

Post–Forum Lesson Plan (2 days)

(This lesson is to be done with the whole class following the forum)

Objective:

- Participating students will inform fellow classmates of student views expressed at the forum.
- All students will engage in deliberation on divergent policies on international issue.
- All students will participate in an online ballot expressing their views.
- All students will develop their own “Future 5” reflecting their own considered judgement on the issues.
- Students will send a letter based on their Future to their federal legislators, the President, or a local newspaper.

Materials:

- Four Futures
- Critiquing the Futures
- Confronting Risks and Trade-Offs
- Student Ballot (Online ballot is available from www.choices.edu/capitol_forum/) (Paper copy is available at www.choices.edu/cf_ballot.pdf.)
- Creating your Future Five

Day 1—Procedure

Report from the Forum (10 minutes)

Student representatives convey to their classmates the issues that are of most concern to fellow students in other schools participating in the Capitol Forum.

Presenting the Four Futures (30 minutes)

Student representatives will present the four Futures to the rest of the class. They should be encouraged to use their creativity as they develop their own approach to this task. Allow time after each presentation for clarifying questions from students, but do not let these questions turn into challenges to the Future being presented. This is a time to understand the Future being presented, not to challenge it.

Considering Underlying Beliefs and Values (10 minutes)

During the Capitol Forum, values and beliefs have been stressed as important determinants in the development of public policy. To illustrate the role of values in public deliberation on policy issues and to help students come to terms with the priorities they hold, have students take 5 to 10 minutes to respond independently to the statements on the handout “Confronting Risks and Trade-offs”.

Homework: Critiquing the Futures

Distribute “Critiquing the Futures” along with the handouts of each of the Futures. Ask students to identify two things they like and two things that concern them about each of the Futures.

Day 2—Procedure

Deliberating the Pros and Cons of Four Alternative Futures (20 minutes)

The “fishbowl” activity found online at www.choices.edu/fishbowl.cfm is designed to engage students in deliberative dialogue in small groups. Alternatively you could have the class as a whole consider the pros and cons, risks and tradeoffs of each of the Four Futures (one at a time). Whether this activity is done as one group or as a rotating fishbowl activity, it is recommended that you share with students the “Guidelines for Deliberation” found on the web at www.choices.edu/deliberation.cfm. Students will find that a review of their responses to “Critiquing the Futures” provides a useful beginning for this exercise. Encourage students to add to their worksheets as they consider the contributions of their classmates.

Complete the Online Ballot (15 minutes)

The online ballot for Capitol Forum is available from the Capitol Forum home page at www.choices.edu/capitol_forum. Click on “ballot” from the menu at the top of the page.

Note: If it is not possible to do this online during class, a paper copy is available in the CRB-II. Only online ballot submittals are included in the ballot report. Students should re-enter paper ballots online after completing them in class. Completion of ballots online is an expectation of the Capitol Forum program. Stress to students that the ballot results will be sent to Congressional representatives and the media.

Preparation for Developing a Future 5 (10 minutes)

The homework assignment will be to develop their own Future 5. This is their Future and as such it should represent their vision for our country’s role in the world. Remind them that in a democracy the citizens together define the parameters within which policy is made, and so their Futures need not be constrained by what is politically viable today. It should, however, be possible if we have the will as a nation; this is not a time for fantasy. Begin a preparatory discussion in class asking the students what components they will want to include in their Futures. Note that as they start to think about their Futures, they may find that the notes they have recorded on “Critiquing the Futures” serve as useful building blocks.

Homework: Developing a Future 5

Using “Creating your Future Five” (worksheet), students should draft the components of their Future 5. At the end of the worksheet they are asked to draft a paragraph about their Future 5. Ask them to expand upon this by writing a formal essay or a letter to an elected official or writing a letter to the editor of a paper.

A note about ballot tabulation & analysis

Individual student ballots are tabulated from those entered through the website. Please do not submit a composite ballot. You will be given specific instructions by your state organizer . If you are unable to do online balloting, please consult your state organizer.

Critiquing the Futures

The four Futures are designed to highlight starkly different directions for U.S policy, grounded in different assumptions and different values. In the end, you will need to go beyond the four Futures presented and develop your own Future based on your beliefs and values. As a starting point for developing your own Future Five, review the four Futures and identify two things that you like and two things that concern you about each.

Things I like	Things that concern me
Future 1 1 2	1 2
Future 2 1 2	1 2
Future 3 1 2	1 2
Future 4 1 2	1 2

Confronting Risks and Trade-offs

Weighing risks and trade-offs is central to the development of public policy. Beliefs almost always come with trade-offs. We may, for example, believe in peace, but we also must ask ourselves what we are willing to do in the name of peace. Are we willing to turn a blind eye to egregious violations of human rights to avoid international confrontations? Are we willing to grant the United Nations new powers to slap down potential aggressors at the expense of our own sovereignty? Are we willing to scale back research on high-tech weaponry in hopes that other countries might follow a similar course?

