How is debate assessed in ECO302/303?

- Teams produce a summary handout (instead of individual research papers) which is graded with team performance during the debate
- All students in a team receive the same grade reflecting team performance in the presentation phase and rebutting phase, as well as the handout quality
- Debates are worth 20% of a students final grade
- Debates form one major component in the scaffolding process
- Students receive an additional 10% of final grade for participation in the online Kialo debates

Scaffolding in ECO302/303

How debates contribute to scaffolding:

- Debate question is chosen as central to each topic
- Debates occur before content is covered in lecture
- Options for term essay questions match the debate questions
- Students submit a lower stakes rough essay worth 15% of final grade
- Students submit a higher stakes final essay worth 20% of final grade
- Final exam includes short answer and essay style questions from debate topics
- Debate serves as opportunity to research and test arguments for essays/final exam and receive immediate feedback

How much feedback do I provide them?

Example of feedback on team performance for debate receiving 70% grade:

Outlined the case well to start the debate, could have then moved more quickly on to main points against State Led Industrialisation (SLI) -Life cycle of SLI was discussed with some emphasis on failures at the end stage -Would have liked a comparison with Asian Developmental States in terms of the life cycle and how that played out differently in Latin America -Labour mkt issues in SLI were discussed well with some case studies given -Would have liked the presentation to have been less narrative overall and had points brought back to the question/thesis -Empirical evidence presented on Latin America was good and linked well to Sachs paper -Got a bit off track when talking about Mexico specifically, needed to hammer in point that it was moving away from SLI that helped Mexico but too much was discussed here that didn't support your side

Debates in ECO302/303

Advantages of Debates?

- 1 Helped motivate/encourage ('forced') students to cover more of the readings and keep updated with course content
- 2 Gave students a broader and deeper understanding of the material
- 3 Opened them up to multiple viewpoints and forced them to think critically
- 4 Encouraged them to develop a variety of academic and life skills

Disadvantages of Debates?

- 1 Requires more time for phases than possible in one hour tutorial
- 2 Reduces the volume of content that can be covered in tutorial

What did students like about debates in ECO302/303?

"The debates in my opinion helped me seek out the content and use more resources not only the ones taught in class but also books and papers outside class. By doing my own research I was able to understand more about the topic and its complexities and i felt more comfortable talking about it specially in the exam time. Besides that, the debate is an opportunity to practice relevant skills and put us in a position outside of our comfort zone. This in itself forced us to grow in many ways. Thank you professor!"

"I enjoyed being effectively forced to consider another point of view."

"I liked that I needed to think about alternative sides, this fosters critical thinking."

"Debates made me read the entire reading list and research the topic and this made me fully understand the topic. They helped a lot for the exam since I had 1 less topic to cover and the topics that i debated on helped me view that issue in multiple ways. Even listening to other debates (the African institutions vs geography one), I had 1 point of view my entire life and now I can agree with the other side due to strong evidence. Without that debate I would have never looked at the other side and just continued to believe my previous opinion."

"Live debates were extremely informative and really allowed understanding of the material being discussed. Made studying the same material much easier for the final exam."

"Debates fostered better understanding of course material as a whole because they forced one to synthesize concepts and theoretical approaches into concise points to support their side."

"I loved the in-class debates. It was a new and refreshing way to learn and assimilate class material. It made sure I had mastered course content as I would be presenting it in class to my fellow classmates and my professor and more importantly people would look for loopholes in my argument. More importantly, It exposed me to the idea academics have their specific theory/agenda/analysis and helped me understand that data can be used to push view points. I enjoyed it so much I found nothing wrong with it."

"Forced you to engage with other classmates. Helped build stronger and broader knowledge of the subject by taking into consideration others opinions."

What did students dislike about debates in ECO302/303?

