

JWAC Monthly Discussion Cheat Sheet

Summary

Each month, members of the top ten World Affairs Council of Dallas/Fort Worth's JWACs are invited to self-direct an online, **1.5 hour** discussion on one JWAC's chosen current events topic. When you are selected to lead your monthly program, you will be responsible for planning the presentation and discussion. You will also receive \$50 to spend on a pizza party for your club.

Presenters:

- Design a **10 to 15 minute** presentation on your topic.
 - Example topic areas: climate change, multilateral organizations, wars/genocide, trade
- Provide **2-3** articles on the topic for fellow JWAC members to read two weeks prior to the event.
 - Think tanks and research journals are your best bet to finding informative articles
- Come prepared to ask and answer questions.
- Introduce and thank your featured speaker
- Presentation and discussion components may include, but are not limited to, the following: audience polls, cultural components (songs, visual arts, videos, news), interactive websites, etc.

Audience Members:

- Read the 3 provided articles, but you are encouraged to do more in-depth reading beforehand.
- Prepare questions you may have for the presenters.

Suggested Timelines

Presentation Preparation:

- 3-4 weeks before: select topic
 - Find 3 informative articles
 - Research topic of choice
 - Find speaker
- 2 weeks before: create presentation
 - Send out articles to JWACs
- 1 week before: finalize presentation
 - Make edits where necessary
 - Write questions, discussion prompts

Example Meeting Timeline:

- 0:00 - 0:15: leading JWAC presents topic
- 0:15 – 1:30: Speaker
- 0:30 - 0:45: open-ended question period
- 0:45 - 1:15: discussion of presenter-provided prompts and articles
- 1:15 – 1:30: last-minute questions, final thoughts, audience feedback

*Note: these timelines can change based on individual presentations.

Tips for Presentation Design

A good presentation makes use of effective content and clarity. Note that you are not constrained by the provided suggestions in this guide and are therefore invited to construct your presentation however you feel will be most successful.

Content:

- Consider the big picture — what are the big takeaways you want your audience to gain from your presentation? What trends and changes regarding the topic should we be aware of?
 - Important information: key leaders, landmark dates/events, relevant statistics, policy implementation and impacts
 - Cause/effect or problem/solution can be effective ways to frame your presentation
- Because you will only have 10 to 15 minutes to present, narrowing your topic focus is advisable. For example, if you choose the topic of climate change, you can concentrate on the impact of international organizations and accords rather than climate change as a whole.
- Don't get trapped in the details, unless you want to lose audience engagement. Avoid the easily forgotten minutia, such as the names of every member of a multilateral organization or a timeline consisting of 50 events. The less detail and the more big picture, the better.

Clarity:

- The most important idea behind presentation clarity is knowing that visuals are a supplement for what you verbalize, not the other way around.
- See [this presentation](#) for ideas on clear, effective presentation design.
- Using interactive tools like websites and polls will engage your audience; media like songs or videos can both convey information creatively and prevent your audience from being bored.
- Example presentation platforms: Slides, Prezi, Adobe Spark, Nearpod

Questions and Discussion Prompts

When asking and answering questions or discussion prompts, keep in mind that any good question lends itself to open-ended, reciprocal discussion. Answers to questions should always be accompanied with a justification, and questions should allow respondents to express their perspectives.

If requested, breakout rooms can be established for smaller groups to have more in-depth conversations about particular sub-topics. This is completely optional.

Above all else, ask questions about things that you genuinely find interest in. This is an opportunity for you to learn from your peers, and hopefully to teach them something as well!

Presenters:

- Questions should enable audience members to think critically, not just to recite the facts.
- Questions and discussion prompts should be designed to have multiple defensible answers, or else they invite the creation of an echo chamber. Avoid leading questions.
- Consider the main ideas of your presentation — questions pertaining to these ideas will solidify them in the minds of your audience.
- Examples: What do you think will be the most important long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy? Do you believe it is possible for international NGOs to improve their accessibility to Yemeni civilians, and why or why not? What statistic or fact did you find most interesting about this particular article and why?
- **Think through each question you ask for 2-3 possible answers... from there, come up with follow-up questions based on those responses to keep the discussion flowing.**

Audience Members:

- Take notes on what facts or ideas about the topic stand out to you. This applies to the provided articles, the presentation, and your personal research.
- Questions can help to clarify information, to have the presenters expand on an area of their presentation that you found interesting, or to gain insights on the presenters' unique perspectives.
- Examples: On your slide about China's offshoring of coal projects, how long do the effects of coal lock-in last for affected countries? Can you explain more about why tensions between Japan and South Korea over the exploitation of comfort women still persist to this day? In your opinion, which of the international agreements you mentioned has been most successful in limiting dangerous nuclearization?

A past JWAC Discussion event can be seen here: https://youtu.be/BSTZyS_hLJI