

2016 NCFL Nationals
Extemp Topic Area Analysis
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Congrats on qualifying for the 2016 NCFL Nationals Tournament! This brief will cover all of the potential topic areas for Extemporaneous Speaking at this tournament. Before we dive in to the specific topics, a couple of notes.

First, note that the tournament has eight rounds but nine topic areas, meaning one of the topic areas will not be chosen. That being said, it's best if you prepare and research for all nine topic areas to be prepared. There will be four prelim rounds on Saturday and four elimination rounds on Sunday, so it's definitely a contest of endurance as well – make sure you get adequate rest!

Second, the questions you will be drawing are competitor and coach submitted, meaning you will run into a variety of questions. I will attempt to address the major issues surrounding each topic area, but keep in mind that a brief is by no means a substitute for comprehensive filing. I recommend filing local domestic news sources (Des Moines Register, Miami Herald) as well as foreign news sources (Der Spiegel, Japan Times) to ensure you have coverage of some of the more obscure issues that may come up. Furthermore, each round's topic area is chosen right before the round, meaning you might face tough questions in prelim rounds but comparatively easier questions in elimination rounds. This makes it even more important to have a good grasp of the issues in each topic area, so you are prepared to face whatever is thrown at you on day one. Finally, on the issue of questions, notice that there is no IX/DX split, so you must have command of both domestic and international knowledge to handle the questions. If you come from a circuit like I did, where IX and DX were split, I recommend reading up on the category you do less as much as possible (I did mostly IX, so I had to cram in a lot of DX).

Third, judging. Throughout prelim and elim rounds, NCFL will have judges with wide arrays of experience – some will come from an extemp-heavy background while others will be oratory while still others will come from an interp background. This means you will have to blend clear, persuasive analysis with an engaging delivery. You cannot sacrifice analysis however, as one muddled speech will be enough to cost you the round and even the tournament.

My best advice for you is to read anything and everything leading up to the tournament. As NCFL is known for its wide array of topics and judges, the best way to succeed at the tournament is to be able to explain tough topics clearly and succinctly, while at the same time crafting unique arguments and a memorable speech. Don't be afraid to take risks! Tell a joke or a story, but most importantly, have fun with the speech and the tournament. One of the best parts of Ft. Lauderdale was relaxing on the beach before and after rounds, so I encourage you to make the most of Sacramento!

US Politics

Issues

It's election season, so be prepared for a plethora of questions surrounding the election. One of the main issues surrounding the election is obviously the impact of Donald Trump on the political landscape and the Republican party. The belligerent and offensive rhetoric of Donald Trump has inflamed tensions throughout the United States, especially between Trump-supporters and Trump-protestors. At several Trump rallies throughout the United States, fights have broken out between supporters and protestors. Part of this is attributable to Trump's rhetoric, in which he actively advocates for violence against those who don't support him. To effectively analyze Trump, it would be best to read up on several instances of unrest at his rallies, or skim over poll numbers just to see how popular he is. It would also be helpful to see what demographics he is most popular with – several reports have found his supporters to be largely white, uneducated voters who feel alienated from the current political system.

That brings us to the second point – the divide that Trump has sown in the Republican Party. Jeb Bush's spectacular failure after raising over \$100 million speaks to how Donald Trump's rhetoric has impacted the Republicans, as the establishment has no way of confronting Trump's attacks. Trump's popularity also points to larger problems within the establishment – they are losing hold on a big part of their voting base, as even GOP-vetted frontrunners like Bush are unable to secure votes. Trump's dominance speaks to a trend that has been occurring to Republicans, traced even back to Eric Cantor's surprise loss back in 2014 primaries. The GOP establishment is seen as detached from ordinary America, and this is a view that Trump has exploited to his benefit. With no direct ties to government or D.C, Trump has leveraged his business background, promising a breath of fresh air for voters. Originally, the GOP were hoping Cruz or Kasich could garner enough delegates to have a contested convention, but as Trump has won primary after primary, a contested convention is looking as unlikely as ever. Cruz just recently dropped out, leaving only Kasich and Trump in the race, meaning Trump is all but guaranteed a nomination. UPDATE: as of May 4th, Kasich dropped out as well, meaning Trump is basically the GOP nominee. Be prepared to thus answer questions that deal with the hypothetical of a Trump nominee, because that hypothetical essentially political reality. Note that all questions will have been written before April 23rd, the last day questions were submitted, so all the new updates regarding the elections will not be in the question pool.

A final note about Trump –many of Trump's [policies](#) are actually either establishment Republican ideals or even more moderate. Having a good understanding of what his policies actually entail will provide you with specifics to reference in your speech. Be prepared to analyze the effect of a Trump presidency on our nation and world. For example, Trump's foreign policy rhetoric could be potentially [disastrous](#).

