INTERNATIONAL DEBATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

MANY SIDES,

DEBATE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

by Alfred Snider & Maxwell Schnurer

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FOREWORD

The history of educational reform has been characterized by a variety of movements that have met resistance from the expectations of the cultural status quo. The current trend towards instructional techniques that enfranchise a partnership between students and teachers to construct both learning environments and actual learning are no better embodied than in the Debate Across the Curriculum (DAC) method. This instructional tool employs the process of classroom debate to teach in virtually all of the intellectual disciplines in a school.

Alfred Snider and Maxwell Schnurer have written the first definitive book on the DAC process and application. Snider has been a powerful advocate of academic debate for more than 30 years. A nationally prominent intercollegiate debate coach, his experience in pioneering debate education for inner city students through the Urban Debate League national curricular reform movement has been applied to the international debate community. He has pioneered the use of the Internet to promote debating everywhere. He has personally helped to promote discussion and debate in the People's Republic of China, Chile, South Korea, Serbia, and many of the former Soviet Union satellite countries. Many of the concepts in this book were field tested at his internationally recognized World Debate Institute at the University of Vermont.

Maxwell Schnurer, a former student of Snider's, has developed his own reputation as a nationally ranked intercollegiate debate coach and pioneer in classroom applications of competitive debate. As an assistant coach at Wake Forest and the University of Pittsburgh, and now as the director of debate at Marist College, Schnurer committed to working with novice and beginning debaters, emphasizing the transformative nature of the debate activity. Besides his role as a top national judge and coach of policy debate competition in the USA, he has placed great emphasis on political activism including animal rights, social justice, environmentalism, and gender issues. Schnurer has also been an innova-

tor in the areas of public debate and debate outreach, staging numerous public debates and engaging in debate outreach programs in Pennsylvania, New York, and nationwide. He represented the USA on a debate tour of Japan, maintains international debate connections, and is always willing to explore debate in a new venue or space. He has been a long time faculty member at numerous debate institutes and has participated in extensive evaluation of the DAC process.

Academic tournament debate has a proven track record of teaching critical thinking at the middle school, high school, and college levels. Many have used debate in the non-speech classroom as an instructional tool that meets multiple educational objectives: interactive instruction, student-teacher partnership, democratic dialogue, student ownership of learning, experiential education, communication skills of listening and speaking, argument construction, cooperative learning, critical thinking, research (traditional and computer), strategic note-taking, logical organization, critical reading, evaluation, and, not least, fun. Debate, both in and out of the classroom, is a profound example of cooperative learning that promotes critical thinking.

In the world of debate it is a foundational tenet that competition motivates intellectual achievement. Can cooperation also be possible in competition? On the competitive debate team, shared research allows students to participate in each others' successes, to be motivated to research harder following each others defeats. On a highly functioning debate team, competition motivates individuals to cooperate for the good of the community as well as the individual. Snider and Schnurer demonstrate the power of that application in the classroom. Exploration of ideas and research gives rise to both individual and group ownership of learning. Teachers and students work together in ways that encourage partnerships for learning. Paulo Freire calls this collaboration the path to a liberating education, one that encourages democratic dialogue and critical thinking.

Democratic dialogue is a powerful antidote to traditional education's penchant for the development of authority dependence in students. Such dialogue has the capacity to open the student up to new ways of thinking and problem solving while encouraging the creativity of teachers. Snider

and Schnurer illustrate this potential with unique format suggestions and creative methods of evaluation. The book is thorough in its approach to practical application in most academic disciplines while encouraging the synergy between student and teacher to invigorate the traditional roles of educational actors.

This year I had the privilege of using some of the curriculum materials from this work for a Providence Urban Debate League workshop for teachers at Brown University and a National Urban Debate League Conference for teachers at Emory University. While the evaluations were exceptional, perhaps the most impressive result was the ease with which this material can be shared within a school, department by department. DAC has the possibility of creating genuine change in urban, suburban, and rural schools by engaging students and teachers in a rich conversation of mutual learning.

Melissa Maxcy Wade
Emory University

PREFACE

Debate changed my life because it taught me to listen. This may seem strange because most of us visualize debates as contests between strident advocates who are intent on pushing their points of view. For me, debate had the opposite effect. When I arrived at college I was already strident. A seasoned political activist, I was prone to polemic-laden political outbursts. Debate challenged me, and for the first time I was forced to examine my arguments with a critical lens. Debaters were the first folks that I couldn't push around – they wanted to examine the evidence I was using to support my arguments, and they wanted me to explain myself. More importantly, my friends who were debaters often had good ideas of their own. For a self-centered young man, the notion that other people might have something valuable to say was a life-changing realization.

Curious about how students could develop these kinds of communication and critical thinking skills, I joined the Lawrence Debate Union at the University of Vermont. I quickly found myself addicted to debate. It was a method of learning that encouraged me to explore new ideas. I could mentally travel as fast as I wanted to – learning about new subjects and researching new areas of interest as my curiosity drove me. Debate stimulated and agitated my interested mind, driving me to ask more questions and to be reflexive about the answers I had already decided. Debate was wonderful for me and it helped to mold me into the person that I am today.

The wonder and excitement that debate realized within me can be experienced by anyone. Debates do not have to be formal events, or even organized by schools. Debates are natural, exciting interactions between people who want to critically examine an issue. I believe that debate can be a format for community groups, activist organizations, social movements, political parties, friends, and businesses.

This perspective is not shared by all. Many believe that debate should be the special realm of political scientists, experts, "debaters," or commu-

nications departments. I fundamentally disagree. Debate should be in the hands of the people. Debate should be used in grade schools, in chemistry classes, and in as many places as there is interest. Debate should be everywhere.