*“**Lack of time** to have a real debate. Debate was based on a text from an authors point of view, we **weren't really encouraged to bring in outside sources** to prove our point even more, I just felt like some debates were super one sided because their article had better evidence (not in my debates, but in the debates that i heard).*

*“I believe that **more rigorous cross examination** by the audience and emphasis on cross examination would make the learning experience more active and less passive. I disliked that there wasn't enough emphasis on cross examination and refutation.”*

*“**Not enough time for cross-examination!**”*

*“**Presentation left little time for asking questions** of the opposing theories.”*

*“**Too much subjectivity in grading.**”*

“Without proper presentation materials like PowerPoint, it was hard to follow some arguments sometimes.”

“Sometimes how much we took away from the debates was dependent on quality of the work students did. Some debates were informative others lacked substance.”

“You had to know the subject thoroughly which requires more time to prepare.”

“One thing I don't like is that i get nervous.”

Debate in economics outside ECO302/303

- Choose a debate question related to course material that touches on a number of concepts from lectures
- Choose a debate topic that is topical and inspired by a national or international debate → ex. 'globalisation then and now'
- Don't avoid topics bearing on sensitive and controversial issues
- Prof. Pernecky suggests that debate propositions used in economics classes should deal with specific policy proposals (Pernecky [1997]) → examples include a flat tax, welfare reform, affirmative action, industrial policy, the balanced budget amendment, monetary policy, currency "bailouts," minimum wage hikes, immigration policy, and health care reform.

Debate Questions Suggested in Literature for Micro

Table 1: Debate Questions and Relevant Microeconomic Concepts

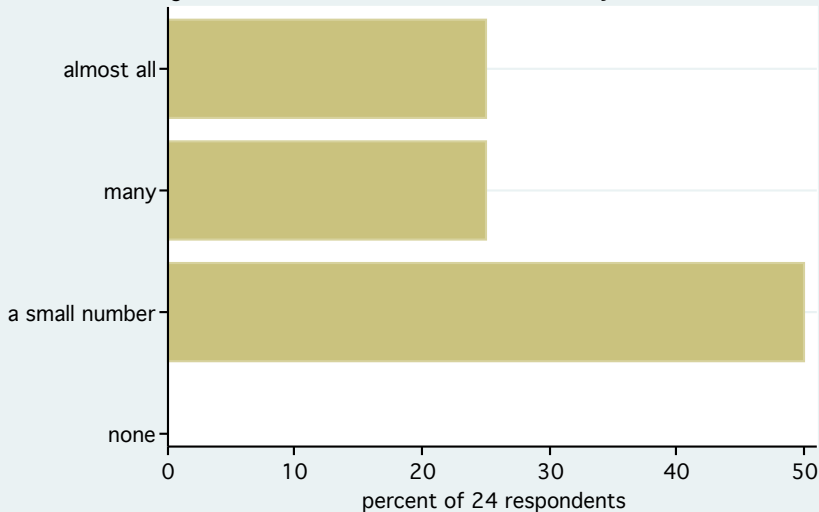
Debate question	Microeconomic concepts
Is the death penalty an efficient crime deterrent?	Cost-benefit analysis; efficiency; opportunity cost; elasticity
Is a college education a good investment?	Cost-benefit analysis; opportunity cost; income and substitution effects; consumer choice theory
Does the anti-sweatshop movement help workers in developing economies?	Producer theory; comparative advantage
Should there be a 'fat' tax on junk food?	Consumer choice theory; taxation; elasticity
Should we allow more charter schools in New York?	Consumer choice theory; public goods; externalities; quotas
Are big-box retailers good for the US economy?	Consumer choice theory; producer theory; cost minimization; profit maximization
Should marijuana be legalized?	Consumer choice theory; externalities
Is discrimination on the basis of gender a major factor in US labor markets today?	Consumer choice theory; labor markets; income and substitution effects

Source: Provencher and Ramnarain [2018]

How open are students to debate in economics?

Which option best completes the following statement:

Going forward I would like debates in ... of my Econ courses



How do I integrate online debates into ECO302/303?