Aside from Trump, we also have the Democratic side of politics! Hillary has managed to retain a sizeable delegate lead, and despite Bernie's best efforts to secure delegates, Hillary seems like she will win the nomination handily. However, don't discount Bernie's effect on

Hillary and her campaign – she has noticeably turned left with regards to her rhetoric and platform. For example, her rhetoric toward Wall Street has noticeably become more heated and targeted toward reforms – something she didn't do in 2008. Furthermore, Hillary has since embraced gun control as a central part of her campaign, something that differentiates herself from Bernie, who is more moderate on that issue. Be prepared to handle questions about Hillary's campaign platform, as well as about the specific effects Bernie might have on her campaign in the future.

Taking a step back from the Presidential race, look to Paul Ryan as new Speaker of the House as a potential question, about his leadership experiences and what he might bring to the table. Another potential politics question is about Obama's last year of presidency in the lame duck period – has he succeeded in his goals and policies? Be prepared for Obama legacy questions as well; having a good understanding of the overall trends of the Obama administration would be helpful toward answering those questions. President Obama has certainly made a lasting impact on our nation, notably with regard to his use of executive action. A key point to note is President Obama's success in climate change – his efforts to secure a U.S-China climate change pact as well as EPA action on cross border emissions are just a couple of examples where the President has succeeded.

Strategy

Obviously the number one issue here is the Presidential election, so expect many questions asking about candidates, the election cycle, etc. Make sure to keep up with the election daily, as well as the results of the primaries. With politics rounds, it's imperative to have the most recent information to craft a compelling speech that your judge will buy, because odds are, your judge is also keeping up with the election, given how popular a topic it is. I will caveat however, that the questions you draw might be dated, because many of them will have been submitted weeks or even a month before the tournament. With that in mind, be careful when drawing question that ask something like: Who will Cruz pick as his vice-president? Not only has that question already been answered (Carly Fiorina), but Cruz has dropped out of the race! If you pick that question, you will be severely limited in the analysis you can use in your speech.

Another aspect to be wary of in politics rounds are political views held by your judges. Since judges come from all over the country, they will obviously have different political views – don't be polarizing in your speeches, but rather seek to provide convincing analysis (i.e, "Republicans are bad" is not a good argument to make, make arguments as to why some Republican policies are will have negative effects, etc). Don't make your impacts political, but rather have clear warranting for why an impact will happen. (i.e, Trump's rhetoric will only further political discord in our nation, barring progress toward equality).

Questions

What impact has Donald Trump's rhetoric had on the Republican party?
How should the GOP establishment respond to Trump's success in the primaries?
Is a Trump nomination a boon or bane for the Republican party?

What steps should Hillary Clinton take in order to boost her chances of winning the general election?

Is Bernie Sanders' campaign helping or hurting the Democratic party?

US Legal & Constitutional Issues

Issues

Many extempers are intimidated by this round, largely because legal and constitutional issues can be esoteric and hard to understand. The best way to succeed in such a round is to consistently read about legal issues so that you can boil a case down to a sentence or two. Visiting SCOTUSblog or OYEZ to get briefing on specific cases.

Several cases you should watch out for at NCFLs. The first is *Fisher v. University of Texas*, an affirmative action case. The main issue of contention is whether the use of affirmative action can be sustained under the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Note here that the case will be significantly influenced by late Justice Antonin Scalia's death, as the court is evenly divided between justices. However, Justice Kagan has recused herself from voting, as she served as solicitor general when the case was first argued. With Anthony Kennedy as the swing vote, the court may look to be heading toward a 4-3, which will be either be a decisive victory or defeat for affirmative action. Keep in mind that Kennedy has historically been conservative when it comes to affirmative action however. With this case, it would be beneficial to look at how strict scrutiny works in relation to University of Texas' 10 percent rule, their "holistic" measurement of qualification, and the Equal Protection clause, as the Supreme Court sent the case back to the Appeals Court in 2013 since it didn't meet the strict scrutiny standard.

Another important case is *Zubik v. Burwell*, which is an important challenge to the Affordable Care Act's birth-control mandate. The case involved religious-sponsored non-profit corporations, who object on moral grounds to an Obamacare provision that allows their employees to obtain contraceptive coverage through health insurance, even if this insurance is provided by insurance companies and the government. The case thus has implications for not only Obamacare implementation, but more broadly for women's rights. To answer questions about this case, it would be helpful to revisit *The Hobby Lobby* case of 2014, which was a landmark decision allowing Corporations to claim religious exemptions from federal laws (in this case, the Affordable Care Act as well).

Other important cases include *United States v. Texas*: Was President Obama's use of executive action to shield undocumented immigrants from deportation constitutional? *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* is a challenge to abortion clinics.

Another major issue for the Legal and Constitutional round is the nomination of the next justice. There will certainly be a question surrounding whether Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland will get through (likely not...but Trump's nomination complicates that prospect), and how the outcome of the Presidential election will affect the nomination. Another type of question to look out for is how the absence of a ninth Justice will affect

decision making (Anthony Kennedy as a swing vote is all the more important).