This book represents a starting point for that vision. Encouraging the use of debate in classrooms is a reclaiming of the notion that debate is something sacred to be kept in a special place. Debate should never be cordoned off into special areas of academic luxury. Instead everyone should undertake it. I believe that the success of debate grows with familiarity, and I hope that debate will spread to have a contact with every person in the world. This book is for everyone who ever wanted to try debate I hope that you will see the wonder.

I would like to graciously thank my co-author and inspiration, Dr. A. C. "Tuna" Snider. You have been my mentor, guide, debate coach, and friend for many years. Your vision of debate for everyone is infectious and I appreciate your energy and ideas. I would also like to thank my partner, Elena Cattaneo, who is a constant inspiration and my favorite mental sparring partner. Thanks to my mother Jai Holly for encouraging my activism and my frank dialogue. Thanks to all the activists who have kept me honest in a world worth fighting for! Thanks to Gordon Mitchell, a wonderful friend, whose spirit of open-mindedness and willingness to debate anywhere and with anyone permeates my writings in this book. Thanks to all of my debate coaches, colleagues, and debaters who have influenced me through the years. All of my colleagues at Marist College deserve thanks, and a special thanks to Dr. Guy Lometti, Dean of the School of Communication and the Arts at Marist College, for his support of debate and this project.

Maxwell Schnurer
Marist College

PREFACE

Debating saved my life. I was a disruptive and unruly student who hated school. Debate helped me to find my voice and my own way of learning. I shudder to think what would have happened to me had I not gone to the debate meeting in 1963.

My thanks to those who helped me on my journey.

Coaches I learned from…

Nancy Ogden, Ray Benoit, Jim Townsend, Barbara Tannenbaum.

Mentors who taught me about what debate really is…

Donn Parson, George Zeigelmueller.

Colleagues who have been my teachers…

Robert Branham, Steve Woods, Melissa Wade, Will Baker, Jan Hovden, Tracy Gonos, Paul Hayes, Pat Gehrke, Gina Ercolini, Jason Jarvis, James Copeland, Marc Whitmore, Gyeongho Hur, Tomislav Kargacin, Obrad Stanojevic, Sima Avramovic, Rodrigo Rojas, Nadezhda Kan, Jackie Massey, Sam Nelson, Juefei Wang, Noel Selegzi, and more.

Students who have been my teachers…

John Meany, David Berube, Dot Marshall, Rosemary Lawlor, Peter Casolaro, Gary St. Germain, Mike Reilly, Steve Griffin, Kevin Fowler, Kevin Wilson, Zack Grant, Paul Johnson, Scott Harris, Dave DeBold, Nancy Legge, Pam Peck, Jeff Nichelson, Amos Tevelow, Glenn Ellingson, Laura LaPierre, Jim Greenwood, Maryscott Fallon, Eric Nelson, Chuck Morton, Gordie Miller, Lisa Heller, Maxwell Schnurer, Jethro Hayman, Annalei McGreeevy, Rae Schwartz, Justin Parmett, Helen Morgan, Sarah Snider, Greta Lockwood, Aaron Fishbone, and more.

Technology that made me more efficient and increased my reach…

The Internet, Apple, Macromedia, QuickTime, RealPlayer, Word, .mp3, cd-r, vcd, dvd, wireless, and a lot of computers named after Doctor Who characters.

And the BBC's Doctor Who series…

It taught me that the evil creatures tell you to obey, and the good creatures tell you to think for yourself.

My dream…

Let every citizen be a debater, and let every computer desktop be a global podium. The righteous have nothing to fear from debate. The evil have everything to fear from debate.

Alfred C. Snider, University of Vermont

INTRODUCTION TO DEBATE AS EDUCATIONAL METHOD

- **Critical advocacy for the information age**
- **Definition of debating**
- **Debate in society**
- **Debate in everyday life**
- **Myths surrounding debate**
- **Conceptual components of a debate**
- **Debate techniques to improve the educational experience**
- **How to use this book**

Alexander Meikeljohn, former president of Amherst College, said:

> I try to select from the long line of students, some one group which shall stand forth as intellectually the best — best in college work and best in promise of future intellectual achievement. Much as I would like to do so, I cannot draw the line around my favorite students in philosophy, nor the leaders in mathematics, nor those successful in biology; nor could I fairly award the palm to the Phi Beta Kappa (women and) men who have excelled in all their subjects. It seems to me that stronger than any group, tougher in intellectual fiber, keener in intellectual interest, better equipped to battle with coming problems, are the college debaters – the (students) who, apart from their regular studies, band themselves together for intellectual controversy with each other and with their friends from other colleges.
> (Waldo Wilhoft, Modern Debate Practice (Prentice Hall: New York), 1929 p.9)

Malcom X wrote:

> I've told how debating was a weekly event there, at the Norfolk prison colony. My reading had my mind like steam under pressure. Some way, I had to start telling the white man about himself to his face. I decided I could do this by putting my name down to debate…Once my feet got wet, I was gone on debating. Whichever side of the selected subject was assigned to me, I'd track down and study everything I could find on it. I'd put myself in my opponents' place, and decide how I'd try to win if I had the other side: I'd figure a way to knock down all those points.
> (Autobiography of Malcolm X, 1964)

This book is a resource for all teachers and educators who are interested in using debate as a classroom teaching technique. We believe that debate is an engaging, stimulating, and illuminating practice that can help educate students and encourage them to take responsibility for their

education. This book will guide you through the practical needs you have to establish debates in your classroom. Using our almost 50 years of experience, we have provided tactical tools to help create classroom debates.

