HOW TO DEBATE YOUR TEACHER (and WIN!)

EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO DEFEND THEIR BELIEFS IN CLASSROOMS AND UNIVERSITIES.

SECOND EDITION
A TURNING POINT USA PUBLICATION
How to Debate Your Teacher
(and WIN!)

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Your hard work is greatly appreciated!
FORWARD

DEBATING FOR THE FUTURE!

It's no secret that capitalism is under attack. Liberal politicians and members of the media are blaming poor economic conditions of free markets and the sound economic principles that made this country great. Today, teachers and professors all across the country are training young minds to believe that capitalism is immoral. It's up to YOU to stand up for what you believe in.

This booklet is designed to empower students to fight back against this progressive aggression in our schools. Turning Point USA has outlined a blueprint to deter the typical strategies used by teachers and professors; we have also provided tips to swing the narrative away from indoctrination toward a balanced classroom environment. Throughout this booklet we highlight real life success stories of students who stood up to their teachers and successfully prevented outward anti free enterprise aggression from occurring in their classrooms. We show you that it is possible to fight back and enlighten your fellow classmates to the truth about history, civics, and economics.

No other book has been published that accomplishes these goals. This is a first of its kind publication created to empower students to stand for truth over slanted and twisted facts.

We hope you enjoy this booklet. May it act as reinforcement that you can debate your teacher (and WIN!).
TPUSA PUBLICATIONS FOR YOUNG ACTIVISTS

Turning Point USA writes and publishes custom publications designed to train, educate, and inspire young activists about important economic issues and principles.

These booklets are distributed on hundreds of college campuses each day, and are also available to read online for free.

Below are a select few of these great publications. Visit www.tpusa.com/publications for the rest of the publications offered by Turning Point USA.

50 Wacky Ways The Government Spends Your Money
This is a hilarious yet very informative publication that explores 50 ridiculous examples of government waste.

Indoctrination Prevention
Too many college professors indoctrinate instead of educate. Indoctrination Prevention addresses and refutes the top 10 myths proclaimed by college professors in academia today, and provides students with the facts to fight back.

How to Debate Your Teacher (and Win!) Second Edition
A booklet that teaches students how to combat liberal indoctrination in the classroom and stand up for their beliefs. Our goal with this publication is to empower, inspire, and train young people to make classrooms in America a place of intellectual diversity.

How America Broke Its Wings
This booklet describes the history and real meaning of the terms “left-wing” and “right-wing,” and presents a new philosophy for to describe our political differences without developing sloppy language that leaves us unnecessarily divided.
CHOOSING YOUR BATTLES

Everybody has that one crazy liberal professor that drives you absolutely insane. Whether they obsess over wealth distribution, bash capitalism, or try to paint the free market as the most awful economic system to ever exist, they are teaching liberalism rather than fact.

No matter how crazy your professor may be, it’s important to choose your battles. You can’t fight everything, especially if liberal indoctrination dominates nearly every class discussion.

Choosing your battles means making a judgment call. The most important thing to consider is how well you will be able to make a relevant point. Your goal is to educate your peers, and if your argument is going to hurt the cause more than help it, it might not be the best opportunity to debate.

Evaluate your own knowledge base. Do you know enough about the counter-argument to make an informed claim? If not, is there a way you can attain the necessary facts and arguments and bring up this topic at a later time? It is never a good idea to debate if you are uncertain about the topic.

Next you should evaluate the situation. Is it an appropriate time to raise your argument? It’s always a good time to stand up for capitalism, but if your professor is always bashing free markets it’s hard to debate on a daily basis. Choose the arguments that are most fundamental to free market thought, and the ones that your peers are most likely to understand and respect.

Be cautious. Try your best to raise your points in a serious and academic fashion. You don’t want to be known as the person who starts trouble or
distracts the class on a regular basis. You will gain credibility by being informed, respectful, and educational in your approach.

Never interrupt your professor or continue on if the conversation is over. Ultimately if your professor says, “We’re moving on” or “The conversation is over,” you need to respect that. It is important to defend your beliefs, but there is a proper way to do it.