Strategy

The best advice I have ever been given for a Legal/Constitutional Round is to simplify and be as clear as possible. Legal issues are often muddled by obscure cases or specifics, but I recommend practicing distilling a legal issue to three sentences or less. That way, you can easily outline what the main points of contention are for a judge. Make sure to also make a clear argument – don't fall in the trap of simply regurgitating words but rather take a stance on a case or at least craft a speech with warrants for a particular conclusion.

Another piece of strategy I have is to read as much of SCOTUSblog and OYEZ as possible. Last year, I drew a question about a random North Carolina Supreme Court case that I had never heard of – don't let this be you. One way to get the 1 in the round is to be the most knowledgeable person in the room, as the more you know, the easier it will become to explain the issues clearly.

Questions

How will the outcome of Fisher v. University of Texas affect affirmative action in the United States?

What is the most important Supreme court case of 2016?

How will Justice Scalia's death affect the rest of the Supreme Court docket for 2016?

Will President Obama be able to successfully nominate a candidate to the Supreme Court?

What will be Justice Scalia's legal legacy?

US Foreign Policy

Issues

Expect this round to be fairly standard when it comes to US FoPo rounds. One of the most pressing issues for American foreign policy, as it has been for a while, is ISIS. Despite the United States' efforts in building a coalition, they have been wholly unsuccessful at unseating ISIS from power in the region. Part of this is due to the fractured Iraqi state, which has prompted many to call for a three state solution. The U.S, in leading the coalition against ISIS, will soon have to make important decisions regarding the future of Iraqi governance and especially the autonomy of the Kurdish rebels in the region. Moreover, the U.S will be faced with tough human rights questions, as the death toll continues to rise. I would advise you not to treat any Syria questions with the run-of-the-mill stock answer, but rather frame the question around current events in Syria – a U.S Navy Seal was just killed in Syria for example, hinting to U.S failures at containing ISIS aggression.

Another facet of U.S foreign policy when it comes to ISIS is how to respond to global terrorism threats. The terror attacks in Paris, Brussels, and Beirut are all examples of the terror ISIS is perpetrating. Expect questions about how the U.S should confront such issues, given the U.S is still largely seen as a world leader responsible for leading the fight against

global terrorism. The threat of global terror also raises an important foreign policy question of refugees, those seeking safety from the Middle East. Due to the rise of terror attacks in the West, anti-refugee sentiment has grown and grown, evidenced by Europe's stringent restrictions on refugee immigration. The U.S should worry about this too – as refugee numbers will likely increase due to continued conflict in the Middle East, the U.S will be faced with tough moral and geopolitical considerations when it comes to accepting refugees. Absolutely be prepared for a refugee question.

Another important issue for U.S FoPo are Chinese relations. As the Trans-Pacific Partnership was finalized pending Congressional ratification, U.S relations with China continue to chill, notably since the TPP excludes China. The TPP represents one the main efforts for the U.S to take a stand against China, especially in the face of renewed Chinese aggression and influence in the Pacific. Notably, China has continued constructing artificial islands and taken increasingly visible military stances. The U.S has recently been reconsidering its military stance in the Pacific, strengthening its military ties with countries like Vietnam and the Philippines. This would have significant implications for the militarization and potential destabilization of the region.

Another area of U.S FoPo that should be addressed are global health crises – the Zika virus is one of the most notable ones in the past year. Zika has become an epidemic in Latin America, and is a very real threat to the U.S. American foreign policy has so far been dreadful in containing the spread of the disease, raising the question of whether our global health policies are up to par. Given the Zika virus is transmitted by mosquitoes, there are potential steps that can be taken – partnerships with countries for mosquito control or mosquito nets. The problem of global health response is one that the U.S has failed to address before, especially with the Ebola crisis. There may be questions related to how the U.S can bolster its foreign policy efforts to better contain health crises.

Strategy

The best way to prepare for the Foreign Policy round is to get a broad understanding of the problems facing the U.S – I have outlined some above, but it is by no means exhaustive. I recommend reading Foreign Policy or the Economist daily to get a more detailed view of the issues. I've found the best way to answer the FoPo questions is to split your answer into three distinct areas, each of which relate to the question and your answer. Too often competitors will get bogged down in details with such a large category, so it's best to keep your analysis clear and succinct. Don't feel like you have to cover every aspect of the issue; it's better to choose 3 of the most important facets of the issue and hone in on them. For example, if I were answering a question about what changes need to be made to U.S strategy against ISIS, I would say A) Restrict ISIS's financial capabilities (perhaps by focusing on controlling oil resources in the region? Continuing the use of sanctions?) B) Strengthen Iraqi Government C) Force Turkey to take a clear stance against ISIS

By clearly delineating three distinct points, you will strengthen your analysis as well as make your speech clearer for the judge. Another thing I would keep in mind is to keep the speech in context of U.S interests; the round is U.S FoPo after all. As always, file extensively

to make sure you are prepared for more obscure topics.

