

Debate: The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Nuremberg Trials

1. **Recommended Level of Instruction:** Designed for a mid-upper level undergraduate course. No prior knowledge is required, although an accompanying lecture on the history of international law will deepen the engagement that students will have with the material.
2. **Keywords:** International law, Nuremberg, WWII, debate
3. **Learning Objectives:** Students will be able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Nuremberg Trials in terms of legal precedents set and also justice served.
4. **Readings/ Materials:**
 - Robertson, Geoffrey (2006) “Chapter 6: An End to Impunity?” *Crimes Against Humanity*. Third Edition. New York: Penguin Press.

 - Yael Danieli, (2005-2006). “Reappraising the Nuremberg Trials and their Legacy: The Role of Victims in International Law.” *Cardozo Law Review*. Vol. 27. p1633-1649.
5. **Synopsis of Material:** The Robertson chapter provides a general introduction to international law as well as details about the Nuremberg Trials. It then outlines some of the international legal conventions that have been introduced since the trials. The Danieli article provides a critique of the trials by examining developments in the field of victimology.
6. **Recommended Background Information:** The readings should provide enough background information on the trials themselves, but a brief lecture on the history of international law will help students to more clearly see the legal contributions made by the Nuremberg Trials.
7. **Discussion Questions / Activity**
 - a. Divide students into two groups.
 - b. Give Group 1 a handout with the following two arguments:
 - i. The Nuremberg Trials were both successful and just
 - ii. The Nuremberg Trials were just, but not particularly successful
 - c. Give Group 2 a handout with the following two arguments:
 - i. The Nuremberg Trials should not be viewed as particularly successful or just
 - ii. The Nuremberg Trials were successful, but not just.
 - d. Tell each group that they may pick which argument out of the two they agree with most then have them craft an argument based on their readings and lecture notes.
 - e. Once the groups are finished, have them present their arguments to the class.
 - f. Use this activity to prompt a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the Nuremberg Trials in terms of procedure, justice, and legal precedent.

Developed By: Catherine Buerger, PhD Candidate, Anthropology, University of Connecticut