Choosing your battles ultimately comes down to you. We can’t tell you the perfect time and place to debate your teacher, but we know you can use your judgment to make an effective call. You can’t fight every battle, so choose wisely and use your talents to save the minds of America’s youth.

Leena Oudin, Turning Point USA -- Illinois

My name is Leena Oudin and I am a Senior at Aurora University, working on my BA in Political Science and Pre-Law, where I am also captain of the dance team. I was an Illinois Field Coordinator for the Fall of 2014 and it was a wonderful experience. I think it is important for students to know that they have a voice in the classroom. I also helped canvas for the Bruce Rauner Gubernatorial election. Conservative politics is a passion of mine and I enjoy spreading conservative ideologies to other young adults.

Actual student testimony:

I grew up in the suburbs of Illinois, which is pretty liberal because it is fairly close to the city of Chicago. I attend Aurora University where I had recently changed my majors to Political Science and Pre Law. This change occurred because I saw professors using the classroom as a platform for their liberal ideas and being completely biased. It really annoyed me that they were giving their opinions instead of the facts, and this became a reoccurring issue in my college career. So, I decided to change my major, as I saw that conservative politics was very important to me.

There was one class in particular that really pushed my buttons, this class was “Humans and the Environment”. My professor was just about as liberal as they come, and was determined to let us all know. He would begin class by putting up a PowerPoint and talking about it for maybe 5 minutes. Then he would go into how everything that happens is “the conservatives’ fault”. Not many people at this point knew just how conservative I was, but that was about to change. He decided this time that he would give the statement, “The NSA should spy on Americans. Patriots and Republicans are the real threat to America. Not al
Qaeda.” This had nothing to do with what he was teaching, I mean the class was about Humans and the Environment… what did this have to do with anything? At this point I had enough of his liberal ideals being shoved down our throats. I knew it was time to say something and show my classmate that he was wrong. I looked around the room to see some students in agreement, some with questioning looks, and some not even paying attention. That was when I said, “So you believe that the NSA should be infringing upon American citizens constitutional right to privacy? Giving the government this amount of power for collecting information takes away our freedom of speech as well as our liberty granted to us by the US constitution. And the fact that you say that al Qaeda is not a threat to America shows just how politically uneducated you truly are.” At this point I had captured everyone’s attention, even the ones who were basically sleeping before. My professor had the worst look on his face, so I continued, “Patriot and Republicans are not a threat to America, and we are simply a threat to rude liberals like you. We stand for what is right and we remind liberals of the beliefs this country was founded on – constitutional rights that we refuse to give up.”

He then tried to cut me off and pretend to get back to his PowerPoint, which he strayed from in the first place. However, I was not finished. I ended with saying, “You are an adjunct professor for Environmental Science… not a Political Science professor. Why don’t you just stick to teaching us how the environment works, and leave the politics to the professors who have PhDs in Political Science?” He had nothing to say, but to just stare at me with a scowl on his face.

Some students in the class sat there in shock of what just happened, and to be honest, I was in shock as well. I hadn’t realized what an impact I was making until some students were clapping and nodding in agreement. It was then when I realized I was not the only one who felt this way. It seemed like I was the only one who was conservative; but I found that there are others and they just felt like they were outnumbered and had no voice. By speaking up to my professor, I realized that I gave other students the feeling of empowerment, and that they too could make a difference.
DEBATE ETIQUETTE

Just as it is important to choose your battles, it is important to choose the appropriate style and method for debating your teacher. Although you may be angry and disgusted by their negligence of the facts, it is important to be respectful and courteous if you wish to make a difference.

This section will provide you with debate etiquette tips to ensure you are successful when debating your teacher or professor.

#1: Be calm. Being aggressive will never win anyone over. It is important to appear cool and collected, and express your opinions in a professional manner.

#2: Be respectful. Never insult anyone or let your debate get personal (this goes two ways; don’t let others talk down to you or insult you). Your goal is to be informative and thought-provoking. There is no need to be rude and disrespectful.

#3: Be informed. You must know what you’re talking about. You’re not helping anyone by arguing a senseless point that you cannot back up or explain. It is also important that you understand the point your professor is trying to make.