Questions

How can the U.S limit China's military rise in the Pacific?

Is it in the America's best interest to accept refugees more freely?

What steps should the U.S take to bolster its efforts to combat the Zika virus?

Has the U.S-Iranian nuclear deal lived up to expectations?

US Economic Policy

Issues

One of the main issues for US Economic policy this year has been the Federal Reserve's decision to increase interest rates, for the first time since 2008. Janet Yellen then stated in March that the Fed would pare its plans for raising interest rates, citing a weakening global economy. Given the impact U.S monetary policy has on domestic and international growth, expect an interest rate question (there almost always is every year)! The main thing is to understand how interest rates work – the reason why interest rates were lowered to near zero levels in the aftermath of the financial crisis was to hopefully increase spending and investment, short term strategies for growth in order to prop up the American economy. Now the actual mechanism by which the Federal Reserve facilitated lower interest rates is through a process called Quantitative Easing – essentially, the Fed made it easier for banks to access liquid capital by buying treasury securities and opening new lines of credit options for banks, like the Term Auction Facility. This past year however, the Federal Reserve decided to raise interest rates due to a healthier American economy, yet that plan was largely seen as premature, given that the world economy is still in an unstable state (i.e Greek debt, lack of Spanish growth, Chinese slowdown), and the fact that U.S wages are still stagnant.

Another issue with U.S economic policy is financial regulation – the Presidential race has put the spotlight on Wall Street banks and institutions, with Sanders leading the way for more regulation. To give a successful speech, I recommend looking at how the financial sector contributed to to the 2008 crisis. Namely, risky investments that were spliced together as derivatives allowed institutions to invest without knowing what exactly they were investing in; derivatives were essentially a conglomeration of mortgage backed securities, bonds, and other debt holding entities. Furthermore, financial institutions borrowed lots of money to fund their investments, in a process known as using leverage. Leveraged investments created a huge threat of debt defaults that far too many institutions like AIG ignored, which resulted in a massive credit crunch once those investments started going bust. Understanding the underpinnings of the financial crisis will help you better address questions of financial regulation, like Dodd Frank and the Volcker Rule. Namely, the Dodd Frank act set much stricter regulations on how much liquid capital a bank must have, in order to avoid the credit crunch we witnessed in 2008. The Volcker Rule in Dodd Frank severely limited speculative investments as well.

Another issue to look out for in economic policy is foreign trade. As I mentioned in U.S

FoPo, the TPP is one of the biggest trade pact the U.S has been a part of, and would have massive implications for the U.S economy. On one hand, the TPP would open America up to many new emergent markets, like Malaysia and Peru. The United States would be able to facilitate greater ease of exports, as well as imports for new goods and inputs factors. Overall, ratification of the TPP would likely result in greater economic efficiency because it opens up markets and eases trade regulation. This would particularly be beneficial for American startups, which often struggle to compete against established giants domestically. Expect the Uber phenomenon to become larger under the TPP – startups would be able to more easily seek consumers in other countries. The benefits of trade liberalization would also help U.S agricultural and pharmaceutical companies, both industries whose products are in high demand abroad. On the flip side, there remain economic drawbacks, including loss of domestic jobs. The TPP would likely see increased outsourcing to the developing countries in the TPP; nevertheless, don't ignore the effects of onshoring – jobs that might come the the United States as a result of increased productivity and efficiency. To answer a complex TPP or international trade question, I would recommend a similar approach of choosing three distinct areas and elaborating on them with specific warrants.

Strategy

The U.S Economic Policy round is usually quite straightforward. The questions in the economic policy round are never too bizarre (although I did get a flood insurance question last year), so I would recommend filing on broad issues, like those mentioned above. However, look into smaller newspapers – the Des Moines Register, Sacramento Bee, Louisville Courier-Journal, etc. These smaller sources are invaluable, as they provide you closer insight what's going in specific areas around the world.

I would recommend filing a lot on economic policies related to energy as well – oil prices remain low, so U.S economic policy toward investments in green energy may change as a result. Also, make sure to file about technology economic policy – startup have been in the news recently because venture capitalist have seen slower return on investments and thus have decreased the amount of capital invested.

With some of the more technical questions, like interest rates, I caution going into too much depth, because your speech may become boring to the average judge. Provide a brief overview of the economic underpinnings at work, but mostly relate how these economic decisions would affect the average individual. If you are to truly persuade the judge that these economic policies are important, you should try to impact out why these policies would affect ordinary Americans. Also, go for humor during economic rounds. Because economics isn't as polarizing as politics or social issues, it is far easier to crack jokes and lighten up the tone of a round – this can work to your advantage by making your speech more memorable.

Questions

Should Yellen lower interest rates again?

What effect will increasing interest rates have on small and medium enterprises in the U.S?