In this chapter we will review and discuss common ideas about debate and try to determine what the essential elements of the process are. We will review debating and debates as found in society and our everyday lives in order to understand the basic processes. We will defuse some of the "myths" some people have about the debate process. We will see that debating can be a useful classroom method in many different settings.

Critical advocacy for the information age

The nature of knowledge and information generation is far different today than it was just a few decades ago, not to mention a few hundred years ago when our basic model of education started taking shape. The amount of information generated and the pace of change have accelerated. Because of these factors, educational methods must change to better fit the times. It is essential to teach a lifelong method of learning to students.

Several developments influence our need to rethink our educational methods. They are obvious in all of our lives and splashed across the headlines. Few areas of human experience are unchanged by these developments.

First, there is more information now that ever before. The sheer volume of data in existence is as distant from the Ptolomeic Great Library of Alexandria as a single book is to the number of volumes in the Library of Congress in the USA. Increasingly the mastery and use of information is the key to success and positive social results.

Second, the pace of social change has quickened substantially and shows no sign of slowing down. In previous generations life would change little from one lifetime to another. Citizens were trained for specific tasks and roles with a fairly static kit of educational skills, and they succeeded because of this. Vocations and lifestyles were passed down from one generation to another. In the 21st century we now realize that we may well need several different careers in any given lifetime. We cannot assume that we can confine "learning" to the "school years." Increasingly, it is essential to

teach our students methods they can apply to changing situations.

Third, the interrelationship between events heightens complexity. Previously communities and nations existed in relative isolation from other communities and nations. Now, with global commerce, environmental stresses, and information exchange, each community is influenced in powerful ways by other parts of the globe. In addition, many technological changes (such as wireless communication, powerful portable computers, and rapid transportation) have systemwide effects, influencing all parts of society. Understanding global and systemic interrelationships is a challenge to every citizen.

Fourth, the effects of the above points had led to a domination of discourse and decision making by so-called experts. While our ancestors might have striven to be "Renaissance" persons, today specialized knowledge is prized. The result is that "talking heads" and "quoted experts" dominate most discussions. Increasingly the role of average citizens is one of emotion, anger, and grief at the occurrence of social tragedies (police brutality, environmental poisoning, the closing of locations of employment, the injuries from a string of consumer product defects, etc.) while the deeper issues surrounding such incidents and the public policies directed at them are discussed all too often by such "experts," and often in defense of their vested interests. Debating calls for individuals to engage in independent thinking. Waldo Wilhoft (10) made this clear back in 1929:

> The hardest business in the world is thinking. A student can go through an entire academic course without doing any original thinking. Learning what is in a book and what a teacher says is true, is not thinking. Thinking consists in hewing out for oneself new lines of thought — new to the thinker, not necessarily new to the entire world. Debating requires thought, thought, and still more thought. The debater learns that thinking is not just a realignment of prejudices nor a justification of congenital bias (10).

Fifth, the communication landscape is increasingly illogical. One wonders at the difference between earlier advertisements, which focused on

needs, uses, and features of products, and the current focus on images, associations, and often illogical connections, which try to persuade citizens that there is a direct relationship between any number of commodities and basic sexual and social needs. Political communication is also increasingly symbolic, source-oriented, and characterized by slogans carried out by huge multimedia campaigns. Democracy has spread laterally to new countries, but everywhere it remains increasingly shallow in terms of real citizen awareness and participation. Increasingly the so-called "marketplace of ideas" rewards ideas that are stylish and hyped as opposed to logically valid. Debate trains students to combat this trend by using logic as the first tool of analysis. McBurney, O'Neill, and Mills put it this way:

> A critical thinker habitually applies the precepts of argumentation: he [or she] discerns propositions; he [or she] discovers issues; he [or she] knows how to study a subject; he [or she] is aware of the proof requirements of a proposition; he [or she] applies the tests of evidence; he [or she] distinguishes between valid and fallacious reasoning; he [or she] identifies implicit assumptions; he [or she] recognizes the non-logical means of persuasion. This skill in critical thinking is no mere by-product if the debating is based upon the sound principles of argumentation (266).

There is a crisis of citizenship as well as education. This work believes that using debate as a classroom technique is valuable in addressing these issues and how citizens deal with them. Debate teaches content as well as process.

Debating about something requires information acquisition and management. Different aspects of an issue must be investigated and understood by the debater. Debaters learn how to gather information and marshal it for their purposes. The process of debating is dynamic, fluid, and changing. Every day brings new ideas and new arguments. Every opponent uses some arguments that are expected and some that are not. Connections need to be made between the arguments in every debate, as debaters search for ways to use what others have said against them. Debaters also learn to compete against others in the realm of ideas while

cooperating with team and class members in their efforts. Debaters learn to cooperate in order to compete. Debaters must critically analyze and deconstruct ideas presented by their opponents in preparation for doing the same thing for the rest of their lives in all of their information transactions.

Debate calls to task simplistic public dialogue and foments a kind of global critical thinking. By encouraging participants to look carefully at the root causes and implications of controversies, and by teaching students that experts often have their own interests in mind when they produce facts and norms, debate can create a powerful resistance to many problems that seem to overwhelm us today. Most importantly, debate teaches a method of critical questioning and learning that can help anyone who seeks out new interpretations. Debates encourage students to not only debate about content but also about the frameworks of problems. Debate heightens mental alertness. Waldo Wilhoft put it this way:

> "To think on one's feet" is an attribute developed out of debate situations or their equivalent. In this age, when a [woman's or] man's height is measured from the ears up, the ability to collect one's thoughts and reach an answer as quickly as if it hung in the air before [her or] him tests a [woman's or] man's intellectual dexterity and skill. The debater meets in every contest a situation wherein [she or] he is called upon to make immediate answer to a question or perplexity submitted by the opponent next preceding. This [she or] he must do in such a way that [her or] his answer is more than clever, useless repartee (10).