#4: Be clear. Overgeneralized statements never work. Assume people are not familiar with the topic and break it down in an understandable way.

#5: Be courageous. It all starts by raising your hand and that takes courage. Dare to be different and challenge the falsehoods being taught.

Marko Sukovic
Teachers have the very important job of educating our youth. As students begin to grow older, teachers introduce them to new perspectives, or different solutions to the many complex problems we face. But in this relationship with the teacher, it is also the students’ duty to respectfully push the boundaries, to ask the penetrating questions that do not necessarily conflict with what we are taught but how we are taught about our history, politics and government, especially when there is disagreement. This is how we as individuals can truly grow.
Arm Yourself with Facts

#1. Be prepared.
It’s the old boy scout motto: “Be Prepared!” but when trying to successfully debate a teacher, preparation is key. YouTube has endless lectures by people such as Tom Woods, Milton Friedman, Thomas Sowell, and Bob Murphy that articulate free market thinking extremely well. Videos are usually more effective when you are trying to prepare for a debate because the argument is made orally. You will be more likely to absorb the content.

Look at the syllabus before your class begins and learn what the course will be covering. This will help you to anticipate arguments and understand the direction of the class. Be sure to know what sources you will be using in class. This includes textbooks, articles, websites, and any other tool your instructor uses. The more you know ahead of time, the more prepared you can be.

Be sure your data is current and correct. Try not to use extremely biased sources. Although your FOX News article might make great points, having a more neutral source can increase your credibility among classmates.

No matter what, you need to be prepared. If you do not feel prepared to hold an educational conversation, don’t start the debate.

#2. Know multiple sources.
It’s extremely important to be familiar with a wide range of reports, news sources, and perspectives. Even if you don’t trust certain media outlets, it is still important to know what they’re saying. Be familiar with what all sides are saying so you can hold a stronger debate.

If you use data (and you should), be sure you can prove it. Know where you got your stats in case they are challenged.

#3. Anticipate your teacher’s next move.
Most teachers use the same arguments over and over again. They are rarely challenged and usually aren’t used to having a free-flowing debate in their lecture hall. Therefore, as the old saying goes, “know the enemy.” Study your professor’s habits and favorite news sources, authors, and members of the media. If you can pinpoint exactly where the professor draws a lot of their inspiration, you can better anticipate their arguments and make a better, more effective counter-argument. As mentioned above, you must be familiar with the talking points that
are not your own. If you don’t understand where your teacher is coming from, you may not be able to combat their ideas.

Some teachers at very liberal universities might be out of practice when you first challenge them. Most professors are completely taken off guard when a student comes prepared, knows multiple sources, and can anticipate moves ahead of time. These three tips should serve of great value when trying to arm yourself with the facts needed to win the debate against your teacher.
You might think we wrote this booklet for college students, but in reality it was written for everyone.

Indoctrination doesn’t just happen in the college lecture halls. It happens in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools across the nation. Here is a picture from an AP United States History textbook, used in many high schools nationwide.

You might be wondering why the Constitution has literally been rewritten, and rightly so. This is a perfect example of liberals changing the 2nd amendment to advance their agenda. This is the type of bias students need to stand up against.

Bias doesn’t just happen in the Political Science class. It happens in English, Math, Reading, Science, History, Theology, and Education (yes, our future teachers are being taught with liberal bias).

Think about the books you read in school and then consider why your teacher may have selected them. Do they all push a similar agenda, or are they truly representative of a wide range of views and opinions? Are they causing you to think critically, or are they limiting your access to a comprehensive understanding of world events?

You must be a critical thinker when it comes to your curriculum. Always ask yourself if you are getting the whole picture, or a small snapshot of the wide range of perspectives. Teachers are supposed to teach students how to think, not what to think.
Turning Point USA interviewed students at Marquette University to get their thoughts on required textbooks at their school written by the former domestic terrorist, Bill Ayers. The books were used in an Education class.

You must be prepared to debate any and every type of teacher. Just because you are not in a politically-based class does not mean political issues will not come up. It is important to stand up to liberal bias in every setting.
THE FIRST STEP

It all starts with raising your hand. It takes courage to do it; the first time is always the hardest. It will get easier and more comfortable as time progresses.