Is the TPP in America's best economic interest?
How can the U.S fix stagnant wages?
What steps should the U.S take to prevent the rise of a tech bubble?

Medicine, Science, and Technology (International & Domestic)

Issues

This is everyone's favorite round! Jokes aside, though many extempers dislike this round, I found this round to be the most intellectually stimulating because you couldn't just recycle the same bland economic or IR analysis. The round topic is so broad that almost anything can be asked.

That being said, several main issues. First, the company Theranos has been in the news a lot recently, especially because of a WSJ expose that revealed the company had likely falsified data and had no conclusive evidence that their "Einstein" machines actually worked. Theranos was founded by Elizabeth Holmes over a decade ago with the promise of a cheaper and quicker blood test, using so called Einstein machines. If Theranos' claims were held up, their technology would be revolutionary, as you would be able to yield hundreds of tests with just a drop of blood, rather than go through the arduous process we have in the status quo. The Theranos case raises questions about the ethics of scientific innovation and whether more stringent regulations are required in the biopharmaceutical industry.

This flows into another problem – drug price gouging. By now, the story of Martin Shkreli is widely known – Shkreli owned a pharmaceutical company, buying the drug Daraprim (used to treat malaria) and increased prices by over 5000 percent. The case of Shkreli is not singular; Valeant Pharmaceuticals, one of the largest companies in the world, has consistently gouged prices as well. This raises the question of whether the FDA should take action and impose prices caps on pharmaceutical drugs based on market value, or whether the FDA should allow more generics into American markets. The question of pharmaceutical regulation is fascinating, and I highly suggest filing several articles related to the issue.

As for technology, one of the major issues that are present are green technologies – there is significant evidence that solar energy is becoming more efficient and gaining traction for domestic use of solar panels as well too, raising the major question of whether solar energy on a widespread domestic scale is possible. Every year there is usually a green energy question, so be prepared for one again. This includes being up to date with EVs, or electric vehicles; Tesla's new Model 3 could potentially be revolutionary with regards to making EVs mainstream and encouraging average consumers to ditch fossil fuels in exchange for electric. So far, the Model 3 has already 325,000 pre-orders in the first week after it launched, so keep careful track of the rise of EVs. SpaceX, another one of Elon Musk's ventures, is also making news in terms of technology and science. SpaceX's Falcon rockets have not only landed a payload on a moving craft in the ocean, but SpaceX is now gearing up to send a rocket to Mars by 2017. This calls into question whether private ventures are

more successful than government organizations, like NASA. After all, private corporations don't have to rely on government appropriations or justifications to the taxpayers, which may raise the question of whether the future of space travel is in the private sector. However, space travel plays a visceral role in the identity of a country as well, as in the Space Race of the 1960s, raising the question of whether space travel separate from national identity is a more successful approach. Whatever the case, I suspect technological advancement with SpaceX or Blue Origin as a potential question.

Strategy

Obviously I did not cover all there is about Science, Medicine, and Tech, but instead chose some of the biggest topics in the past year. File diligently from the New York Times, Washington Post, and Vox (carefully), as these sources have some great information on technological trends. I also recommend reading Scientific American or TechCrunch for the latest updates regarding Science and Tech.

You will likely not know everything there is to know for this round, but don't panic! Often times, you can extrapolate information you do know in order to answer a question. For example, say you know nothing about this random pharmaceutical merger between Pfizer and Allergan (me in Glenbrooks), but recall that corporate taxes are so high that companies are moving elsewhere. Combined with an article I had filed a week before, and you find that Pfizer was motivated to merge with Ireland based Allergan to potentially dodge taxes. But then recently, the merger was called off due to action taken by the U.S treasury. Thus, you can often extrapolate information you already know to answer a question.

Often times, it may be helpful to take a Science and Tech topic you know a lot about, because you will be able to explain it better with lots of details. This is good, but be wary of going overboard – too many details and your judge will be bored or overwhelmed. I would try to frame the topic around something interesting – a boring topic like scientific research regulation can be reframed as “ensuring we don't waste money on fraudulent work”, something that may be more appealing to the judge. This round is one where Extempers often make it or break it – succeeding in this round (if it is chosen) is critical in attaining good ranks, and it's often not that different from other rounds in terms of difficulty of question. The questions are just often not spoken on (I recommend giving a practice speech on a topic for preparation)!

Questions

How can the FDA better curb price gouging?

Is it in the United States' best interest to promote domestic use of green energy?

Should the United States restore NASA's funding?

Is a market cap on pharmaceutical prices the best solution to price gouging?

Are electric vehicles the future of the auto industry?