Take a few minutes by yourself to think about and respond to the statements below. Rate each according to your beliefs. After each, reflect on your response in light of the possible trade-offs cited. This is just for you — to help you focus your thoughts as you prepare to critique the four Futures and then figure out what you think. Rate each:

1 = Strongly Support 2 = Support 3 = Oppose 4 = Strongly Oppose 5 = Undecided

___ The interests of the United States can be maintained only if we are willing to consistently exercise our power and influence in international affairs.

Would you support this statement even if it means that...

- We must use military force and risk American lives for less than admirable causes?
- We will anger our allies and trading partners by acting independently?
- We must maintain high military spending to deter our potential enemies?

___ Problems in the international arena are far less important for Americans than the challenges we face at home, such as poverty, crime, and budget deficits.

Would you support this statement even if it means that...

- we will sit on the sidelines as the next Adolf Hitler gains strength?
- Global problems, such as international terrorism, degradation of the environment, AIDS, and drug trafficking, will worsen?
- The international alliance system will break down, endangering world peace?

___ The United States should oppose countries that grossly abuse the human rights of their citizens.

Would you support this statement even if it means that...

- We will anger some of our key trading partners and military allies, especially in the Middle East?
- We will aggravate tensions with other great powers, such as China and Russia?
- The cohesion and effectiveness of the UN and other international organizations will be undermined?

___ The United States should be willing to give up some of its own sovereignty to promote international cooperation.

Would you support this statement even if it means that...

- The United States will be obliged to live by the decisions of the UN and other international bodies even when they run counter to U.S. interests?
- American taxpayers will have to support expensive new programs and powerful bureaucracies created by the international community?
- The United States will be able to take military action only with the approval of the UN?

___ The United States cannot afford to give other nations a say in policies by which Americans must live.

Would you support this statement even if it means that...

- The United States will find itself isolated in the international arena?
- The UN, the international trading system, and other global institutions will unravel without U.S. participation?
- Other great powers, such as China or Russia, will emerge as leaders in the international community?

___ International stability and order should be protected because they are vital to the interests of the United States.

Would you support this statement even if it means that...

- We must always defend the international status quo, regardless of its fairness and legitimacy?
- We will have to respond to every threat to international order and stability?
- We will be expected to aid governments that are fighting insurgents within their countries, regardless of the reasons for civil conflict?

___ U.S. foreign policy should be directed toward promoting American values in other countries.

Would you support this statement even if it means that...

- Tension will escalate with countries that reject our values?
- New divisions will arise within the international community centered on questions of values?
- Anti-Western forces, such as Islamic fundamentalism, will gain greater prominence in cultures that do not share our values?

___ We should rely less on military force and other conventional foreign policy tools to solve the problems of today's interconnected world.

Would you support this statement even if it means that...

- Regional aggressors will be convinced that the United States will not block their efforts to expand their influence by force?
- Global problems will remain unresolved because the United States lacks clout in the international arena?
- The international system that has evolved in the 20th century will grow increasingly fragmented and chaotic?

Capitol Forum Student Ballot

Part I: Ranking the Futures

Rank the statements below from 1 to 4, assigning 1 to the statement with which you most agree and 4 to the statement with which you least agree.

___ **Future 1: Lead the World to Democracy**—The United States is the most powerful nation in the world. The world depends on us to maintain peace and order and to support liberal democratic principles. Today’s international system was built around American ideals and power. Neither collective security nor the United Nations can be counted on to deal with the threats to this system. We must devote the necessary resources to build an international moral order and a vigorous international economy grounded in American political and economic principles and we must protect this international system from any threats, even if pressuring other governments to adopt American democratic principles may spark international criticism that the United States is ushering in a “Pax Americana.”

___ **Future 2: Protect U.S. Global Interests**—We live in a dangerously unstable world. U.S. foreign policy must strive for order and security. International terrorism, chaos in the Middle East, rising poverty in the developing world, and global economic competition have created an international minefield for U.S. leaders. We need to focus our energies on protecting our own security, cultivating our key trade relationships, ensuring our access to crucial raw materials, and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons to unfriendly nations or to terrorist networks. We must be selective in our involvement in international affairs and be prepared to protect ourselves—at home and abroad—against any threats to our security and prosperity, even if this policy may breed resentment and lead to an angry backlash against us.

___ **Future 3: Build a More Cooperative World**—We live today in an interdependent and interconnected world. We cannot stand alone. National boundaries can no longer halt the spread of AIDS, international drug trafficking, terrorism, and other global scourges. We must take the initiative to bring the nations of the world together and play a leadership role in strengthening the UN’s role in international security and responding to other global problems such as environmental pollution, financial crises, refugees, and AIDS. We must be willing to give up a portion of our independent authority, or sovereignty, to the UN and offer our military, intelligence, and economic support to UN-led initiatives, even if this may limit our ability to use military force unilaterally outside of North America..