You may find that your peers are on your side. Some may have been thinking the same things you were but just didn’t have the courage to speak up and say something. Be bold and start the conversation. Do not be afraid.

Sometimes you may spot bias in a different setting and this must also be confronted.

One student took the first step by forwarding an e-mail she received from a teacher to local news sources and investigative journalists. Her impact was astounding. The issue drew national attention and the teacher was forced to correct her statements. The testimony below is one that you do not want to miss.

Charlie Kirk (Real life Textbook Bias Success story)

It all started at the end of my senior year in high school. A good friend of mine found many egregious errors in a widely distributed economics textbook that our local school district was using. At first I did not think much of the biases and fallacies placed in the textbook. Upon further examination and research, I realized that the author of the textbook, Paul Krugman, was a Nobel Prize winner and an outward advocate for European-style socialism and increased liberal policies!

As I dove deeper into the book one particular section stood out to me. In the textbook it stated “The Reagan tax cuts did not accelerate economic growth” Throughout my high school career, President Reagan was one of my heroes, and I knew the history of his Presidency rather extensively. I knew immediately this statement from the textbook was deceitful at best, and factually incorrect at the very worse.
I then realized throughout the book there were left-leaning anti-free market stances scattered on almost every page. As I read more and more I discovered and came to the realization there was an ulterior political agenda being subversively advanced in the economics textbook.

I never thought an economics textbook could be hijacked by politics. But boy was I wrong! At that time Turning Point USA did not exist. There was no organization that I could come to with the bias in the book nor was there a community of experts I could plug into to get advice. Encouraged and prompted by a close community of friends and fellow free market activists, I decided to submit the tip to Breitbart.com. I considered it a shot in the dark at the time. I did not know if I was going to receive any feedback or any sort of review. To my surprise I was asked by the editor-in-chief of Breitbart.com to write a story about the textbook. After days of hard work and collecting advice I finally submitted the piece which was then posted to the front page of Breitbart.com!

Once it was posted, it quickly spread all across the internet. Moving quickly, it was reposted on over 500 news and blog sites including Drude Report, Dallas Morning News, Townhall.com, and HotAir. It was amazing to see how my single article was multiplied into millions of people being aware of this textbook!

About a month and a half later, I launched Turning Point USA for I was so dismayed and disappointed that the young conservative community did not have avenues or outlets I could expose these sorts of bias to.

This story can show that a singular incidence of textbook bias can multiply into a national news story! Every student and young person has a unique megaphone to let their voice be heard. Due to the rise of the internet, Facebook, Twitter, and instant communication, every student can expose their teachers, professors, or textbooks on a national scale.

At Turning Point USA we offer a host of options to expose textbook bias. Visit this link to get more tips on how to break stories at your school:
http://www.tpusa.com/reporttextbookbias/

I hope you take advantage of all the opportunities offered by our organization. Turning Point USA was founded for students like you.
TO WIN THE DEBATE, WIN YOUR CLASSMATES

In the battle against your teacher, some of the least utilized and most valuable assets are your fellow classmates. If you can get your classmates rallying behind your message, you will be much more likely to win the hearts and minds of the entire class and stop future indoctrination.

Your challenge is to sculpt a message and use every tool you know to get your classmates to fight fearlessly beside you. Nothing is more effective to deter indoctrination than other students saying “Yeah, I agree” or “He is right, why are we learning this?”

Here are three tips to get your classmates behind you:

#1. Illustrate the extremism of the professor without looking like an extremist yourself.

If you are able to successfully paint your professor as an extremist or someone that is way off base, you are very likely to quickly gain support from your classmates. Your classmates will join a cause that veers towards “sanity.” If you can show that your contention is one that is even-minded and balanced, you will win your classmates. That said, you don’t want to look like an extremist yourself. It is important to make a clear argument that does not appear radical or illogical. It is also essential to be respectful to your professor. You can expose his or her radical viewpoints without name-calling or sounding hateful.
#2. Plant seeds beforehand.