Societal Values & Ethical Issues (International & Domestic)

Issues

This is just a fancy way of saying social issues, only it's both domestic and international. One of the main social issues this year is the Black Lives Matter movement, especially the public challenge to Presidential Candidates. Some, like Trump, have actively denounced BLM protestors and even encouraged violence against them. Moreover, the BLM movement have run into a counter – All Lives Matter. I think this [article](#) does a great job at explaining where All Lives Matter misses the point, that Black lives are socially and institutionally undervalued in the United States, and there must be a correction against it. This is especially important when it comes to the relationship between law enforcement and the black community, as the tension from Ferguson and Baltimore still exists today. Just because there is no news coverage of the discontent in these communities doesn't mean the structural problems beneath don't exist.

A legal case that may threaten existing rights to abortion in the U.S is Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt, which may determine to what extent laws that restrict abortion for the stated purpose of promoting health actually serve the government's interest in promoting health. Researching the case will give you helpful background when answering question about the current landscape of abortion rights in the country, especially in the face of the defunding of Planned Parenthood in many states across the country. Be prepared to analyze why some states defunded (Kasich may have done so in order to secure conservative supporters in his Presidential run, but it seems like that failed). Per usual, don't take too extreme of a stance because the judges might also have polarizing views on the issue.

There are other domestic social issues, like the classic marijuana legalization question, or private prisons divestment question, etc. If you usually DX, the round should be fairly straightforward in terms of DX social issues. But NCFL throws a twist by also including IX social issues questions. One of the main issues here is obviously the refugee crisis in Europe – countries like Germany have reneged on promises of accepting refugees due to intense internal pressures. Other countries like Hungary went so far as to actually build a border wall to keep immigrants out. The European Commission recently unveiled a plan to centralize European asylum policy by allocating refugees around the bloc according to a quota system determined by a country's wealth and size. Countries that refuse to take in refugees would be required to pay EU states that are doing more. This seems to be an equitable system, but be familiar with it to address any questions related to efficacy.

Refugee crises exist all over the world, notably also in Myanmar, where the Rohingya are a religious and ethnic minority that have been persecuted for years. Notably, Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who has long been seen as the icon for democracy in the country, who shocked the world by saying the Rohingya's persecution is not her priority. Her neglect of the issue reveals important contradictions within leadership, those which may result in greater consequences as persecution of the Rohingya become rose.

Another major issue abroad are women's rights. Though not in the news as nearly as they should, women's rights have made significant progress in the past year. For example,

women voted for the first time this past year in Saudi Arabia, a huge progressive step for what is otherwise an authoritarian and conservative state. Nevertheless, there is so much more that needs to be done. Specifically, rights-based maternal health is a huge issue in the developing world, as there are unmet needs for family planning, underlying health conditions that plague women during times of pregnancy, unsafe abortions, just to name a few. Massive steps need to be taken in order to ensure safety of pregnant women in the developing world. Not only this, but female genital mutilation remains a prevalent problem in many of these same countries, another major issue that must be conquered.

Obviously there are far more social issues in the world, but I just wanted to give a brief overview of the ones most present in the news. This is by no means representative of the broad scope of social ills that plague our world.

Strategy

As with any social round, be careful about what you say. Don't be offensive or rude, instead give persuasive arguments and warrants, and make your impacts clear. Often times, humor is not appropriate for social rounds, so instead seek to forge a narrative that your judge can easily follow. This is probably the best way to make your speech stand out from the rest.

If you can, opt for a unique question that judges maybe haven't heard before, because we know they're all tired of the stock legalize marijuana question.

For sources, the daily big news sources are good for current information regarding social issues. For court cases, SCOTUSblog and OYEZ are great. I strongly recommend local international papers like Der Spiegel or internationally focused publications the Diplomat.

Questions

Has the Black Lives Matter movement made progress with race relations in the U.S?

What effect with anti-immigrant sentiment have on Europe in the future?

Is Aung San Suu Kyi still the best leader for Myanmar?

Will Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt end up setting back abortion rights?

How will state defunding of Planned Parenthood affect the Presidential elections?

Education (International & Domestic)

Issues

Education topics are another area that many extempers don't like, but they can actually be quite fun. One of the main issues here for Domestic education is definitely the Common Core – adopted by almost all states back in 2010, the Common Core standards have not lived up to their standards. Several states have considered repealing the standards, including Michigan and Massachusetts, who are attempting to revert back to the standards that Massachusetts used before it adopted to Common Core. Those standards were considered the best in the country at the time. Many educators and academics have criticize the Common Core standards as ineffective for young children, and some have criticized

standards based education in general. Specifically, the Common Core involves lots of testing – the PARCC and SBAC testing that have consumed school districts, all trying to convert to this new computer based testing system. The Common Core’s decision to shift attention onto more standards and technologically based tests furthers the divide between poorer school districts and rich districts. Note only this, but the Common Core has been one of the most widely talked about education programs in the United States, including Donald Trump who says he would repeal the Common Core (despite the Common Core being state implemented).

Another issue with education is *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, which asked whether public employees who chose not to join unions must pay a “fair share service fee”, typically equivalent to the dues members pay. These fees are usually used for collective bargaining costs. The Court ended in a 4-4 tie, meaning the lower court’s ruling that objecting teachers must still pay the fee is upheld. This is a huge win for teachers’ unions, one that will affect unions across the nation too.