___ **Future 4: Protect the U.S. Homeland**—The attacks of September 11, 2001 have made us feel a vulnerability not felt in more than fifty years. We have spent hundreds of billions of dollars a year defending our allies in western Europe and East Asia and distributed tens of billions more in foreign aid to countries throughout the developing world. These high-profile foreign policy programs have only bred resentment against us and made us enemies. It is time to sharply scale back our foreign involvement and turn our attention to the real threats facing Americans: a sagging economy, decaying schools, a shaky health care system, and inadequate resources to protect against terrorism, even if this may upset the worldwide balance of power and cause insecure countries to seek nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

Continue to Part II

Part II: What most concerns you? Please check only three.

- 1. A clash of ideologies and political values will fuel conflict and instability in the world.
- 2. The gulf between the developed and developing worlds will widen, making it increasingly difficult to address common problems.
- 3. Increasing immigration will worsen strains in our society.
- 4. U.S. jobs will be lost to other countries.
- 5. Loose border controls will threaten our security.
- 6. The United States will act unilaterally and the international community will turn against us.
- 7. Nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons will proliferate and end up in the hands of terrorists.
- 8. The United States will drain its resources trying to solve other countries' problems.
- 9. The United States will lose access to oil and other key resources abroad.
- 10. U.S. troops will get bogged down in conflicts abroad.
- 11. Damage to the global environment will become irreparable.
- 12. More Americans will die at the hands of terrorists.
- 13. Participation in international organizations will force the U.S. to follow costly or risky policies.

Part III: What beliefs drive your thinking?

Rate each of the statements below according to your personal beliefs:

1 = Strongly Support; 2 = Support; 3 = Oppose; 4 = Strongly Oppose; 5 = Undecided

- In today's interconnected world, many serious problems can be addressed only through international cooperation.
- We will always have to compete with the world's other nations for power.
- Any nation acting alone has neither the moral authority nor the capacity to right the world's wrongs.
- The United States should not do business with countries that grossly abuse the human rights of their citizens.
- Our resources should be focused on addressing poverty, crime, and budget deficits at home.
- We have no right to decide on our own to pressure another country to behave in a certain way.
- The greatest threat to our civil liberties comes from the limits we put on ourselves because of our fear of others.
- Using our economic and military power around the world creates more enemies than friends.
- Trying to make deep changes in the way the world works is naive and dangerous.
- As Americans, we have a responsibility to spread democracy around the world.
- Free trade and open economies are the best way to foster economic growth at home and around the world.

Continue to Part IV

Part IV: What should we do?

Rate each of the statements below according to your beliefs:

1 = Strongly Support; 2 = Support; 3 = Oppose; 4 = Strongly Oppose; 5 = Undecided

- ___ The United States should spend what is necessary to remain a military superpower, even if this means having less domestic spending, larger deficits, or higher taxes than we would like.
- ___ The United States should support broadening the mandate of the UN and other international organizations, even if this means we are bound by the decisions of this community of nations and cannot act unilaterally except to defend our homeland.
- ___ The United States should use military force to protect access to oil and other important raw materials, even if this places us in opposition to our traditional allies and the broader international community.
- ___ The United States should commit itself to the elimination of nuclear weapons, even if this means that we will need to rethink our defense strategy.
- ___ The United States should impose trade sanctions on countries that threaten their neighbors with aggression or contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, even if such sanctions harm U.S. trade relations.
- ___ The United States should increase financial aid to countries where poverty and despair are creating the breeding grounds of discontent, even if money needs to be diverted from domestic programs.
- ___ The United States should help negotiate strict international standards to address global warming and other environmental threats, even if compliance forces us to pay more for cars, gasoline, and other products that contribute to pollution.
- ___ The United States should accept fewer immigrants, in addition to cracking down on illegal immigration, even if this deprives the American work force of the talent and ambitions of newcomers and fuels anti-American sentiment abroad.
- ___ The United States should use its military—alone if necessary—to stop gross human rights violations, even if this may isolate us from our traditional allies or the broader international community.

After completing this paper ballot, students should go to the Capitol Forum web site to use the online ballot. Click on “ballot” at <www.choices.edu/capitol_forum>. Only online ballots can be included in the ballot report that will be disseminated to elected officials and the media..

Creating Your Future Five

Instructions: Having completed your U.S. Role in the World Student Ballot and submitted it online at <www.choices.edu/capitol_forum>, you are ready to offer your own recommendations for U.S. foreign policy. In this exercise you will create a Future that reflects your own beliefs and opinions. You may borrow heavily from one Future, combine ideas from two or three Futures, or take a new approach altogether. Be careful of contradictions, keep in mind that policies should logically follow beliefs, and remember that the economic cost of your Future must be factored into your thinking. There are no right or wrong answers. Rather, you should strive to craft a Future that is logical and persuasive.

Your Future Five: _____ (your title)

1. What do you believe are the most important problems facing the United States?

2. What steps in the foreign policy arena should the United States take over the next ten years?

3. How would your Future affect the lives of Americans?

4. What are the two strongest arguments opposing your Future?
 - a.

 - b.

5. What are the two strongest arguments supporting your Future?
 - a.

 - b.

Like the Future that you've constructed? Now you get to let other people know what you think. Use your responses to the questions above to write a paragraph or two describing your Future 5. Then write your "Future 5" in the form of a letter to your federal legislators, the President, or your local newspaper.

Make your voice heard!