This may sound obvious or a bit elementary but if you meet with two or three people before class and ask them if they will back you up when you debate the teacher, you can quickly multiply your effectiveness. Even if it’s just one more friend or fellow student, you can increase your likelihood of winning the debate.

#3. Incorporate others’ opinions into your argument.

If you are able to seamlessly connect other students’ previous points and opinions into your argument, you dramatically increase your credibility and effectiveness. Here is an example:

**Teacher:** Capitalism is only for the rich. It only helps the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

**Student:** I would fundamentally disagree with that. Capitalism is the best system to fight poverty that the world has ever seen. Just like what Steve said last week (motion to Steve), his dad was able to work his way out of a low paying dishwashing job eventually into owning a restaurant. Economic freedom is a primer to prosperity for all. Brett mentioned earlier today (motion to Brett) how many jobs are created when people are spending money. Look how people pursuing their self-interest can help others. Even Raymond a few months ago (motion to Raymond) said he liked to be able to choose a variety of products without having a centralized authority choose for him. As you can see, many people in this class support the basic merits of capitalism and have benefited from it. And none of us are “rich.”

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**Austin Paul, Turning Point USA – Georgia**  
**How to Debate a Teacher**

As a student, I know firsthand what it is like to use textbooks and listen to teachers that put forward an inaccurate and often partisan view of subjects like history, economics, and government. The only thing worse than listening to these falsehoods is the fact that many of my classmates will believe them and understand them as true for the rest of their lives. I believe that it is my duty to challenge the ideas that are put forward by teachers and texts in order to teach my classmates an accurate and balanced view of the subject. In order to be taken seriously by both your teachers and classmates, it is important to go about challenging misinformation in a respectful, intelligent, and civil way.
It is important to approach every situation with respect. Most teachers have invested a great deal of time and money into their education and it is important to recognize that. Oftentimes, teachers are not purposefully teaching inaccurate facts, they are just repeating what they were taught in high school and college by people that they trusted. When you approach the situation respectfully, nine out of ten teachers will be open to discussion and debate. From my experience, I’ve found that teachers enjoy discussing ideas and addressing concerns with students who are informed and respectful.

Always ask questions. Instead of yelling endlessly ranting about why the textbook or teacher are wrong (trust me, everyone will stop listening when you do that), ask questions about the topic that will help lead to your desired conclusion. The Socratic Method is always a good way to help get your point across. Questions force people to think and at the end of the day, making someone think does far more than continuously telling them that you are right.

It should go without saying that you should always enter a debate with facts and logic that will back up your argument. Absolutely nothing is more important than knowing what you are talking about. You should also know your opponents argument backwards and forwards. If you only know your side of the argument, you cannot effectively debate because your opponent’s points will often catch you off guard and you will be forced to evaluate the other side in the middle of the discussion. Perception is reality; if you know every side of the argument, your opponent and those observing the debate will be more inclined to agree with you because you will look more informed and knowledgeable about the topic at hand.

Lastly, you should always know when to stop. Some arguments are worth making and some are not. Correcting misinformation is important but when you look at the big picture, every battle is not worth fighting. Constantly pointing out every idea that you disagree with may seem like it is helping the cause, but it can actually turn off those around you. Strike a balance, and know when to draw the line between being helpful and being a distraction.

Debating a teacher can be a daunting task but it can be done. Every situation is different; therefore, every situation warrants a different approach. Misinformation is a plague in school systems all across the country. As students, it is our responsibility to correct the falsehoods that are pushed in classrooms every day but we must do this in a way that makes people want to listen to us. Our message can win and it will win; we just have to make sure that we are setting it back while we think that it is being advanced.
Your Professor Won’t Change

Reread the header again. Your Professor Won’t Change.
You are not debating your teacher to change his or her mind. Chances are good that your professor has held this viewpoint for several years and has probably written research paper upon research paper, or maybe even written a book based on his or her chosen ideology. You aren’t doing this to change your teacher’s mind.

You are doing this to change your fellow students’ minds. Many students have not yet formed solid opinions and those that do have an opinion probably haven’t held those views for many years. By debating your teacher and challenging the information presented in class, you are exposing your classmates to a new perspective they may have never heard.

