

The Great Debate – Program Transcript

- 01:00:00 Title Open
- 01:00:04 LAUDIN: My name is Riza Laudin, and I teach at Herricks High School and I teach and I teach economics and AP Macroeconomics
- 01:00:09 LAUDIN: OK what I want to do now is our debate. The topic today is social security should be privatized.
- 01:00:21 LAUDIN: Back at the first week of school I tell the students that there is going to be a debate schedule and I print up fourteen debates that I'd like them to do. And they're told the framework and that they have to do research, and that it's a debate. And by debate I mean that I don't want them to have scripted speeches. Once I pick the topics, then the students are told that they should pick a partner and they are to pick two debates that they want to do. The debates are constantly changing based on what topics we do in class and the relevant news.
- 01:01:06 LAUDIN: They are then told they're going to have five minute introduction for pro and then a five minute introduction for con.
- 01:01:13 BOY 1: It's no doubt that social security was once a noble idea and still is to an extent, However, um, it's unsustainable. By the time 2021 rolls around the program will be 118 billion dollars in debt.
- 01:01:26 LAUDIN: My overall goal for my students in AP macro is to be life-long learners. I want them to be aware of what's going on, to read papers, to be able to discuss things, to have a, uh, an innate curiosity and to follow through on it.
- 01:01:41 GIRL 1: Privatizing these companies would make it so that these companies are going to want to make a profit off of this. Social security's something that's supposed to help people when they retire; you can't put a profit price on that.
- 01:01:53 LAUDIN: We just started the intro to macroeconomics and the whole idea of the economy as a whole. So this topic, while not exactly related to GDP, it's related to the macro economy.
- 01:02:05 BOY 1: The system will be fine for about another ten years, because the government invested some of the money that people paid into social security and got interest. So that interest will continue to fund the system until about 2025. Uh, once 2025

rolls around, we're in trouble. Because in 2025 interest is no longer enough and taxes are no longer enough.

- 01:02:30 LAUDIN: And that's one of the main reasons why I do have the debates because I think that is the skill that we are the weakest in teaching students. I think if you're going to make it in the world the most important thing are your oral and verbal skills.
- 01:02:44 GIRL 2: Over the next 47 years, privatization will reduce the 2005 benefit level by 44%. It would cut out benefits like disabilities and survivors.
- 01:02:53 LAUDIN: They use graphs, pictures, political cartoons, and it helps, I think, especially, make the debate come alive.
- 01:03:06 LAUDIN: To prepare for the rebuttal, I will tell them that they should research the other side so that they know their position and so they know what kinds of questions they should be prepared to ask.
- 01:03:17 BOY 1: You want that ratio to be as high as possible. Because if there's 500 people paying into social security for every one person taking out, they're obviously going to have a ton of extra money. But as soon as you approach one to one you lose the ability to save and therefore invest and make a profit on that money. Even for the trust fund in general.
- 01:03:33 GIRL 1: If you increase the retirement age, you're going to have less people taking out the benefits and more people paying in because if there's more people working obviously they're going to have- more people, more taxes and more money to come in.
- 01:03:46 LAUDIN: While the debate's going on, I will mark down, so for example, excellent use of statistics, spent a good deal of time against social security but not necessarily supporting privatization. When the rebuttal was going on I was giving a check to whoever I felt scored the point.
- 01:04:03 BOY 1: If you're talking about, oh, eventually in 2070, or whatever, we'll have to raise the retirement age to 85 because people are living to 115 – an 85-year-old can't do the same kind of work or for the same amount of time as a 65- even a 65-year-old could.

- 01:04:17 LAUDIN: I also tell them that they should take notes while the other side is talking if there are additional things they want to bring up resulting from the notes.
- 01:04:25 GIRL 1: But also as we get better medical technology, people are healthier at older ages.
- 01:04:30 BOY 1: We need people to retire to make new jobs in this market.
- 01:04:33 LAUDIN: Can we focus on privatization? I mean you're doing a nice job on social security, but let's key in on specifically why there are problems with privatization or why it's the wonderful option.
- 01:04:45 LAUDIN: I think you're going to have to do proposals, presentations, and what better training than to be able to think on your feet.
- 01:04:58 LAUDIN: And then the class gets to ask questions and what's fun is the class really gets into it. The only thing is they want to debate but I try to limit it just to the students that are debating and that they can ask questions.
- 01:05:10 BOY 1: We showed that social security is honest to goodness an unsustainable system that has to be repaired or modified. Outside of even just like this debate we think that it's a very important issue in general because it's actually our future that's on the line.
- 01:05:23 GIRL 2: I mean we had a general idea of what they were going to say, but we definitely could have prepared more for that.
- 01:05:29 LAUDIN: Now they can start using their economic knowledge of supply and demand, the economy, what government policies can be, and they can, they can debate an issue using the economic knowledge with their research skills and develop cohesive and persuasive arguments.
- 01:05:48 CREDITS