This work is intended to help bring this exciting method to every classroom across the curriculum. It is our hope that this text will be useful to those who are interested in integrating this ancient, yet dynamic, learning method to the needs of today's students and citizens.

Definition of debating

While many things masquerade as "open debate," we prefer a more rigorous definition.

A debate should be defined as an equitably structured communication event about some topic of interest, with opposing advocates alternating before an opportunity is given for decision.

This definition implies a number of principles for a debate. A debate should be equitably designed. All designated "sides" should be given an equal opportunity to present their views. A debate should be structured, with established communication periods and patterns with a beginning and an end. This structure allows for preparation and strategy. A debate is a communication event, where the mode of operation is oral or written communication and serves as performance as well as a method of transmitting ideas and arguments. Every debate has a "topic" or issue focus, allowing the debate process to be more directed than a normal conversation. The topic itself should be of some import and interest to the participants and any audience that may observe the debate. A debate is composed of two or more "sides" of an issue, where the advocacy positions are identified in advance. For example, a debate is held on the issue of the death penalty, and one side is in favor of the death penalty (thus they may be called pro, affirmative, proposition, or government) and one side will be against the death penalty (thus they may be called con, negative, or opposition). This sense of "opposing sides" is critical to the probing analysis of the topic to be debated. Presentations in a debate should alternate between the sides, creating a pulse of critical communication in opposition to previous and subsequent pulses. During the debate the advocates will be asking other participants and observers to agree with their point of view, and, at the end, calls for a "decision" by those present, either publicly or privately. These decisions are valid in the present, and of course they may change over time and in the presence of new information.

Debate in society

While there are an infinite number of forms of debate in any society, the common public examples of debate help us understand the dynamics of the debate process.

Perhaps most obvious are the debates connected with governance. Legislative bodies debate over pieces of legislation, regulations, and appropriations. Equal time is allowed and all sides are heard. The specif-

ic measure under discussion serves as the topic. At the conclusion there is a decision represented by a vote of the body. Court proceedings are also examples of debates, but they follow a specific set of long established legal rules. There is a topic under consideration, advocates alternate, and a judge or jury at the conclusion makes a decision.

Perhaps the most common example is a debate between political candidates. While not a part of governance, these events are a precursor to governance. These events have varying formats, some meeting our definition of a debate, and others barely recognizable. The power of the debate process is shown by the vigor with which candidates try to influence and design the debate event so that it meets their needs. The debate between candidates is fraught with danger for the participants, such as a mistaken statement, a show of ignorance, a projection of an unflattering image, and a potential loss of composure. Most often, in our experience, candidates prefer to avoid direct interaction with their opponent(s), choosing to take questions from a panel of journalists or audience members instead making alternating speeches. In fact, most debates between candidates are actually grand press conferences where the opponents answer some of the same questions but avoid the confrontation of a true debate. A real formal debate offers deep insight into people and their ideas, and it is no wonder that candidates approach them with such caution, and some refuse to participate at all.

The media provide countless examples of debates, although many are fairly watered down. News programs often feature segments where individuals who disagree speak about an issue briefly. Panel discussions often feature various points of view. These programs can be enlightening and informative, but rarely achieve the enlightening potential of a true debate. They generally are too short to be very illuminating and allow only very brief presentations from speakers even though they often deal with very complex subjects. One receives the impression that issues have been "debated" but such events rarely provide the necessary detail for a "decision" by those viewing them. The short attention span of television and television viewers (which is created by the availability of such shallow events) and the dominance of so-called experts render these events far from optimal.

Genuine public events can be far better. Public debates, forums, and other events often provide a better setting for meaningful debate to occur. The many public debates and events we have held show that citizens are willing to view an extended debate on an important issues, are willing to engage in questions and short speeches, and often come away quite impressed and excited by the event, now in a better position to make decisions for themselves. Our experience demonstrates that a public debate event is more successful when it more closely approximates the prescriptive definition we have offered of a debate. This is the model that most inspires us to suggest classroom debating as a technique for teachers.

Debate in everyday life

Although far less formal, many of the components of a debate are found in our everyday lives. We are constantly engaged in persuasive attempts to influence the decisions of others. It is the very nature of human existence to call for change in some manner. It may seem banal that the roots of this book are these regular day-to-day interactions, but we believe that a vigorous sense of debate can only improve our world. More importantly, it is in these small persuasive moments that our lives are affected. Teaching students to become more skilled both in persuasion and resisting persuasion is valuable. Consider some of the following examples.

A job interview is a one-sided debate over whether you should be hired. You present your reasons through communication, the interviewer poses questions and issues that you must deal with, the interview situation is structured, and a decision emerges at the end.

A meeting with a teacher to gain a deadline extension on an assignment is a similar situation. You make your arguments, the topic of the discussion is obvious, and in the end there is a decision.

Attempting to make a sale in a retail situation, asking parents for use of a car or an increase in special privileges, discussing government policy with friends, evaluating various books and movies; all of these have the components of a debate, although they are far less formal. Still, people present opposing ideas and a decision is called for during and after the discussion.

Debate is a natural process, something with which we all have experience. The importance of realizing that debate is an inherent part of our lives should help to reduce the fears and anxieties about the process. Students should realize that this is not a totally alien practice, but simply a more formal type of discourse that they are engaged in regularly.

Myths surrounding debate

There are certain "myths" about the formal debate process that often appear as reasons students do not want to participate.

