



## 10.2 Assumptions of the Topic

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*This activity introduces critiques. It increases student understanding of the assumptions that underlie the resolution. As a class, students brainstorm a list of plans relevant to the current resolution. Once they have developed this list, they answer a series of pointed questions requiring that they analyze the plans and the resolution.*

### **Time Allotment**

One class period

### **Goals**

By the end of this activity, students will:

- gain the ability to critically examine the assumptions of the resolution and common cases.
- gain a broad familiarity with the affirmative cases that are prominent on this year's resolution.

### **Materials and Preparation**

Students should have some knowledge of the common cases being run on the debate topic.

In addition, you should have:

A list of 6-10 potential cases, so that you are prepared if the students have difficulty brainstorming a sufficient number.

An understanding of several critiques and their applications to the current resolutions.

Students should have read a chapter on, or participated in an introductory discussion of, critiques.

### **Method**

As a class, brainstorm a list of affirmative plans that fall under the current topic. Once you have a list of 6-10 cases that are prominent on this year's topic, you should have the class respond to a series of questions about each case. Break students into small groups, and assign each group a case. For each case, the small groups should answer these questions:

- In the real world, who proposes and advocates this policy? Do these proponents share any common (perhaps self-interested) motivations? How would you characterize the world-view of this policy's proponents? What is their professional and political background? What are their material interests? Who probably funds them to write what they write? Who funds their research?
- If this policy were implemented, who would benefit most? Who would suffer the most?
- Why is federal and governmental action uniquely important? What assumptions does the affirmative case hold about governmental action?
- Does the language employed by the primary solvency authors betray any biases? If so, what are these biases?
- What economic, political, linguistic, and social structures does the plan operate within? In what ways does the affirmative case implicitly and explicitly endorse broader institutions and structures like capitalism, patriarchy, institutional racism, etc.?



- Are there underlying assumptions informing this policy. Do those assumptions conflict with other values?
- Are there any underlying assumptions common to these policies? Are these assumptions inherent to the resolution?
- If these assumptions were acted upon in every circumstance, if they guided all policy decision making, what would be the possible (negative) consequences?
- What kinds of problems are these strategies designed to solve? Are these really problems? Does anyone benefit from the existence of these problems?

Not all of these questions will be relevant to every case. Once small groups have answered all of the relevant questions, have the whole class discuss the answers to and meanings of these questions in the larger context of critique debate. Use this activity as a lead into broader discussions about critiques.