

## How to Conduct a Panel Discussion

### *Preparation*

- Select 4 or 5 panelists who are familiar with the subject. If your class members have written essays on the subject beforehand, choose students that you believe have the best essays.
- Prepare 3 to 6 questions designed to draw out the panelists' opinions on the subject.
- Interview each panelist before the discussion. Ask a couple of questions from your list. Listen carefully to be sure each panelist understands the topic and has developed some personal opinions about it.
- Set the panelists' chairs in a row facing the rest of the class. Place your chair in the center of the row. Do not put yourself and the panelists behind a table, as that creates a psychological barrier between you and the audience.

### *The Discussion*

- Briefly introduce the topic to your audience (no more than five minutes).
- Determine how much time you can allow panelists to answer each question. Ask 1 or 2 panelists the first question, then ask 1 or 2 others the next question, and so on. Make sure you move to the next question when you reach the allotted time limit. Time will not allow you to ask all panelists all of the questions.
- Allow time for questions and comments from the audience after all of the panelists have commented on the topic. Reserve about one-fourth of your total session time for this purpose.