

BUSINESS, SOCIETY & ETHICS

Debate #3: This House Believes Amazon Must Clean Its Toxic Work Environment

Proposition Teams

Prop 1 Prop 2 Prop 3

Prop 4 Prop 5

Opposition Teams

Opp 1 Opp 2 Opp 3

Opp 4

Background Reading

- Jodi Kantor & David Streitfeld, "Inside Amazon: Wrestling Big Ideas in a Bruising Workplace".
- Jeff Bezos, "Amazon Chief's Message to Employees".
- Jodi Kantor & David Streitfeld, "Jeff Bezos and Amazon Employees Join Debate Over Its Culture".
- Anat Lechner, "Amazon Is on to Something".
- Guy Kawasaki, "It's Called Work for a Reason".
- James Pethokoukis, "Miserable? Who Says Workers Are Miserable?"
- Judith Rodin, "Misery at Work Is Never a Good Thing".
- Jayson DeMers, "The Cost of on-the-Job Misery".
- Miya Tokumitsu, "There's More to Life Than Work".

These are only a starting point. I expect that you will conduct additional research to better prepare for the debate and the position paper.

Preparation Outline

Due: Thursday, February 18th by 8:00AM via Blackboard.

Late preparation outlines will *not* be accepted unless you have requested and I have granted a *prior* reasonable accommodation.

Only one person on your team needs to submit your outline. Unless I tell you otherwise, each member of your group will receive the same grade on this outline.

Instructions: Your outline should be 1,300–1,500 words in length and conform to the course's "General Technical Requirements for Written Assignments" from page 12 of the syllabus.

Your team's assignment is to prepare an outline of its position and defense. The over-arching goal is to present a reasoned defense of your team's position that would assist you in defending yourself against someone who disagrees. Your team's outline must clearly do the following two items:

1. Justify and defend your team's position, and
2. Critique and reject the other team's position.

Each part should be about a half of the total outline. In writing this, please assume that your readers are not familiar with the debate's motion—so explain and organize the outline as clearly as possible.

I will leave it to your team to decide how to fairly distribute this work load.

Collaboration & Academic Integrity

Please be aware that academic integrity demands that each group work on its own in preparing for the debate and that each student work on his or her own in writing the position paper.

That said, everyone remains free to discuss the debate's motion, share related articles and other links, and so on, via Twitter using the course hashtag **#BSE16**. However, if you use anything from another person in your preparation outline or in your position paper, please cite it, e.g., as "From a tweet by @TwitterName" or "From a discussion with Person's Name".

I always encourage you to talk about these issues with your classmates and others. Learning with and from others is great! But I also expect that your team writes its own preparation outline and that you write your own position paper, all while being honest about any assistance you may have received in doing so.

Peer Evaluation

Due: Thursday, February 18th by 8:00AM via Google Forms.

Late peer evaluations will *not* be accepted unless you have requested and I have granted a *prior* reasonable accommodation.

Failure to submit an evaluation will result in a 0.10 point (i.e., one-tenth letter grade) deduction from your end-of-semester preparation outline grade.

Instructions: Your peer evaluations will have you assign each member of your team a score in response to questions about their contribution. In particular, you are asked to think about the extent to which you believe that they did their fair share of the work. You are free, but not required, to include comments if you feel it necessary to explain your evaluations.

At the end of the semester, your total score will be compared to the class average. If your score is above average, then your overall preparation outline grade is increased by 0.25 point (one-quarter letter grade) per standard deviation you are above average. If you are below average, then your overall preparation outline grade decreases by 1.00 points (one letter grade) per standard deviation you are below average.

Note: If you are having trouble getting in touch with your team members, please let me know immediately. I will do my best to get you all in contact with each other. Furthermore, if you are experiencing difficulties working with another group member, please let me know immediately. I will do my best to help resolve the situation to everyone's satisfaction.

Please continue ►

Debate #3: This House Believes Amazon Must Clean Its Toxic Work Environment (Continued)

In-Class Debate 🧑 + 🧑

Date: Thursday, February 18th.

At the beginning of class this day, I will randomly select one proposition and one opposition team to debate in front of the class. Anyone not present at this time, *regardless of whether his or her team is randomly selected*, will earn a 0.00 (R) for that day's in-class debate.