One common myth is that "Debating is for the experts, not for me." The thought is that you need to know everything before you can speak about it, neglecting the long tradition that discussion and debate about a subject is how one learns about it in an interactive way. We tell students that no one knows everything, and that each of us knows different things, so the sharing of our ideas is crucial to the advancement of mutual understanding and knowledge. Besides, so-called experts still represent a point of view, and often it is a point of view and a set of interests that do not match those of the individual citizen. It is the individual citizen, prepared to be a critical advocate (a debater) who is in the best position to defend his or her interests, and thus participation is vital. Democracy withers when citizens accept the myth that the voice of the people is inferior to that of the experts.

Another common myth is that students do not have the "necessary skills to engage in a debate." We often tell students that they engage in these processes in all areas of their lives – they attempt to influence through communication, they make arguments to support a certain point of view, they are critical of ideas of which they do not approve, and they ask people to make decisions in their favor. They have succeeded enough in these efforts to reach the classroom, so obviously they have demonstrated these skills that only need to be enhanced. The major difference for those holding this myth is the structure and setting of a debate, but their role is one with which they are already familiar.

The final common myth we want to mention is that the audience will give a bad evaluation of the presentation. The fear is that the audience will react with inattention, disagreement, or mockery. This is, of course,

also true of every attempted communication, so the arguments against the myth of inadequate skills apply here as well. The classroom situation, in fact, is a uniquely supportive one. Every class member will have to debate, so feared behavior will be moderated. Students will not assertively "mock" a debater because the same fate awaits them when they are in the spotlight. In our experience students become supportive and helpful toward each other, as they all grapple with a uniform experience of a new setting and structure for the sorts of influence attempts they engage in every day.

Conceptual components of a debate

While we have discussed the structural components of a debate, it is useful to understand the conceptual processes involved in a debate: development, clash, extension, and perspective. These elements describe a prescriptive approach to what a "good" debate should involve, not the depths to which many debates can sink. Let's look at these conceptual components one by one.

Robert Branham, one of America's leading debate proponents, outlined this distinction in 1991:

> If debate is "the process by which opinions are advanced, supported, disputed, and defended," the fulfillment of these actions in turn requires that the arguments of the disputants possess certain attributes. Thus, true debate depends on the presence of four characteristics of argument:
> 1. Development, through which arguments are advanced and supported;
> 2. Clash, through which arguments are properly disputed;
> 3. Extension, through which arguments are defended against refutation; and
> 4. Perspective, through which individual arguments are related to the larger question at hand (22).

In a debate ideas and positions are developed. This development involves description, explanation, and demonstration. In a debate about

universal health coverage one does not simply state that it is a good idea, there is also an obligation to explain why we need this policy, what that policy will be, and how it will operate successfully. Some specificity is always called for in a debate as advocates outline what it is they are in favor of and what it is they are opposed to.

In a debate ideas are refuted: in debate jargon, this is the concept of clash. Those ideas presented by opposing advocates need to be examined with a critical eye, locating weaknesses, faults, and inconsistencies in these ideas. We call this "clash" because opposing advocates must not just disagree, but must demonstrate the specific reason why they reject the specific ideas of opponents. In a useful debate the ideas of the other side cannot be ignored, but must be critiqued.

In a debate ideas are defended. In debate jargon, this is the process of extension. When an opponent has criticized an advocate's ideas, these criticisms should be answered. Arguments against an idea cannot be ignored, but must be answered. This process creates a cycle of critical analysis, where ideas are presented, refuted, defended, refuted again, and then defended again until the debate has concluded. Extension creates a rich interchange of ideas that audiences and participants find to be some of the most intellectually stimulating experiences of their lives.

Finally, each debate should call for a decision. This is the process of perspective. The decision is the sum of the arguments and ideas presented. Some ideas are more important than others, and ideas in a debate can relate in complex ways. Debaters should assist the audience in weighing the ideas and issues so that a logical decision can be made. While many other kinds of discussions urge people to "consider further," a debate calls for a decision at the end, either about the issue at hand or about who did the better job of presenting or defending the issue. The decision phase allows for closure and forces participants to stand in advocacy and not remain noncommittal.

Not every debate contains all of these elements, but we believe that it should. These are the conceptual components that the classroom debate should try to encourage. They are, in our view, the essence of how human beings learn from each other and grow through communication.

Debate techniques to improve the educational experience

This work is undertaken because we believe that debate can be a highly useful educational method in the classroom. Teachers and students react very positively to debate as a way to study a wide array of subjects. Debate activities can increase student involvement in the educational process and with the subject matter, encourage independent and critical thinking, and are quite often enjoyable for students and teachers. These ideas will be further explored in Chapter 3. However, some examples might illustrate this point.

A German language class has students debate the topic, "Vienna is a culturally German city." The experience has been very positive, with students going beyond simple conversation using an exchange of memorized sayings by making points and using the language to build ideas. Students integrate their sturdy of the language with some knowledge of German culture and its existence outside of Germany itself.

A literature class has students debate the topic, "Shakespeare's character Hamlet acts in an immoral fashion." This topic has been staged either as a debate between two teams of students or as a trial, complete with prosecution, defense, judge, witnesses (students playing the role of characters), and the rest of the class as jury. Students are encouraged to become a part of the play, to imagine themselves in it, and to make it more relevant to their lives.

A current events class has students debate the topic, "Palestinians should have a permanent homeland." Students can either represent themselves or one side can represent the state of Israel and the other side the Palestinians. Students learn the basic arguments and justifications used by each side, they begin to understand the roots of this conflict, and they personalize the experience through their involvement. This class debate has had the almost universal effect of helping students understand why this conflict has not been easily resolved and continues through time.