Your professor might back down, or even be intimidated by your argument but he or she probably won’t be converted. This is to be expected.

It is also important to realize that you may not win over every student. You may be in class with very opinionated liberals who hold very firm beliefs. You must remain consistent, confident, and factual. Your goal is to educate your peers on a new perspective, not win over every member of your class.
During my senior year of High School, my English class was always full of debate and controversy. Our English teacher would always provoke us to get into arguments with one another to see what each of us thought about certain issues in society. About halfway through the year we were assigned an argumentative paper about five pages in length over almost any issue we wanted to write about. During class to prepare us for the paper she would provoke us to discuss some of the hotter button issues that a few of the students picked to give us an idea on what to write about. One student had decided the issue of Obamacare would be his paper topic and she began to probe his mind over the topic.

Everything I heard him say was basically a carbon copy of what one would hear in the mainstream media:

“It helps poor people get insurance.”

“It will lower health care costs.”

“Without it there will be people who never can get insurance.”

She then immediately turned to me and asked “so Caleb, Obamacare: good or bad?” And I of course expressed my dissatisfaction with the law. She then followed up with all of the arguments that you might hear from msnbc or even the president himself. When asked how I could expect people to afford insurance without it I gave an answer that apparently nobody had thought of or heard before in the class. I explained how competition through free trade would automatically drive prices down by the natural law of supply and demand. She then pointed out that we have tried that before Obamacare and it wasn’t working because insurance companies were driving the prices up. I then proceeded to explain how the system we had before Obamacare was not free market capitalism, but rather cronyism because the federal government was subsidizing these big companies and squashing any real possibility for free trade to work and that this has only expanded with the passage of Obamacare.

She pointed to the amount of people who had enrolled in the system as proof that it was working as I then explained how though yes, millions of people had enrolled, over five million had also lost their coverage because of the so called Affordable Care Act. And for the people who had not lost their insurance,
their premiums had doubled in cost and causing millions to lose not just their insurance, but their jobs as well as increase taxes in the process all in order to pay for this system that ultimately will fold in on itself.

By the time we had finished debating, the whole class was fully intrigued by not only the arguments I was presenting, but how I was presenting them in a constructive manner. A majority of the students had never heard of the free market equation in the health care debate. The class had ended and everyone was talking about Obamacare and the arguments I brought forth that most had never even considered before and generally liking the idea’s of the free market as a better alternative to government.
How to Win the Debate Without Losing Your Grade

So you’ve decided to take a courageous step and debate your liberal teacher. Great! But wait… now you’re concerned (and rightfully so) that your teacher may take out their anger on your grade. We’ve compiled some tips for how to avoid grade reductions and guidelines for what to do if it occurs.

The best way to avoid an incident is to be respectful, courteous, and accurate. Obey classroom rules, speak in a respectful tone, and wait to be called on rather than interrupting. When you are called on to speak, be informative and correct in your claims. Although your teacher may not agree with you, he will probably respect your professional and thoughtful remarks.

If your teacher does punish you for speaking your mind, you must take action. Your teacher or professor has no right to punish you for having a different opinion, as long as you were respectful and accurate in all your claims.

If your teacher took away points on a paper for an incorrect statement that you believe to be true, find the facts to support your argument and present them to your instructor.

If you lose participation points for debating your teacher, confront the teacher privately and ask why it is wrong to disagree. As long as you were respectful, you should not be penalized for having a different opinion. Diversity (of all kinds) should be accepted in the classroom.

In the event that your teacher does punish you for making legitimate and respectful claims, contact Turning Point USA and our team will direct you to student resource groups that specialize in defending targeted and ostracized students.

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Remember, you are never wrong for standing up for your beliefs.
Caroline Stout, Turning Point USA --

Just as a foundation paves the way for a house, one’s background inevitably plays a major role in who they become. As one would certainly expect, my beliefs essentially mirror those of my parents and my community. Growing up hearing that only specific ideas were right, I learned from a young age the correct social, moral, and political answers for my setting therefore I never had to question why I believed what I did. Although I felt secure in my political perspective, my opinions could not have been weaker.

