

2025 Gorlok

Editorial Impromptu Articles

Editorial Impromptu: Students will receive a short editorial (ideally 3-5 paragraphs) and develop a response. Participants will be allocated nine minutes to divide between preparation and speech time. Speakers must speak for at least five minutes. Limited notes, prepared in the round, are permitted.

Before preparing your speech: make sure to double check FTN to ensure you are selecting the correct speaker's editorial. These are excerpts from longer editorials. The longer versions can be found under the same author and title name by simply googling the title.

Reminders: Please submit a link to your recording NO LATER THAN Tuesday, January 21 at NOON. You are responsible for ensuring links are working properly and that you can be heard clearly. We recommend using YouTube and uploading the video as UNLISTED.

Only one submission per speaker is required. The same video will be used for both rounds and for finals should you advance.

Finally, HAVE FUN! We look forward to seeing what you have prepared for us.

Speaker 1

Opinion - The Editorial Board: America Needs More Jimmy Carters

“There’s no predicting history’s verdict. Up to now, Jimmy Carter, who died on Sunday at age 100 in Plains, Ga., has been judged to be a middle-of-the-pack president, his one term in office remembered for circumstances and events that simply overwhelmed him: the seizure in Iran of 52 American hostages, the bungled attempt to rescue them, the gasoline lines, inflation, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Yet he is also considered one of America’s greatest ex-presidents, for using the residual star power of his office to help his successors and his country as a peacemaker, backstage diplomat, human rights champion, monitor of free elections and advocate for the homeless while finding time to write poetry and, by his own example, providing the best possible case for traditional religious values.

His life offers countless lessons for leaders everywhere.

As this board observed in 1994, compared with Mr. Carter, most former presidents struggled to use their stature for the common weal. Most wrote memoirs. Some disappeared into private life; some set up foundations; some went around collecting large sums for speaking. Mr. Carter took risks and played crucial roles as an honest broker in nuclear talks with North Korea and in civil conflicts on the continent of Africa and in the Middle East.

He described his second career as “waging peace.” That work remains far from finished, and it remains for those who admired Mr. Carter to continue.”

Speaker 2

Opinion - Farah Stockman: The Real Case for D.E.I.

“It matters that U.S. sanction policies were overseen by a man who grew up watching his parents send money through Western Union to relatives in Nigeria. That’s worth remembering today as Americans bid farewell to the most diverse administration in U.S. history — and as we watch a new administration that pledges to dismantle diversity initiatives take power.

Too often, critics have labeled this commitment to diversity as politically correct window dressing or a source of government bloat. But when diversity is done right, it can be a crucial strategy for bolstering American power. The United States attracts the world’s best and brightest because they can rise here and eventually help run the place. Newcomers to China, Russia and Iran can’t expect the same thing. That makes diversity in the ranks of the federal government a big comparative advantage.

The Biden administration’s decision to draw on talent from different walks of life, rather than the well-connected few, has served America well.

At least some immigrants, along with Mr. Musk and Mr. Krishnan, will have a place in the federal government under Mr. Trump. Even the person picked to run the civil rights division at the Justice Department, Harmeet Dhillon — who is expected to wage war on wokeness — is a Sikh born in India.

Even MAGA needs immigrants, it seems.”

Speaker 3

Opinion - Mara Gay: Helping Students Find Their Way to College

“After the Supreme Court’s decision last year to ban affirmative action in college admissions, OneGoal is an especially timely and vital balm. A vast majority of OneGoal students are eligible for free or reduced lunch; 94 percent identify as a member of a racial minority group. Americans who are committed to fairness and equity and who want to help such students will have to find creative ways of doing so.

The OneGoal program begins in the junior year of high school. Students form a cohort within their existing high school and together receive intensive college advising, from help with personal essays to the byzantine process of applying for financial aid. OneGoal also tries to build the confidence of its students, who often attend overburdened schools.

Given the enormous barriers to attending college, it’s not surprising that nearly 90 percent of students from wealthy families do so, while only half of students from low-income families do. OneGoal is aimed at closing this gap. Giving students from low-income families a fighting chance to attend college is a matter of fairness. But it’s also a way to strengthen the middle class, which is essential to American democracy.

