Every topic should have one or more positions associated with it. A position is one view about the topic.

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What positions fit in Discourse DB?

There are three types of positions in Discourse DB: views on possible future actions, meaning what should be done, views on past actions, meaning what has already been done, and general analytical views on the topic.

Future actions

A simple example of a topic with positions on future actions is an election: every election should be phrased as a topic, and every candidate running in an election should be phrased as a position within that topic. Any item that's written about this election while the campaign is ongoing, and states some opinion about who should win, can be grouped as having an opinion on one or more of these candidate positions.

Past actions

Discussion on the wisdom of a political action can keep going even after that action has already been taken; in the case of military actions, afterwards is when most of the discussion occurs, since governments usually do not reveal all the details of planned military
operations before they happen. If commentary about a political action happens after it occurs, it should be grouped into a separate position than the commentary from before it occurred, since afterwards commentators are obviously acting on a different set of information than they did beforehand. A simple example of two complementary before-and-after positions are "U.S. should invade Canada" and "U.S. was right to invade Canada".

**Analytical statements**

These are statements that simply describe a situation, without a recommended solution. We would generally counsel to avoid these types of positions, because they are the ones most prone to abuse. Sometimes commentators will make personal attacks against a politicians, or political groups, they dislike, such as, say, criticizing a verbal gaffe a politician has made. Any such attack could, in theory, be defined within the system as an analytical-statement-type position. This is generally not the sort of commentary that Discourse DB is geared for; we are more interested in policy debate, and constructive proposed solutions to existing issues. However, there may be cases where a point of view exists on a specific topic that cannot be summed in any specific proposed action. An example might be an election, taking place in the future or the past, in which one or more commentators feel that the election will be or was rigged, and thus the results are invalid. In cases like these, an analytical statement can be used to describe that position, such as "Election was rigged".

**Representing a position**

A position's name should take the form "topic name / declaration", where the topic name is the name of the topic the position is associated with.

*Example:* "Minnesota gubernatorial election, 2006 / Jeff Smith should be elected"

In the case of an election, like this example, not all positions must be related to one of the candidates: another position could be "Minnesota gubernatorial election, 2006 / All eligible citizens should vote", if at least a few editorial are written taking a stand for or against that idea.

There will always be a choice about which way a position should be worded, since it can be for or against any action: "Capital punishment should be outlawed in the U.S." could just as easily be "Capital punishment should be upheld in the U.S.". There are three general rules to this, depending on the type of position it is:

**Future actions**

A position on a future action should be phrased as representing a move away from the status quo, and toward a new state. In the above example, "...should be outlawed..." would be the better title, because capital punishment is currently legal in the U.S.

One exception to the status quo rule might be a politician running for re-election; the position representing that person running should still be "Senator Carlson should be elected", not "Senator Carlson should be voted out of office". (Though you could argue that that's not an exception at all, since the politician was elected only until the end of that term; there is no status quo on who serves next).
Past actions

A position on a past action should be phrased in favor of that action. An example of a position name for a past action might be "Johnson v. Smith / Supreme Court was correct in their ruling".

Analytical statements

A position that's an analytical statement, if it occurs, should be phrased as taking the more negative or controversial view.

All position names should be kept as simple as possible. One way to do this is to avoid using negatives in the position name; it is better to state the position in the positive. For example, "Gay marriage should not be illegal" can be said more simply as "Gay marriage should be legal". Also, positions should be reduced to their basic elements. "The European Union should negotiate with Syria and Iran" would be phrased better as two positions, "The European Union should negotiate with Syria" and "The European Union should negotiate with Iran".

The position template

Although a lot of decision-making can go into the naming of a position, the contents of a position page, once that name has been decided on, are quite straightforward. In the page where you want a new position to be, just enter the following:

| {{position}} |


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