- 1 Students participate in an online debate board concurrent with live tutorial debates
- 2 Participation in Kialo debates (excluding own debate) is worth 10%
- 3 Students receive 1% for main comments on Kialo and 0.5% for secondary comments
- 4 Students receive 0.25% for main comments that need to be reassigned or altered
- 5 Online debate board is left open for comment for one week following live tutorial debate

ECO302/303 Debate Trees

Were standards of living stagnant until the mid-19th century?



Standards of living were stagnant until the mid-19th century

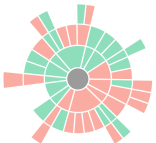
Although the male real wages doubled in 1820 - 1850 (Lindert and Williamson, 1983), the negative impacts of urbanization that associated with the process of the industrial revolutions overcame the positive effect in the real wage. One of the side effect was captured in the reduction of nutritional status, the heights, in the period of 1740 - 1865. Urbanization also increased the cost of living. The standards of living was not just stagnant but actually worsened until the mid-19th century.

Pros	Cons
If anything, height should be directly correlated with standard of living. Historically, people were shorter than they are now. However, higher height metrics is indicative of better access to nutrients, not the other way around.	How does this claim square itself with all the improvements in technology that would have been occurring in the agricultural sector and given people c.p. more disposable income for other ventures?

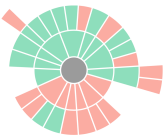
ECO302/303 Debate Topology



Discussion Topology



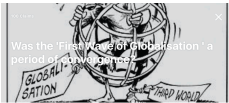
Discussion Topology



Discussion Topology



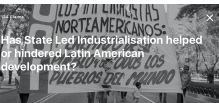
Discussion Topology



Discussion Topology



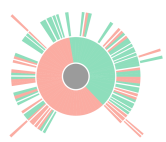
Discussion Topology



Discussion Topology



Discussion Topology



Advantages of Kialo?

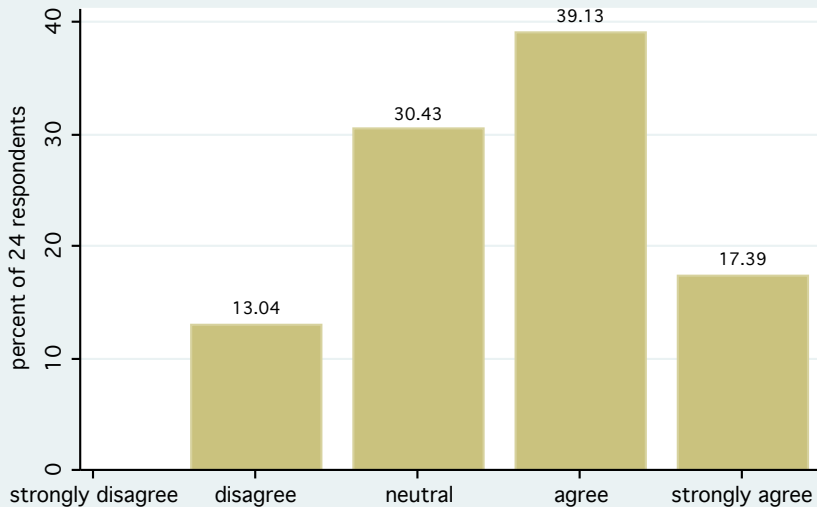
- 1 Debate generates an organised web of ideas or mind map convenient for revisions and essays
- 2 Keeps a record of student participation for assigning grades
- 3 Gives all students a chance to contribute to debate given time constraints in live debate

Disadvantages of Kialo?

