**Sample Consent Form**

Western Carolina University

Department of Human Services

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Principal Investigator (PI): Eliza Dean, Ph.D.

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Project Title: The Use of Debates in the College Classroom

**Purpose of Study:**

You are invited to participate with no obligation in a research study intended to describe the use of debates as a teaching strategy in an undergraduate Birth-Kindergarten course at Western Carolina University. When I assign debate papers in my courses I ask students to engage in research, read articles, write a paper, converse with classmates, and finally participate in a class debate. In this study I will describe these steps and ask students about their feelings toward debates.

**Description of Participation:**

If you choose to participate in this research I will give you a pre-questionnaire before each debate and a post-questionnaire after each debate. The questionnaires will take about 15 minutes to complete and will ask you questions about your knowledge of the debate topics and your feelings toward debates. These questionnaires will not be graded. We will have three debates during the semester.

In addition, I will take observational notes during our class debates, which will contain information about what you say. Finally, I will interview you one time in an individual interview and also one time in a group interview (a focus group interview). I will schedule these interviews at your convenience. The individual interview will last approximately one hour, and the group interview will last approximately one hour. I will audio-tape these interviews so that I may transcribe your words in order to capture everything you say. After I transcribe the interviews I will provide you with copies of the transcripts so that you may add, delete, or change words. You may also decide after the individual interview that you want the transcript and tape destroyed, a request that I will honor. You may also decide after the group interview that you want the parts concerning you erased, a request that I will honor. The interviews will consist of open ended questions concerning your knowledge of the debate topics, your feelings toward debates, and your preferred learning style. If there are other topics you want to discuss I will welcome those discussions as well.

The interviews will occur at WCU at your preferred time and in your preferred location. You will fill out the questionnaires before and after our class debates.

**Confidentiality:**

To protect your confidentiality I will ask you to choose a pseudonym for yourself so that when I write about the findings your real name will not be used. If you mention a person’s name in an interview, during the debates, or on your questionnaires, I will also change that person’s name to a fictional name. All data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, accessible only by me, the Principal Investigator.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation is strictly voluntary. If you decide not to participate there will be no penalties or negative consequences. Your course grade or the way you are treated in this course will not be effected if you decide not to participate in this study. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw, all data concerning you will be destroyed.

Do you have any questions? (Circle one) NO YES

If you circled YES, please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Eliza Dean, at the above phone number or by email at edean@email.wcu.edu before signing this form. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, you may also contact the chair of the WCU Institutional Review Board at 828-227-7212. Do not sign this form until these questions have been answered to your satisfaction.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO ALLOW THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR TO USE THE WORDS FROM YOUR QUESTIONNAIRES, INTERVIEWS, AND CLASS DEBATES FOR RESEARCH AND PRESENTATION PURPOSES ONLY. YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW ALSO INDICATES THAT YOU ARE OVER THE AGE OF 18.

I AGREE DO NOT AGREE (Circle one) to participate in this research study.

Participant’s name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Participant’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_