

## Socratic Seminar on the US's Role in the World

July 2, 2014

In order for this exercise to be effective, you must do all the assigned reading. The discussion will only be productive and meaningful if everyone understands and is informed about the topic. Also, **please bring a discussion question of your own to the meeting.** Be prepared to speak at least once during the discussion.

*“Each individual State has the **responsibility to protect** its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means. We accept that responsibility and will act in accordance with it. The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability. The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.”*

*-Outcome Document of the 2005 United Nations World Summit ([A/RES/60/1, para. 138-140](#))*

### Sample Discussion Questions:

What role should the US play on the world stage?

Does the US have a responsibility to help other countries?

Who has the responsibility to protect? At what point do states collectively decide to take action on R2P? At what point do you think military intervention is necessary?

What happens when states fail in their responsibility to protect their own citizens?

What do you think is more powerful humanitarian aid or military intervention? When is each tactic appropriate or inappropriate for the United States?

Do you think R2P restricts state sovereignty?

Do you think the United States has the responsibility to protect Syria? How about in past circumstances throughout history, such as in Darfur, Libya, Rwanda?

What is the best way for the United States to aid foreign countries like Syria that are in the midst of violence, genocide, or civil war?

Given that the US armed the Mujahedeen, should the United States continue to arm and train countries in unstable areas?

**What is a Socratic Seminar?** A Socratic Seminar is a structured classroom practice that promotes critical and creative thinking, intellectual curiosity, and collaboration through shared inquiry and dialogue. The main goal of a Socratic Seminar is to build deep conceptual understandings of texts and ideas through dialogue (not debate). In the seminar, the teacher's role is purely that of a facilitator, and students generate and lead their own discussion.

### **Fishbowl Style**

- Inner Circle – Half of the class is in the ‘fishbowl’, and they will be participating in the discussion for the first 20 minutes.
- Outer Circle – The other half of the class will be observers. They will observe and evaluate their partners in the inner circle.

After the first 20 minutes, the students switch places, and the new inner circle can either discuss the same questions, or different ones.

### **Ground Rules:**

- Don't raise hands
- Listen carefully
- Address each other respectfully and with eye contact
- Base your opinions on evidence (articles, examples, logic)
- Allow everyone time to speak
- Only those in the Fishbowl can speak in the discussion (not observers!!)
- Observers should take notes on the discussion and give feedback to their partners afterwards