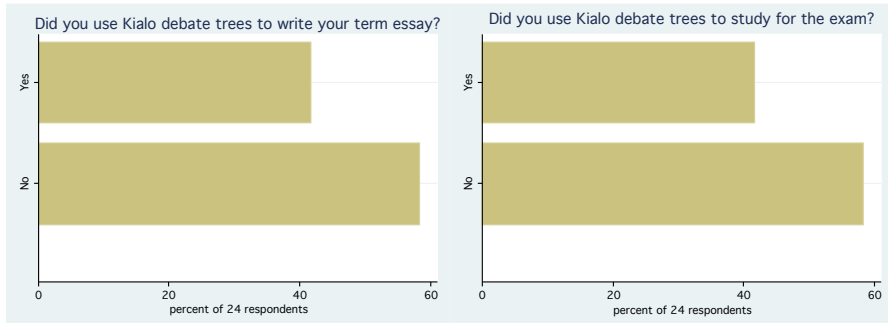
- 1 Students are 'too focused' on commenting for participation grades
- 2 Difficult to keep track of comments coming in live
- 3 Challenging organisation of arguments and counter-arguments
- 4 Difficult to police comments on quality and originality

Do students enjoy the online debate component?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
Kialo online debates added value to the live tutorial debates



Did Kialo help in achieving learning outcomes?



What did students think about Kialo debates?

*"I liked the Kialo platform. It **integrated the class to each debate** and made research easier by giving you a general sense of discourse in the topic material."*

*"Liked that I could **review in detail, arguments** made prior to the exam. Disliked that Kialo maps arguments and counterarguments, but not necessarily cross examination and refutation in the degree desired."*

*"Engaging in terms of not just having to read the econ papers, but had the **opportunity to present what you thought were the big ideas** from the papers."*

*"I disliked having to **split my focus on writing comments** for marks on the Kialo debates as opposed to just participating in the debate openly."*

*"I felt that the **less pertinent or redundant comments** should have been deleted sooner to make the quality of looking back on the debate posts more effective."*

*"Liked that it forced everyone to prepare before every debate therefore giving them a **better understanding of the topic**. Disliked that it **took the focus off the live debate** and into **filling up the Kialo page with points** before everyone else takes your points."*

*"Enjoyed the idea of drawing thought trees using the reasoning of others as well as my own. **Helped make connections between concepts and ideas**. Felt that at times **people made points just for the participation marks**, with no real substance to their observations."*

*"**Liked: Participation marks**. Disliked: They were not very organized."*

Additional Videos



- Topic 1: Pre-Modern Growth

- [Ken Pomeranz on the Great Divergence \(ChineseEconomicHistory.com\)](#) 



- [Niall Ferguson on the Great Divergence \(Ted Talks\)](#) 



- [Steve Broadberry on the Great Divergence the European Miracle \(Weast Initiative Lectures\)](#) 



- Topic 2: The First Industrial Revolution

- [Nick Crafts on Why Britain Was First \(Legatum Institute Lectures\)](#) 



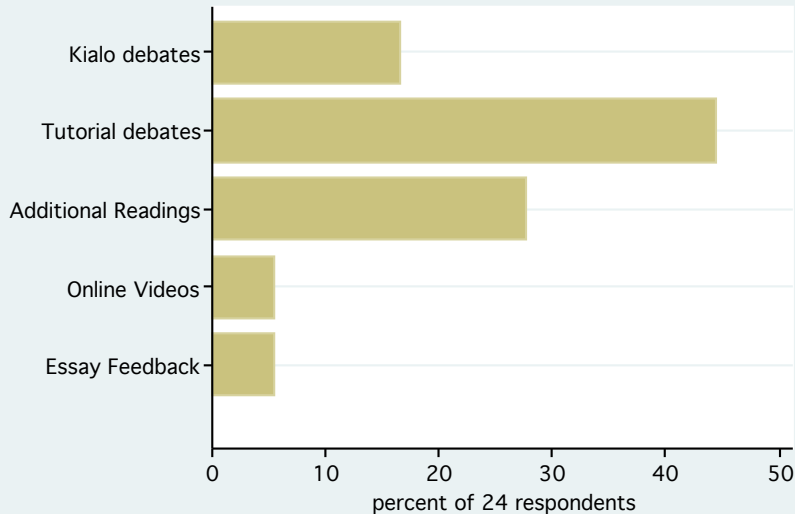
- [Mark Overton and others on the agricultural revolution \(BBC Radio 4 - In Our Time\)](#)



- [Bob Allen on the technological revolution \(Tawney Lectures\)](#) 

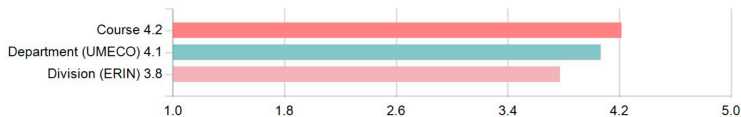
How did students rank resources available?