Since 2007, over 30,000 students have been directly served by OneGoal, and tens of thousands more have been helped through local school districts that have adopted the program.”

Speaker 4

Opinion - Serge Schmemmann: Democracy is Not Facing a Global Extinction Event

“Democracy, it is often heard these days, is in crisis. The election of Donald Trump and news of political turmoil in many other democracies has created the impression that liberal democracy is everywhere in retreat in the face of authoritarians feeding on discontent over economic woes, rapid social change, mass migration, disinformation and general malaise.

It’s easy to perceive a global trend: workers of the world losing faith in the established order and dismayed by globalization, rushing for the extremes and rallying behind populists.

But as The Times’s Berlin bureau chief Jim Tankersley suggested in a recent analysis of Germany’s plight, “not all malaise is the same.” Popular discontent in Western democracies may have broadly similar sources, but the political consequences are as different as the leaders and systems in each country. And it is ultimately leaders who shape the outcomes, argues Larry M. Bartels, the author of “Democracy Erodes From the Top.”

Scanning the global political storms separately reveals their unique characteristics and challenges, and the way many are rooted more in a backlash against incumbent leaders than in a new embrace of the far right.

That the threats to democracy are diverse may not be a great consolation to those worried about where it is headed, and there’s every reason to remain vigilant. But it should be reassuring that democracy is not facing a global extinction event but more a patchwork of storms, and that democracies have usually found a way to weather them.”

Speaker 5

Opinion - Guest Essay: How Higher Education Can Win Back America

“Elite education has lost the trust of many Americans, in no small part because of how it solidifies the advantages of wealth. The fact that many schools still give preferential treatment to children of their alumni just adds insult to injury.

It doesn't have to be this way. College should not be a prerequisite for advancing one's prospects in life, but everyone should have an opportunity to continue education as a young adult in a good apprenticeship, trade school, two-year college or university. The best universities would be even better if they invested more in finding talented students in places they have historically overlooked — if they went beyond the usual metrics of meritocracy that elite families know how to use to their advantage.

Good college classes, despite what one reads these days, don't just teach closed-minded students to condemn privilege or to complain about systemic oppression by elites. A good college education opens pathways for transformative achievement. And by doing so, the school inspires still more people to change their life trajectories through learning.

We will always have elites — some deserving, some not — and we will always have anti-elitists — some civic-minded, some cynical. Constitutional democracy doesn't work if people are stuck in the station they're born into, and education can still be an effective lubricant, and a powerful corrective to entrenched inequality.

Like the founders, we can be anti-elitists without falling into the trap of being anti-education. We'll have to create pathways that change the opportunity structures for our fellow citizens, wherever they live and wherever, or whether their parents went to school.”

Speaker 6

Opinion - The Editorial Board: Books About Everyone, for Everyone

“Book banning is on the rise in the United States. A growing number of communities are trying to take reading choices out of the hands of children and families by declaring some books off limits. The targets of those bans are often books that feature people of color or people who are not heterosexual or books that deal with difficult subjects like sexual violence and substance abuse.

First Book is an antidote to these bans. In 2022 and 2023, First Book delivered more than 25 million books to communities across the country, including a wide range of titles that might not otherwise be available in those places.

The impact of making these books available is concrete. During the 2022-23 school year, First Book enrolled 437 teachers, all of whom work in schools in low-income communities, in a pilot program to measure the impact of increasing the diversity of the books available in classroom libraries. The participating teachers reported significant increases in the amount of time that students spent reading and in performance on reading proficiency tests.

First Book secures discounts from publishers by buying large quantities of books. Donations allow even deeper discounts and support the distribution of free books. Last year the group distributed 90,000 free books to teachers across the country, as well as 40,000 free books to families in public housing projects.

Like any great bookstore, a big part of First Book’s work is curation. First Book staff members review about 10,000 titles each year, and its website features both classics and lists like “The Best New Books of 2024.” In addition to highlighting diverse characters and stories, First Book uses its weight in the marketplace to encourage publishers to provide more of the kinds of books that the current generation of American children needs.”