Growing up in the fine arts, I was an active participant in my school and community’s theatre scene, having acted since age four, and was quite accomplished at my craft. Into my high school years, however, I underwent a rude awakening to the liberal bias of the theatre community and was frequently told to “shut up” about my conservative values that were largely unwelcome there. Heartbroken, I gave up on my acting career after having had enough of the constant torment of my peers. I chose to channel my public speaking skills through a new avenue.

Leaving the world of theatre, I had hope that my new activity would provide a setting that praised my interest in politics and current events rather than suppress it. Perhaps I would fit in better and truly find my niche.

As a junior in high school, I found myself in the freshman debate class in order to better my critical thinking and analysis skills. On my first day of the class, I was struck at the vastly different culture in which I had unknowingly immersed myself. Upon discovering my contrasting opinions, my teammates immediately shunned me from social functions and even in-class practice. Furthermore, they publicly attacked and teased me for my beliefs until I no longer offered my input and eventually started questioning if my views were even correct. What stunned me was how open the debate coach was about her political ideology. A devout liberal, she openly provided her input during in class debates between her ill-informed and highly impressionable students. Once we were discussing environmental impacts of business, and she immediately piped up saying with concern how the polar bear population was severely endangered. I wanted to jump in and say, “Really it depends on which polar bear subpopulation you are looking at. According to recent studies, some groups have actually doubled in population while others have slightly declined.”

Nevertheless, I bit my lip for fear of being proven wrong or ridiculed by debate
coach who was actually a former debate champion. How do you argue against someone who is always right and has the evidence to prove it? While I enjoyed our conversations and looked up to her as a person, I was intimidated by her as a teacher and coach. How was I supposed to feel welcome in a setting where she would crack George W. Bush jokes and say she loves her brother even though he is a Republican? I felt belittled and personally victimized by her blatant disdain for anything conservative. Although, I idolized her as a fellow debater, I was terrified of ever having to defend my values to her.

Once in class, she was ranting about having to drive upwards of an hour to school every morning from a community east of Katy. When one student asked why she didn’t just move closer to our high school, she threw back her head and laughed then informed us that she would never live in Katy because “there are too many Republicans”. Uncomfortably, I stared down at my folded hands fighting the urge to stand up and defend my beliefs and party. Not only were comments like that hurtful but they were additionally confusing to me. Never had I been indirectly ridiculed by someone I respected so much who was fully aware of my political affiliation and active participation.

Furthermore, the students took cues from our coach’s unabashedly liberal bias. At debate tournaments, only a few members of the team spoke to me, and I felt ostracized to the point that I would sit alone. One afternoon in class, a new friend of mine, one of the only ones in the class, sat with me as I crammed for a test the next day. Fed up with the subject, I slammed the spiral shut and muttered about how stupid I felt in this class. Laughing, she smirked and said, “Well, you are a Republican!” She followed her insult with a half-hearted “I’m kidding!” as I shrugged it off with an insincere laugh, but secretly took it to heart. Even a girl who was supposed to be my friend discredited me for my political beliefs in the same way our coach seemed to.

The zenith of my debate coach’s many partisan lectures was when she began a tirade on how we live in a patriarchal society that oppresses and shames women for being women. She provided evidence such as the fact that the word “man” is hidden in the word “woman”, that women with successful careers are called “careerwomen” rather than just “women”, that women get paid less than men in the corporate world, that there are double standards against women that engrain in us from a young age that we are less than men. Staring at her from the back of the room, millions of thoughts raced through my head as she indoctrinated my young classmates. All I wanted to do was stand up and express the double standards that also exist against men and explain to my impressionable
classmates that there is another side to this debate, that this isn’t the only truth they have to believe, that our coach was trying to get them to believe one side of a highly polarized issue. Nevertheless, I remained quiet and stiffly sat staring at her from the back of the room with my eyes aflame. I was too afraid to debate my debate coach.