Format: Each team member must speak exactly once for five minutes. The order of the speeches during the debate will be as follows:

1. **First Proposition Speaker:** Presentation of the argument supporting the motion.
2. **First Opposition Speaker:** Presentation of the argument rejecting the motion.
3. **Second Proposition Speaker:** Exposition of flaws in opposition's argument.
4. **Second Opposition Speaker:** Exposition of flaws in proposition's argument.
5. **Third Proposition Speaker:** Rebuttal of opposition's criticism and closing summary of proposition's argument showing why proposition won the debate.
6. **Third Opposition Speaker:** Rebuttal of proposition's criticism and closing summary of opposition's argument showing why opposition won the debate.

I will leave it to your team to decide when each of its member will speak.

Following the debate, we will have a vote on which team offered the strongest and most compelling argument about the motion. The team with the most votes will earn a prize. The remainder of time opens the floor to questions and comments by the entire class.

Position Paper 🧑

Due: Thursday, February 25th by 12:00PM (noon) via Blackboard.

Late position papers will *not* be accepted unless you have requested and I have granted a *prior* reasonable accommodation.

Remember, you must submit at least two position papers this semester. One of these papers must respond to debate 1, 2, or 3. So if you have not written on debate 1 or 2, you *must* write this debate's topic

Instructions: Your paper should be 1,600–1,800 words in length and conform to the course's "General Technical Requirements for Written Assignments" from page 12 of the syllabus.

Your assignment is to state a clear thesis of agreement or disagreement with the debate's motion and then provide a reasoned *argument* in support of that position. Please do not provide a list of "possible positions" e.g., "one might say x, or one might say y . . ." Simply state *your* position and defend it. In doing so, be clear about the following four items:

1. The statement of your position (or thesis) on the debate's motion,
2. The premises, reasons, and/or evidence you are using to support that position,
3. The justification why these premises, reasons, and/or evidence are plausible and difficult to deny, and
4. The inferences showing how these premises, reasons, and/or evidence entail your position.

This is not a long paper, so remember to *stay focused*. It should be clear to the reader how your every word, sentence, and paragraph is doing one of these four things.

Organization: I expect that your paper is organized with an introduction, body, and conclusion, following these guidelines.

Introduction: The purpose of the introduction is to present your paper's position on the debate's motion. To that end, your introduction should be very simple, consisting of only one short paragraph with no more than four or five sentences. The statement of your position will most likely appear at the end of this paragraph.

In general, the statement of your position is one or two sentences that clearly states the claim that the body of the paper will defend. Do not be coy in stating your position. Be blunt and clear about what it is. There is nothing wrong with the last sentence of your introduction simply saying, "In this paper, I will argue [your position]." This gives your paper focus, conveying to the reader exactly what it is they should expect you to accomplish in the body of your paper.

In addition to stating your position, the introduction should provide any background information that is necessary for the reader to understand what your position is about, the issue it involves, and why this issue is important. This is done by defining any technical jargon or complex concepts that may appear in your position's statement. Do not assume the reader is in this class or is aware of this debate's topic.

Body: The purpose of the body is to present the arguments providing a reasoned justification for your thesis statement. That is, the introduction has told the reader the position you intend to defend, and your paper's body presents that defense. This is the most substantive part of your paper, so it should comprise about three fourths of it (≈1,300 words).

Conclusion: The purpose of the conclusion is to present an important implication of your position. While the paper's introduction presented the position's statement and the paper's body justified it, the conclusion reveals important consequences of now accepting that position.

For this paper, the conclusion must state one important *practical* implication of your position. By practical, I mean something geared towards action. So, what course of action should now be done because your position has (ideally) been fully justified and accepted?

Suggestions: In order to write this position paper, you must address the four items mentioned in the instructions. There is no where else to look, nor is there anyone else to ask, for the right answer. It is up to you to reflect on the position you are willing to defend as the most compelling. Keep in mind that this position may not be the same one your team prepared to defend. Once you are clear in your mind about your own position on the debate's motion, then you can begin to identify the strongest reasons to offer in support of it. Once you have done all that, you can finally assemble all this into your position paper.

You have read material for this class that relates to this topic, so you are free to draw upon any of this material if it is relevant to your argument. Please cite any material that you draw upon, if you do so. However, please do not waste space with unnecessary quotation. I am primarily interested in *your* views. However, do not assume that your reader is familiar with the topic, so you must explain your argument to them as clearly as possible.

I encourage you to creatively explore this topic. Even so, while you have freedom in terms of your paper's style and argumentative structure, remember that it is your *argument* that must always clear to your reader. Do not let stylistic elements distract from your paper's primary purpose, which is to provide a reasoned defense of your thesis. Entertaining your reader has extremely low priority.