A teacher-training class has students debate the topic, "Standard grading practices in high schools should be replaced by portfolio evaluation of long-term student work." Students become more aware of alternatives to standard grading, they reflect on the meaning and uses of

teacher evaluation, they explore issues such as student and teacher motivation, and they learn about issues of educational accountability. Once again, the issue is made real through personal involvement.

A history class has students debate the topic, "The United States should not have dropped the atomic bomb on Japan during World War II." Students explore the value issues inherent in this question (innocent victims vs. saved lives for soldiers, ethics in war, etc.), political realities at the time in Japan and the USA, as well as the military situation and the difficulties of mounting an invasion of Japan. What has long been an unquestioned fact of history becomes a very real issue once subjected to the scrutiny inherent in a debate. Participants often develop strong opinions one way or the other after such a debate, but it is always a more informed and considered opinion.

These and countless other examples show how it is easy and productive to use debate as a learning tool in almost any classroom. A dean at a major university mentioned that some faculty had not wanted to use debate in the classroom because "all of our major issues have been decided." Her response was that if this was the case, then their program should be cut or canceled, because it was obviously a "dead" subject that needed no further exploration. Debate in the classroom illustrates that learning is a process of growth and individual development through communication and interaction, not the simple memorization and internalization of discrete bits of data.

Austin Freeley (30), America's most popular debate textbook author, summarized the intellectual power of debate for students this way:

> Debate is distinctive because of its unique dialectical form, providing the opportunity for intellectual clash in the testing of ideas. The creation of an argument is one of the most complex cognitive acts a student can engage in. To create an argument, a student is required to research issues (which requires knowledge of how to use libraries and databases), organize data, analyze the data, synthesize different kinds of data, and evaluate information with respect to the quality of conclusions it may point to. To form an argument after this process, a student must understand how to rea-

> son, must be able to recognize and critique different methods of reasoning, and must have an understanding of the logic of decision making. The successful communication of arguments to audiences reflects another cognitive skill: the ability to communicate complex ideas clearly with words. Finally, the argumentative interaction of students in a debate reflects an even more complex cognitive ability — the ability to process the arguments of others quickly and to reformulate or adapt or defend previous positions.

This approach to learning is demanded if we are to better serve the citizens of the information age.

How to use this book

This book is structured to be useful to the busy educator. The first nine chapters offer a simple "how-to" approach to classroom debating.

Our experience shows that many educators attempting to integrate debate into the classroom are able to handle most of the planning and implementation with very little assistance, most find one or more areas, such s format design or topic creation or evaluation, to be difficult for them.

This book attempts to outline the major steps needed to stage classroom debates. Feel free to consult the chapters that cover the areas about which you have questions. Our organizational scheme is functional and our style attempts to be straightforward. We provide examples because it is a useful form of illustrating abstract concepts.

Chapter 10 provides suggestions and guidance for specific subject areas. Teachers should feel free to turn to the appropriate section of this chapter and discover some basic approaches for using debate to further the educational goals they have in their specific subject.

Finally, we provide references for support information that might be useful for both teachers and students. These easily available materials facilitate many of the basic skills needed for a student to engage in a debate.

As educators we shape the future. Every time we expand the critical advocacy skills of our students while at the same time involving them in

a more serious consideration of the subject matter at hand, we make a positive contribution to that future.

This chapter began with a discussion of how the knowledge and information landscape of the 21st century calls for new critical methods and a new approach to education. We do not believe debate is in any way a panacea for this daunting challenge, but we strongly believe it is a powerful tool for creating a better world.

BASIC DEBATE PROCESSES

- **Investigation and issue discovery**
- **Research**
- **Making an argument (ARE Format)**
- **Building a case**
- **Critical analysis of opposing viewpoints**
- **Decision making**
- **Oral communication skillS**
- **Listening**

This chapter provides you with the basic information you will need to teach students how to debate. If you have ever thought that you might be interested in having a debate in your classroom but you were not sure how to go about providing your students with the necessary background, then this chapter is for you.

Investigation and issue discovery

Debate is a stimulating way to explore new ideas. Debate can help push us, teachers and students alike, towards exciting new areas of literature and thinking that we would never otherwise encounter.

One of the most important parts of debate is determining a topic for the debates, since the topic is the foundation for all of the following argument. An exciting debate topic will intrigue your students and get them excited about the debate process. Much of the success of the entire project of a debate can come down to how you sell the issue and format of the debate. If students are hooked by the ideas of a debate, then they will be interested enough to make the whole process work. It behooves you to spend some time working out the core issues of the debate with your students.

One way to make it easier to introduce the issues of the debate is to allow students to participate in selecting the topics. You will get a lot of mileage out of the debates when students see their own input being acknowledged. This does not mean abandoning classroom topics, for you can guide the students to focus their topics on class-related issues. You might give students a homework assignment to write down three classroom subject areas they would like to learn more about or pursue in depth. You might have a brainstorming session where the participants in your class spend a set amount of time tossing out ideas in a freestyle fashion and then select exciting ideas out of that process. We suggest that you encourage your students to seek out areas that they are not familiar with – push them to take chances and learn new things rather than rework familiar material. Getting students involved by having them drive the areas of interest will ensure they are involved and your job of instructing them is easier. For more on this see Chapter 5.

Once the topic is established, it is valuable to guide the students through the subject matter with some analysis of the themes that you expect will emerge in the debate. Teachers can help students to discover elements of the issue that they might otherwise miss. You will want to introduce the concepts and major thinkers who write about this particular controversy. You might want to talk about terms that the students might not be familiar with. One of the easiest ways to do this is to provide the class or the debaters with a basic article that outlines what's at stake in any debate.

