The debate format most appropriate for a classroom really depends on the particular objectives, goals and constraints of a given course.

Some questions to consider: How many students do you have? How many debates do you hope each student to have? Does each student debate affirmative and negative? How big is your classroom? How long is your class period? How much class time is dedicated for the debates themselves? How are the debates being assessed? Who is assessing the debates? What do you the students to learn from the debates and debating?

One format we have recommended for several faculty is modeled after the high school debate activity, public forum debate. This format is well suited for shorter class periods, involves multiple students, allows moderate in-depth argumentation and encourages direct engagement between speakers and arguments. Each debate would take about 25-30 minutes and feature 4 students.

First affirmative speech: 4 minutes

First negative speech: 4 minutes

Cross examination between first two speakers: 2 minutes

Second affirmative speech: 4 minutes

Second negative speech: 4 minutes

Cross examination between second two speakers: 2 minutes

First affirmative rebuttal: 2 minutes

First negative rebuttal: 2 minutes

Second affirmative rebuttal: 2 minutes

Second negative rebuttal: 2 minutes