Encouraged by my political mentors, I founded the first Young Republicans club in the school district sponsored by my favorite teacher, a fellow conservative and an active participant in local and state politics. Hours were spent drafting the constitution for the club, designing and redesigning flyers, planning events, and asking for support from local and state political colleagues. As the first meeting that I knew would set the tone for the entire year drew near, a mixture of nerves and excitement consumed me. Many people had expressed interest in the club and my political mentors had commended me for my hard work on this project. I had even recruited my mother to bring pizza and cookies to the meeting in an effort to lure in more members. Each minute detail of the meeting was carefully planned so that nothing could possibly go wrong.

Walking into the room where the meeting was to be held, my jaw dropped upon noticing the every inch was completely packed with students present for my meeting. Over fifty young people were present seemingly eager to become active in politics like I was. However, my heart soon sank. These weren’t students here sharing my values. The entire debate team crashed my meeting and even planned to vote themselves into officer positions in what they called a “communist takeover”. Naturally, I couldn’t exclude them or show my complete and utter outrage. Saving face, I kept my cool and accepted their presence with a tight smile. During the meeting, I was pleasant and sunnier than I had ever been with them before. However, that evening, I went home with tears streaming down my face and spent that night lamenting what they’d done. In a setting such as debate where diversity is supposed to be fostered and encouraged, I found myself subject to an overwhelming pressure to conform to their supposedly tolerant ideology.

I felt unbearably excluded and pressured to mold my ideas to match theirs. At the point of my most deafening silence I found myself at a crossroads. My situation forced me to choose to either compromise my doctrines or to uphold them.

Active in politics, it seemed only natural to join a small group of my peers on a civic education trip to our nation’s Capital. Little did I know I would encounter drastically different students from other regions of the United States, for I
had always assumed people were mostly just like me. Yet, upon meeting my roommates for the week, I learned they hailed from the golden state of California, a place vastly different from southern Texas.

We enjoyed each other’s company but avoided touchy subjects on which we assumed we would disagree. The week progressed with little conflict, but our program leaders began to encourage us to discuss issues such as socialized health care, gay rights, gun control, and immigration reform. As expected, we found our views tremendously contrasting, and yet our conversation was dominated by respect, courtesy, and consideration.

Through polite discussion, I had for the first time a pleasant experience of what I always assumed to be nothing but “the other side of the aisle”. Not only did I have the opportunity to express the reasons for my own beliefs, but I also finally understood their background and upbringing impacting their views. Although their principles did not influence mine, I at least learned to appreciate them with a bit more comprehension and courtesy than before. I returned to Texas prepared to face my debate team and coach.

Determined, I embarked on a journey to confidence in my stance through independent research and firsthand political involvement with Attorney General Greg Abbott in his gubernatorial campaign then became Katy Outreach Director for a state representative campaign. Gradually discovering and further developing the reasons for my beliefs, my long silence ended with a more educated and wise voice.

In a place where I was shamed and frequently insulted for my views, I soon began to prove them wrong with my articulate, intelligent confidence and respectful dissemblance. Currently, as a debate captain and district champion, I am finally a true member of our wildly successful team. My experience as the black sheep of the debate team benefited me in stratifying my social and political opinions yet also gifted me with a gracious, open mind. Although the journey was strenuous, the destination was certainly worth the long yet rewarding effort.
**CONCLUSION: BE COURAGEOUS**

The fight against liberal indoctrination is big. It’s bigger than your classroom, bigger than your school district, and it’s even bigger than your State Board of Education. It starts in the classroom and finds its way into nearly every facet of life. It’s real, it’s big, and it’s up to YOU to stop it.

America’s youth have the right to know accurate information; unfortunately we can’t depend on our education system to deliver that. We have an obligation to stand up for principles like fiscal responsibility, free markets, and capitalism. These are the principles that made our nation great and right now they’re under attack.

It takes a lot of courage to debate your teacher, but hopefully as you read the testimonies in this guide from your peers across the country, you learned that the value of debating is worth it. We encourage you to take a leap of faith and stand up for what you believe is right.

Ronald Reagan told us, “We can’t help everyone, but everyone can help someone.” Turning Point USA encourages you to help someone by defending fiscal responsibility, free markets, and capitalism in your classroom.

How to Debate your Teacher (and Win!) has given you all the tips and tools to defend your ideas; now it’s up to you to operationalize it.

Be bold. Be courageous. Be fearless.
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