The debate process itself builds a student's investigative skills. Douglas Ehninger and Wayne Brockriede describe the investigative situation the debater is in, suggesting that the very nature of debate is fundamentally exploratory.

> Debate is a mode of investigation for the very reason that its end and method are critical. Unlike the general run of professional public persuaders - the propagandist, the ad writer, the "psychic huckster" — the debater does not seek conviction regardless of the terms. He [or she] is more concerned that decision be reflective and that his [or her] method be correct than that any particular result be obtained by his [or her] appeals. If he [or she] were primarily interested in results, he [or she] could easily find quicker and surer ways to win acceptance for his [or her] claims-ways that involve fewer risks to the cause he [or she] espouses. Such methods are available in legion; they range from the blatant devices of censorship and open threat to the subtlest modes of suggestion and indirect persuasion. Most professional persuaders resort to these methods daily. The debater, on the contrary, by the very act of selecting debate as his [or her] method, openly renounces them. Foregoing the convenience and easy sureness of "short-circuit" appeals, he [or she] shoulders the labors and accepts the risks involved in the premises we have stated. In the debater's code, judgment is delayed until "the facts are in." Argument must run the gamut of the silent criticism of the judge and the open attack of an opponent(18).

If you help students to feel involved and excited about the debate topic they will reward you with powerful outputs of their own intellectual growth. This means you must not only provide them with information, but also allow them to share their perspectives and views with the class. This process of discovery is vital to the success of your debates. It will also help to position students to get started on the research for the debate.

Research

Many students have done research projects for schools, but research preparation for a debate will be a new experience for them. The most obvious difference is that unlike traditional research projects, where a student seeks to build an argument and gather information that supports their argument and avoids contrary evidence, the debate research process encourages a kind of holistic approach, where students need to pay attention to the critics of their argument because they will have to respond to those attacks. Combine this with the usual trepidation about research and you will often find students are more worried about the research process than the debate. This section offers way you can reassure them and guide their research efforts.

One exciting way to limit the time spent on research and help students become confident with the debate format and research is to have a debate with a limited research pool. In this format, you would provide the students with a restrictive number of sources that they can use for their debates. You might, for instance, provide them with a short bibliography and explain that this is the extent of the research you expect. You might instead give each student a single article for them to read and prepare for a debate the next day. Limited research pools help students who have never debated before practice the holistic reading necessary to draw out ideas needed for a debate. It also can help you guide the topics that will be discussed and fit a research-based debate into a short amount of class time.

If you are going to require the students to do their own research then you should provide an explanation of how to research and what sort of research you expect them to find. This is a necessity because of the rapidly increasing amount of data that floats around the world. With the rise

of the Internet as a research tool, a student can easily be lost in the research process. The next section provides a research timeline that can be translated into almost any subject area.

Make a keyword list. A keyword is an identifying word or phrase that can be used in libraries and when searching databases to find information on certain topics. A keyword list is the most important part of any research process because all information is filed away based on keywords. If you are looking something up in a library or typing a search request into a computer, you are using keywords that are shared by those who organize information. Librarians, database administrators, and information scientists all share a format for organizing information based on topic, and that is a standardized keyword list. For example, if you were searching for information about the Inuit, the native tribe that lives in Alaska, many libraries categorize that information by the keywords Inuit, indigenous-Alaska, Inuit, Native Americans-Alaska.

Keywords are the tools necessary to unlock the mysteries of research. Keeping a good list of keywords for your research project is vital. The keyword list should be updated and adapted to new information that is found when research leads in new directions. One of the easiest ways to add to your keyword list is by looking at the end of journal articles that you find; often there is a list of the keywords that should be used by librarians to file certain articles. If you discover these keywords, then you should have access to other articles that are filed using the same keywords.

Find a basic article or two about the subject. When you start researching a subject, you do not necessarily have to understand all of the arguments put forward in an article or a book chapter. Because an expert wrote these arguments and they are often privy to information and a conceptualization that is well informed, the first glance of a subject can seem overwhelming. This is not a permanent state! After some preparation reading, and some cross-researching to understand terms of art that experts use, anyone can become not simply familiar, but involved in a particular literature. Some kinds of research require more terminology (hard sciences), and others might require background ideas (philosophy), but all of them can be understood if a student commits to thinking through the ideas presented.

The easiest way to begin this process is by looking for introductory articles. The first artifact that you should look for when researching in an area that is new to you is a basic article outlining the ideas and background of a subject. This will allow you to make an educated decision about what direction you want your research to undertake.

Begin holistic reading. Holistic reading means a careful, active reading that draws out important arguments regardless of which side of the debate it helps. When engaging in holistic reading, the debater should look for all the major arguments and begin thinking of them in terms of the topic being debated. As they encounter quotes, statistics, metaphors, and examples that can help to build an argument they should consider how these ideas would play out in a debate.

Holistic reading allows students to reflect on the debate topic and how the research concepts interact with their emerging understanding of the topic. Is there obviously a strong argument for the other side? In this case the student will want to make sure to find answers to that argument. Holistic reading turns information that is on a page into evidence that a debater can use – translating information into ideas. While engaging in holistic reading, the students should be revising and adding to their keyword list and beginning to identify lines of argument that they might want to pursue. In addition, students should be taking notes through this entire process. It is in this process that debaters start thinking about how they plan to create their debate arguments. Students should plan what their major arguments are going to be and start looking for research holes that need to be filled.