Aside from that court case, review the *Fisher v. UT* case, which deals with college admissions using affirmative action. Keep in mind another case rising is the lawsuit on behalf of Asian-Americans against Harvard, arguing whether Harvard systematically discriminates against Asians. Another issue regarding education is the continued college debt bubble that ceaselessly rises. College is becoming more and more expensive, and thus students are having to take out more loans with higher rates of interest. This is especially a problem for racial minorities as not only are need-based scholarships not enough, but minorities often leave college with much more debt than their white counterparts. This speaks to the striking inequality that exists in American higher education that favors the already well-off, limiting the extent to which people can actualize the American dream.

In terms of education abroad, an important trend to note are increasing number of American students studying in Germany, for free! Indeed, many German universities offer free education for German citizens as well as foreigners in hopes of attracting skilled labor to the country, in order to account for the labor deficit. This is an interesting solution to the labor deficit, with some critics arguing Germany’s method would create a lack of accountability in universities; so far however, that hasn’t seemed like a problem. Germany is also well known for its vocational schooling, which has increased the number of high school graduates attending college, as well as improved workplace productivity given better trained workers in specific sectors, like carpentry or the restaurant business.

Another topic in foreign education is East Asian education, especially Chinese and Korean models which emphasize testing over everything else. In China, there exists a *Gao Kao* that essentially determines your future; score well, and you can attend one of the best universities, but score poorly and you are relegated to manual labor in a shop or construction. The emphasis on one test determining your future has led to a huge problem of mental health in China, especially with the creation of private schools dedicated toward teaching to the *Gao Kao*. Students at these preparatory schools spend upwards of 18 hours per day studying, memorizing terms or doing practice problems. Likewise, in Korea, education is often described as brutal, or criticized due to its rigid and hierarchical

structure which again, awards those who test well. Like China, Korea employs a nationwide college entrance exam, which largely determines the trajectory of a student's career. Many have blamed Korea's education system for the high suicide rate in the country.

Strategy

Education rounds are usually less polarizing, but keep in mind that many of your judges are teachers! Don't be afraid to take risks however, as often times education speeches can become stock and boring. Try to crack some jokes or perhaps weave a story across. Make sure you are well read about domestic education issues, because odds are your judge, as a teacher or some form of educator, will have experience with those issues.

Questions

Is the Friedrichs decision a boon or bane for teachers?

What steps should Korea take to reform its education system?

How can the United States reduce the college debt burden?

Should more efforts be taken to invest in vocational education in the United States?

Is the Common Core doomed to fail?

Foreign Economics

Issues

Lots of topics here. One of the main ones is bound to be the TPP, so see above. Another issue is the TTIP, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which is the TPP's equivalent with Europe. The problem with the TTIP is that it's been highly resisted by European countries, especially in light of Europe's recent fight with Google over antitrust allegations. The TTIP would be a huge benefit in accessing European markets, but again, problems with negotiations remain (even after, there would be a huge roadblock in Congress).

Another foreign economics issue are global oil prices. OPEC, or the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries increased its production in April, and large producing nations including OPEC members failed to reach an agreement to freeze their output at a meeting last month in Qatar. It's likely that Saudi Arabia and the other countries of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) will not cut production, even at the current prices, because these countries seek to maintain their share of the oil market. As a result, expect oil prices to remain low for the near future. This means several consequences for the world economy. First, there might be a small increase in global consumption, especially as consumers in the U.S or China will obviously pay less for oil. Second, low oil prices will continue to drive a stake in the heart of the economies like Venezuela's, which are not only dependent on oil, but rely heavily on exporting crude oil. As a result, countries like Venezuela will continue to suffer. Another point to watch out for is Iran; as sanctions have been lifted, expect Iran to continue increasing oil exports to pre-sanction levels. Despite low oil prices, Iran will continue exporting as anything is better than when

sanctions were still in place.

Another major issue is Abenomics, named after Shinzo Abe, the Prime Minister of Japan. Entering his sixth year as PM, Abe has taken a step back in his economic revitalization plan. In a bid to rescue Abenomics, Abe appears to be considering a U-turn in which Tokyo would abandon fiscal consolidation in favor of fiscal stimulus aimed at spurring near-term growth. This has huge implications for Japan. Though it might spur short term growth, it will continue to stall the necessary structural reforms Japan needs, like addressing the lack of women in the work force, or attempting to bring in foreign skilled labor, or addressing the huge domestic subsidies given to agriculture. Without those structural reforms, it's unlikely Japan can achieve pre-recession rates of growth. Keep filing Japan – this is a critical moment in their economic strategy.

