



## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURED CONTROVERSY™

### DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the Structured Controversy process is to provide experience in developing the habit of critical thinking necessary to continuously improve one's ethical decision-making ability. Continuous improvement depends upon having effective tools to admit and correct mistakes made in previous decisions. With practice, habits form, decisions become easier, and ethical maturity increases. The exercise also provides experience in skills of civil discourse where people can listen thoughtfully to opposing ideas and fashion a course of action that includes the best of both sides.

### CLASSROOM AND HOMEWORK ACTIVITIES

Using any particular topic that is relevant to the day or discussion, students work in pairs to debate for or against the topic. The activity provides the opportunity for students to consider together the various points of view as they learn to use the ethical considerations of each of the Four Ethical Lenses™.

<i>Learning Objectives</i>	<p>The student will demonstrate the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gather facts that contribute to best arguments for their position and discard peripheral information</li> <li>▪ Choose and articulate the ethical considerations of each lens that can be used to support position</li> <li>▪ Listen to another person's position and be able to restate that person's perspective to a third person</li> <li>▪ Adopt and articulate the best position using the ethical norms of each of the Four Ethical Lenses</li> </ul>
<i>Duration</i>	<p>60–90 minutes for in-class activities 30–45 minutes for homework</p> <p>The instructor will manage the events to flow appropriately given the class schedule. The components can be completed in one homework assignment and one class period or spread across two classes.</p>

### IN-CLASS INTRODUCTION

<i>Duration</i>	10–15 minutes
<i>Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Divide the students into two groups</li> <li>▪ Assign each group the position they will represent, either “for” or “against”</li> <li>▪ Introduce the four steps to the students</li> <li>▪ Give students the topic that will be debated</li> </ul>
<i>Resources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For the topic, the instructor is to choose a “hot” topic from the news or another area of desired research</li> <li>▪ In the Resource Center under “Hot Topics Simulations” see:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ <i>Structured Controversy Student Worksheet</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

<i>Duration</i>	30–45 minutes
<i>Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Read information about the “hot” topic</li> <li>▪ Brainstorm and write out the best argument for assigned position</li> <li>▪ Use as many of the ethical considerations for each of the four lenses as appropriate</li> </ul>
<i>Resources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In the Resource Center under “Hot Topics Simulations” see:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ <i>Structured Controversy Student Worksheet</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### Activity 1

<i>Duration</i>	10–15 minutes
<i>Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pair up with a student who has a different position than the one you were assigned</li> <li>▪ Take five minutes each to explain and give evidence for your position to your partner</li> <li>▪ Make sure to use the language of all four lenses</li> <li>▪ Listen carefully to the position of your partner.</li> </ul>
<i>Resources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In the Resource Center under “Hot Topics Simulations” see:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ <i>Structured Controversy Student Worksheet</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### Activity 2

<i>Duration</i>	20–30 minutes
<i>Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Each twosome pairs up with another twosome</li> <li>▪ Each student is given five minutes to explain the position of their initial partner to the group.</li> </ul>
<i>Resources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In the Resource Center under “Hot Topics Simulations” see:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ <i>Structured Controversy Student Worksheet</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### Activity 3

<i>Duration</i>	20–30 minutes
<i>Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ After hearing all four positions, the group is to adopt a position and prepare a statement to discuss and defend</li> <li>▪ Each member of the group is responsible for articulating the opposing viewpoint using the language of a different lens so that all four ethical perspectives are highlighted</li> </ul>
<i>Resources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In the Resource Center under “Hot Topics Simulations” see:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ <i>Structured Controversy Student Worksheet</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## **SAMPLE STRUCTURED CONTROVERSIES**

1. The United States has a need for workers. However, we are facing a situation where some assert that we cannot absorb any new citizens. Thus, we should adopt a proposal which would create a new category of Visa for H-1b workers. One important feature of this category of Visa would be that children born to workers with this type of visa while in the United States would not be automatic citizens of the United States. Rather, they would retain the citizenship of the native country of their parents.
2. Governmental and private companies (profit and not-profit) should be required to pay a wage rate that would meet the minimum “living wages” to all employees. A “living wage” is compensation that is sufficient to meet the basic needs of shelter, food, health care, and transportation. According to an article published on July 29, 2012 in The New York Times called, “Why Can’t We End Poverty in America?” “104 million people—a third of the population—have annual incomes below twice the poverty line, less than \$38,000 for a family of three” and “20.5 million people earn incomes below half the poverty line, less than about \$9,500 for a family of three—up eight million from 2000.” With this provision, we as a community would not have to redistribute taxes through the Earned Income Credit because people would be earning a sufficient amount to support themselves and their families.

## **OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Have the pairs representing different lenses articulate their positions using the values of the lens they represent.
2. Have the students write a paper defending and opposing a position through two lenses.