

Miami Oceans Debates, April 11-12, 2026



On behalf of the University of Miami Debate Team and the UM School of Communication, we are pleased to invite student debaters of all experience and skill levels to participate in a debate tournament and civic debate event on our campus on Saturday, April 11 through Sunday, April 12, 2026. We will offer four preliminary rounds of debate and appropriate elimination rounds up to quarterfinals. On Friday, April 10 preceding the tournament, participants will be invited to engage in an *Ocean Service/Learning* activity; more details to be announced by March 1.

Topic

The topic for debate is:

On balance, marine ecotourism does more good than harm for ocean health and sustainability.

It is our hope that the topic will encourage research, thought, and discourse about the vital and urgent need to preserve ocean health and resources while attempting to adapt and prevent climate change.

Affiliation

The Oceans Debates are a civic debate education program intended to be consistent with the aims of the [Civic Debate Consortium](#).

Format

The debates will be public in style with a goal of attracting media attention and local participation. The format and approach, therefore, is designed to be suitable for a public audience and accessible to student debaters regardless of experience. Persuasive delivery style and appropriate argument selection for non-expert audiences will be rewarded. To this end, we will use the format originated by the Lafayette Debates and adopted by the Social Justice Debates, a hybrid between intercollegiate policy and parliamentary formats, and very accessible for audience debates.

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Students will compete in teams of either two or three debaters each. Teams will be assigned to affirm or negate the topic, with each team representing the affirmative in two debates and the negative in two debates.

On teams of two, each speaker will give one 6-minute speech, be cross examined for 4 minutes, and cross examine an opposing debater for 4 minutes. One debater should participate as a questioner and one as a respondent during each cross-examination period. In addition, one speaker for each team will also give a 6-minute closing rebuttal. For teams of Three, each debater should give a 6 minute speech, the rebuttalist should conduct one of the cross examination periods as questioner, and no debater should be questioner more than once.

1st Affirmative 6 Minutes

Cross examination by 2nd Negative Speaker, 4 minutes

1st Negative 6 minutes

Cross examination by 1st Affirmative Speaker, 4 minutes

2nd Affirmative 6 minutes

Cross examination by 1st Negative Speaker, 4 minutes

2nd Negative 6 minutes

Cross examination by 2nd Affirmative Speaker, 4 minutes

2 minutes of preparation time

Affirmative Rebuttal 6 minutes

2 minutes of preparation time

Negative Rebuttal 6 minutes

Over the course of the four preliminary rounds, each speaker on the teams of two must give two closing rebuttals for their team and their partner must give two closing rebuttals for their team.

Community Judging: While the judges supplied by the tournament participants will serve as the judges for most of the preliminary debates, content area experts, ocean and environmental educators, activists and professionals, and others interested in the issues of ocean health and/or public advocacy and public speaking to serve as the judges for the semifinal and final rounds.

Fees and Judging: Fees will be \$50 per person (for all debaters, coaches, judges and observers) to defray the cost of awards, rooms, breakfast on Saturday and Sunday, lunch on Saturday, and snacks. You must provide judging to cover your teams @ 2 rounds of judging provided for each team entered. Judges should not be currently competing undergraduate debate students. All judges will be obligated through Quarterfinals. Teams may not participate if they cannot supply judging. University of Miami students will be allowed to participate and will be eligible to receive awards. If the fees and/or judging requirements create a hardship for you that would prevent your participation, please communicate with David Steinberg (dave@miami.edu) about your situation asap. We want you to be able to participate and will work with you. A credit card portal will be available for payment.

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Registration. Please register for the tournament at ForensicsTournament.Net. The deadline for registration is EOD April 1, however, please enter as early as possible *even if your entry is tentative* to help us in planning. Or just let Dave know you are thinking about attending.

Hotels: Unfortunately, hotel rates near The University of Miami are high. We will not be arranging a block, however, you may secure UM rates at local hotels through the [University Travel Site](#). You must select “Leisure Hotel Rates” and create a Deem login if you do not have one already (it is free). The rates we saw were cheaper than booking directly with the hotels. We recommend that you make your reservations as soon as possible, this is Miami during Spring Break, rooms will be in demand.

Directions: For directions to The University of Miami, and campus maps, visit [Directions and Maps](#). The School of Communication is located at 5100 Brunson Drive, Coral Gables, FL 33124-2105.

Parking: You will be required to pay for on-campus parking through [PayByPhone](#) or a Pay Station. The PayByPhone code for the School of Communication is 303209. See [University of Miami Visitor Parking](#) for more detailed information and maps.

Tournament Operation:

All participants debate at the invitation of the University of Miami according to its tournament rules and the rules the University holds generally for conduct of guests while on campus. The tournament will in general, attempt to follow the guidelines of the [American Forensic Association Code of Standards](#) related to tournament operation and contestant, judge, and coach conduct. Students must have the approval of their institution to compete. Please forward your questions about format, tournament operation, etc. to David Steinberg at dave@miami.edu or 786-351-3813.

The University of Miami is a tobacco free campus.

Equity/ Title IX: The University of Miami Debate Team seeks to foster an environment where all competitors, judges and guests feel welcome and safe. We encourage you to help us in this endeavor. The University of Miami’s Title IX Office, guidelines, and complaint procedures can be located at [Title IX](#).

Accessibility: If you need accommodations, please contact David Steinberg. All our classrooms are wheelchair accessible. We will designate a Quiet Room to allow participants to relax and regain composure. Upon request, we will provide a breastfeeding room. There are gender neutral bathrooms on campus. We can provide a list of rental car and car services that accommodate wheelchairs. The University of Miami’s Office of Disability Services (ODS) is in the [Camner Center for Academic Resources](#) in The Whitten University Center N201. ODS staff can be reached at 305-284-2374 (Voice), 305-284-3401 (TDD).

Eligibility: The tournament is open to any undergraduate student seeking a degree from an accredited academic institution. Students must have the approval of their institution to compete and have a faculty advisor/official coach available for questions or concerns.

Videos: A semifinal round and the final round of the 2023 Oceans Debates on the aquaculture topic are available here: <https://www.youtube.com/@umdebate>

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Tentative Schedule (times approximate)

Friday, April 10, 2026

Ocean Service and Learning Activity, details TBA

Saturday, April 11, 2026

9:00	Registration, Breakfast, Mandatory Judge and Competitor Briefing
9:30	Round I
11:15	Round II
	Lunch (provided by UM)
1:30	Round III
3:30	Round IV
5:30	Quarterfinals

Sunday, April 12, 2025

9:30	Breakfast
10:00	Semifinals
12:00	Finals
1:30	Presentation of Awards

We sincerely hope you will join us in Miami for the Miami Oceans Debates. Do not hesitate to contact us if we can answer questions or help in any way. Sincerely,

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