

STS 201: Consensus conference assignment

Due: April 14/24, 2017 (see below)

In this assignment we'll be conducting a mock "consensus conference", which is a technique developed by Danish policy makers to involve the lay public in making decisions about controversial scientific or technological questions. For our consensus conference, we'll discuss a current science or technology policy issue of your choice (we will brainstorm possible topics and then vote on them in class).

Each person in the class will take on one of the following roles to play during the week of the mock consensus conference:

- *Scientific expert*: A person with professional training that's relevant to the issue, such as a doctor, researcher, or health policy expert
- *Lay expert*: A person who has non-scientific expertise that's relevant to the issue, such as a patient, organ donor, or religious figure
- *Lay citizen*: A person who has little to no prior knowledge of the issue, and who is demographically representative of the public
- *Researcher*: A person with social science training who facilitates the conference and the writing of the policy recommendations

Your assignment for the consensus conference has two parts:

1. *Preparation of a 750-word background document* for the role you will be playing in the conference. For scientific experts and lay experts, this document will present your research and official opinion/recommendation on the issue. For lay citizens, it will describe the relevant demographic features of your character and present research on how you think these features will affect the way your character is likely to evaluate the issue. For researchers, it will summarize the discussion that takes place in your small group during the consensus conference, discuss the strengths and limitations of the data you've collected during the conference, and present the final policy recommendations you will make to your funding agency. *NB: for scientific experts, lay experts, and lay citizens this document is due before the conference (April 14), but for researchers this document is due after the conference (April 24).*
2. *Participation during the conference*. For scientific and lay experts, this component will involve a short presentation on your area of expertise at the beginning of the conference. For lay citizens, your participation will involve responding to the expert presentations, and formulating opinions and recommendations during the small group session. Researchers will facilitate the small group sessions, orally report the results of your small group session, and facilitate drafting of the final policy recommendation.

We'll have time set aside in class for you to meet with your fellow experts/citizens/researchers to coordinate your roles and presentations.

STS 201 Consensus Conference Rubric – Experts

	EXEMPLARY	COMPETENT	NEEDS DEVELOPMENT	SCORE
RESEARCH	Background document shows extensive research and familiarity with the issue; sources are specific to the role being played	Background document shows evidence of research, but uses easily available sources rather than ones that are specific to the role being played	Background document draws on general knowledge rather than specific research; sources are non-existent or inappropriate for the topic	/5
ANALYSIS	Recommendation is specific, follows logically from the research presented, and relates to the role chosen	Makes a recommendation, but it is quite general or the connection to the research/role is not clear	Background document gives a “laundry list” of different factors to be considered but with no clear recommendation	/5
ORAL PRESENTATION	Presenter speaks clearly and confidently; presentation is tailored for a non-scientist audience; presentation is well organized and uses the allotted time appropriately	Presenter is understood but is not polished; presentation is slightly too technical or simple for the audience; presentation is a little disorganized, too long or too short	Presenter is hard to understand because s/he is too quiet, rambles, etc; presentation is inappropriate for the audience; presentation is disjointed, much too long or too short	/5
GROUP WORK	Group members work together to coordinate their respective roles; all members feel respected; connection between presentations is logical and well organized	Group members divide their roles and then work independently; members feel respected in all but minor instances; presentations are somewhat connected	A few members dominate the group or did all the work; one or more group members feel disrespected; presentations have little connection or are overly repetitive	/5
				/20

STS 201 Consensus Conference Rubric – Citizens

	EXEMPLARY	COMPETENT	NEEDS DEVELOPMENT	SCORE
RESEARCH	Background document addresses a number of relevant demographic variables; sources are used creatively to understand these variables and their relationship to the issue	Background document shows research into relevant demographic variables; but addresses a limited number of variables, does not explain well their connection to the issue, or uses questionable sources	Background document draws on general knowledge rather than specific research; sources are non-existent or inappropriate for the topic	/5
ANALYSIS	Makes specific predictions about how the character is likely to react; predictions follow clearly and logically from the research	Makes specific predictions about how the character is likely to react, but connections between predictions and research are not always articulated	Predictions about how the character is likely to react to the issue are based on personal opinion and unrelated to the research presented	/5
PARTICIPATION	Responds actively to expert presentations and takes a lead in small group discussions; comments reflect the specific attributes of the character chosen	Asks questions of experts in presentations and small group discussion rather than voicing opinions; comments are general or reflect personal opinions rather than the character	Says little during large or small group discussions; lets the experts do all the talking	/5
GROUP WORK	Group members work together to coordinate their respective roles and share research ideas; all members feel respected; as a group the characters are representative of the population	Group members divide their roles and then work independently; members feel respected in all but minor instances; characters are representative of the population in most respects	A few members dominate the group or did all the work; one or more group members feel disrespected; many relevant demographic features are overrepresented or absent	/5
				/20

STS 201 Consensus Conference Rubric – Researchers

	EXEMPLARY	COMPETENT	NEEDS DEVELOPMENT	SCORE
RESEARCH	Research report accurately and concisely summarizes the methodology and the main findings of the consensus conference	Research report covers both methodology and findings, but some important details are not reported or extraneous information is included	Summary of methodology and/or findings is absent, and/or summary dominates the entire report	/3
ANALYSIS	Considers the strengths and the limitations of the data; researches and makes connections to the social science literature on consensus conferences; recommendation is specific and follows clearly from the research	Covers strengths/limitations, connections to the literature, and recommendations, but one of these areas relies on generalities or is not persuasively argued	Two or more of the analysis areas (strengths/limitations, connections to the literature, and recommendations) are weak or absent from the report	/7
FACILITATION	Uses a variety of facilitation techniques to ensure discussion flows smoothly; actively solicits comments to make sure all voices are heard	Relies on one or two facilitation techniques; attempts to balance discussion but some members are heard more than others	Facilitator him/herself dominates small/large group discussion, or hangs back and does little to moderate the discussion	/5
GROUP WORK	Group members work together to coordinate their respective roles; all members feel respected; large group discussion is well organized and every member plays a role	Group members divide their roles and then work independently; members feel respected in all but minor instances; members are somewhat unclear about how to organize discussion	A few members dominate the group or did all the work; one or more group members feel disrespected; plan for large group discussion is formulated on the fly	/5
				/20