Another issue that always seems to come up is China, especially considering the past year where we've witnessed massive volatility in Chinese markets as well as China's decision to devalue the yuan to be closer to market levels. Moreover, the IMF has announced that the Chinese Yuan would soon be added to the basket of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), increasing representation China would have in the IMF. Seeing as the IMF wants to promote fair and open markets, expect China to continue to devalue in order to fulfill IMF requirements. Nevertheless, devaluation would have significant problems for China – they will continue to dwell in the export based model they've cultivated (which has slowed down!), and the purchasing power for the middle class will suffer. China will thus continue to stock up dollar-denominated assets to push the dollar up in comparison to the Yuan, which continues to raise the question of how much U.S debt China holding, and whether this rate of debt consumption is sustainable. Furthermore, China still faces a domestic housing crisis, with far too many apartments and buildings being built for people to live in them, sparking speculation of a housing bubble.

There is a lot more to cover for Foreign Economics that I can't do in a short brief. Foreign Affairs and the Economist is great if you want to learn more.

Strategy

Expect some zany out of the box questions as well as your standard questions. This round can be really unpredictable given that the questions are all competitor and coach submitted. That being said, don't be afraid to go out of your comfort zone in order to spice up your speech and make it more memorable for the judge. Definitely crack jokes or tell a story to make your speech memorable.

Questions

Should China continue to devalue their currency?

What effect will the yuan being included in the IMF special drawing rights basket have on the world economy?

Should OPEC cut oil production?

What steps should Iran take to revitalize its economy?

Is Abenomics a failed effort?

Foreign Leaders

Issues

This is an interesting round topic; we didn't have it last year. But Foreign Leader rounds are usually fairly straightforward topic about some of the countries you've probably heard of in the news. To prepare, I recommend just writing down a list of Heads of States in G-20 countries and any country that has been in the news recently.

One of those leaders is Dilma Rousseff, the president of Brazil. Over the past year, she's come under increased scrutiny for corruption allegations. Favorability ratings have plummeted since the 2014 World Cup, which was largely panned as an administrative disaster. This specific corruption scandal revolves around state-controlled oil company Petrobras, which Rousseff allegedly manipulated funds from for her campaign for re-election in 2014. The three men in the line of succession have also faced accusations of corruption. The Brazilian government is in tatters, there is little to no faith in the government among the people, and the 2016 Rio De Janeiro is looking to be somewhat of a disaster (especially in regards to pollution and the slums). Meanwhile, Brazil is still dealing with rampant drug violence and cartels, operating within slums that the Brazilian armed forces have failed to clear out. Given how big of a country Brazil is, and the impending Olympic stage, there will surely be a Rousseff question in there.

Another world leader worth keeping an eye on is Vladimir Putin. Over two years since he invaded Crimea, the news of Russian invasion has vanished from news – in essence, Putin won. Putin has acquired significant power and leveraging ability since then; sanctions have not rattled him. The drop in oil prices have certainly had an effect on his personal pocketbook, yet has not deterred him from taking aggressive actions. Keep in mind Russia is still supporting Bashar al-Assad, yet is taking steps also to fight ISIS, a moral conundrum if you're someone who wants stability in the region. Another leader worth keeping an eye out for in this region is Recep Erdogan, the Turkish President who has become more and more authoritarian (he has just forced the foreign minister Davutoglu out of power). Turkey's slide from democracy has been notable over the past year, yet it's his actions with refugees that have garnered him the most attention, especially with the refugee deal with Europe – this stipulates that Turkey will accept European refugees in exchange for European visa freedom with Turkey. Erdogan's power grab further complicates the deal as he wishes for a broadened anti-terror stipulation in the deal to protect him against Turkish Rebels. Keep up to date with this deal – huge implications for refugees in Europe and EU-Turkey relations.

Several other leaders to keep an eye on – Aang San Suu Kyi, for reasons mentioned above. Jacob Zuma's corrupt hold on power in South Africa. Nicolas Maduro for how he fails to manage Venezuela's crisis. Justin Trudeau as the new PM of Canada. Angela Merkel over the refugee crisis. Xi Jinping for his role in stamping out corruption and China's econ policy. Shinzo Abe for Abenomics mostly and his role with Asian Pacific tension over militarization. Kim Jong Un because there is always a question about North Korea in IX rounds, and because he is claiming outrageous things about his nuclear arsenal again.

Strategy

Treat this like any IR or IX round. Be interesting, funny if possible, and have clear concise analysis. There is so much to talk about with Foreign Leaders, but distill the question down to three taglines for your points. I recommend practicing summarizing articles or papers just so you have grasp of how concise you must be. Don't dumb down analysis, just make it understandable for your judges. I anticipate this round to be a fairly straightforward IX round with the added twist about the topics being centered on leaders.

Questions

How should Dilma Rousseff respond to corruption allegations?

Is Brazil's political future with Rousseff over?

Is Vladimir Putin a boon or bane for the Middle East?

How have Xi Jinping's actions in cracking down on corruption affected Chinese political legitimacy?

Has Recep Erdogan become the most powerful figure in Eurasia?