In addition to lectures, what do you think was the most valuable resource:

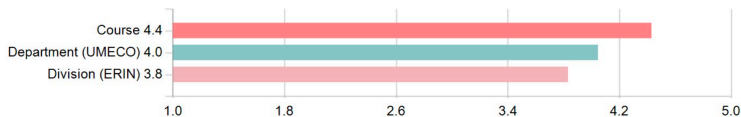


How did students feel about resources in ECO302?

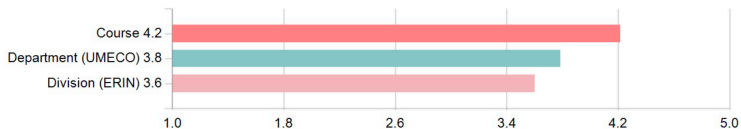
4. Course projects, assignments, tests, and/or exams improved my understanding of the course material.



5. Course projects, assignments, tests and/or exams provided opportunity for me to demonstrate an understanding of the course material.

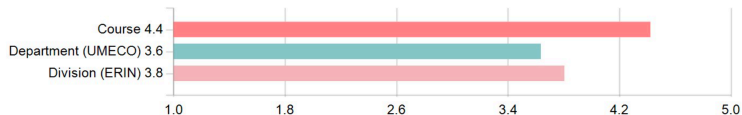


6. Overall, the quality of my learning experience in this course was:

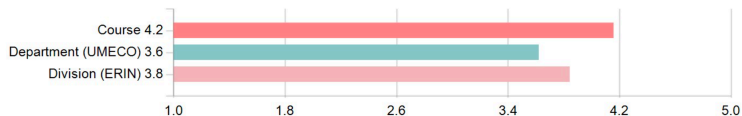


How did students feel about resources in ECO302?

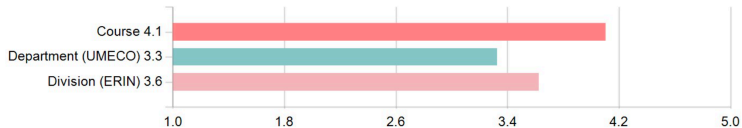
4. Course projects, assignments, tests, and/or exams improved my understanding of the course material.



5. Course projects, assignments, tests and/or exams provided opportunity for me to demonstrate an understanding of the course material.



6. Overall, the quality of my learning experience in this course was:



Am I doing this right?

- Should I allow self-selection into teams or try to encourage greater balance and enthusiasm across teams?
- Should I provide key articles to debate or just topics?
- Should I pose the same question in debates as essays?
- Should I require an individual report from each student for debates and grade separately from team performance?
- Should my grades and/or feedback in live debates relate to presentation style or just content?
- Should I enforce stricter policy on participation in Kialo debates? → quality not just quantity?
- Should I edit or comment on Kialo debates myself (or have TAs do this) once the boards have closed?
- Should I encourage students to return to Kialo boards by offering a grade incentive if they edit or use them at the end of the course?

Supplementary References

- David W. Johnson, Roger T. Johnson, and Karl A. Smith. Constructive controversy: The educative power of intellectual conflict. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 32(1): 28–37, 2000. doi: 10.1080/00091380009602706. URL <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091380009602706>.
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- Mark Pernecky. Debate for the economics class and others. *College Teaching*, 45(4):136–138, 1997. doi: 10.1080/87567559709596215. URL <https://doi.org/10.1080/87567559709596215>.
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