Use the bibliography and footnotes. While engaged in holistic reading, a student might come across a particularly exciting article or essay. Through research, one might also find a single great paragraph or quote that is exceptional. In these cases, the student should follow the lines of research back to the sources that each author used in their work. Using the bibliography, the student can often find lists of books and essays that mesh with the ideas they are developing. Using footnotes is a fantastic way to get deeper into a particular argument when a wonderful quote or passage has been found. Following the research paths that other authors have used to make their arguments is extremely valuable because stu-

dents will come up with new ideas and have contact with lots of new types of literature (sometimes older and more diverse). This is one of the best ways to fill missing spaces on a research outline.

Evaluate Sources. Finding ideas through your research process is one thing, but you should also explore the nature of the sources that you are using in the debate. The obvious things to watch out for are examples of bias in authors, arguments that are out of date because some dramatic change has occurred since they were published, and sources that lack credibility. We believe that you should examine sources in much greater depth – look beyond the traditional conceptions of what a "good" source is. Instead, students should look carefully at even the most respected sources because all sources have biases, and every source makes errors.

Consider the example of the New York Times, one of the most widely respected newspapers in the USA. Cynthia Cotts, a columnist for the Village Voice, explored the bias in New York Times reporting about child-slavery in the Ivory Coast chocolate industry. A rival news organization, Knight Ridder, published a high-profile story that traced chocolate from the hands of child slaves to manufacturers in the USA and concluded that, as one of the world's largest consumers of Ivory Coast chocolate, the USA should take a certain amount of responsibility for the fate of these child-slaves.

The New York Times ran a story on the same subject whose "conclusions were so contrary to Knight Ridder's that some KR employees are wondering if the Times deliberately tried to knock down a competitor's exposé and reduce its chances of getting a Pulitzer" (Cotts 31). In the world of competitive national news, even the most powerful and widely respected news sources are often blind to their own biases. It is important to impart in your students the importance of critical analysis of even 'respected' sources.

Related to the simplistic notion that some sources are good and others are fundamentally flawed is a notion that Internet-based sources are somehow inferior to hard-copy sources. We believe that some Internet resources are simplistic propaganda from obviously biased individuals, but this is certainly not unique to the Internet. In fact one can find newsletters and pamphlets published (many of which have a widespread circula-

tion) that are low-quality propaganda. Many of the sources that can be found on the Internet are high quality. Many academics will publish papers on their Web pages; many journals publish online copies of their work. The Internet makes many sources available to people without easy access to a major research library. The sheer size of the Internet requires some skills in navigating information, but just because a source is only available on the Internet does not necessarily mean that it is a bad source.

Organize debate notes. Once debaters have a good idea of what they want to argue and how they want to position their ideas, then they should organize their notes. There are two excellent ways to do this. The first involves taking notes on index cards – putting a single argument we will introduce in the next section on each card. Once this is done, the student can organize the cards so that their arguments make make sense. The second method of note taking is to put arguments with big-issue labels on the tops of pages and then include all the information and arguments about that issue on each page. The first method is useful for debaters who are not sure what their final argument is going to look like. The second method is more useful for students who have determined what their major arguments are going to be.

Follow up the research trails to discover new ideas. After students have created their notes and organized them, they may have some peripherally connected arguments that seem interesting. The students should follow these ideas to see where they go. Most arguments in the public sphere tend to mimic and recreate the perspectives of experts. This is a rare opportunity to break out of that pattern and create new ideas. They may need to do extra research and find sources that seem diverse, but there is no other forum where they get this opportunity.

Do not feel trapped by research. Students may have a conception of what should be done that comes from their own experience and they discover that no one has written about this perspective. The students should feel free to make this argument and defend its merits. Their own ideas and experiences should be valued in the debate process.

Search for alternative kinds of evidence. Historical examples, narratives, poetry, and music all represent very powerful kinds of evidence that

should be used in debates. Do not stick to the traditional ideas of evidence. Debaters should use their hearts and brains to follow up valuable kinds of support for their arguments.

Making an argument

Creating good arguments is the central part of any debate. To make a good argument, students have to get used to moving beyond their traditional conceptions of arguments. Arguments are not simply statements that make a claim that might be considered controversial. "Cats are good companions" is not an argument because it does not include a reason why that statement might be true or any evidence to support the argument. We suggest that you use the ARE format for all of your debates. ARE is an acronym that stands for Assertion, Reasoning, and Evidence – the three vital parts of making an argument. When you put these three elements together, you get the format for a strong argument.

Assertion means the claim or statement that the argument centers around.

Reasoning is the warrant or reason that the statement is true.

Evidence is some kind of support for the assertion and reasoning.

Two brief examples:

Assertion: Cats are good companions.

Reason: Cats provide psychological support and friendship to those they trust.

Evidence: My aunt Geeba has lived with a cat for ten years and she considers the cat to be her best friend.

Assertion: NATO (The North Atlantic Treaty Organization) should extend membership to the Baltic States.

Reason: NATO provides stability through alliance building that will prevent any Eastern European nation from attacking any other.

Evidence: The long-standing respect that all of the current NATO members have for one another.

Using the ARE format does not guarantee that your arguments will be

strong, but it discourages many mistakes that beginning debaters make in framing their arguments by simply making claims or presenting evidence without any explanation of how the ideas interact. If students get used to this ARE format, they will have a template not only for building the arguments, but also for attacking other people's arguments. Recognizing the value of these sections of arguments illuminates the flaws in other arguments.

In the first example above, a student could clash with the reason that cats provide psychological support by arguing that many people are allergic to cats and that their very proximity can cause increase psychological stress. In the second example, a debater could clash with the evidence presented about the respect that many NATO states have for one another by pointing out that France has left NATO in anger and many others chafe under the alliance system. They could also argue against the reason by stating that the extension of NATO to the Baltic States will only anger Russia and increase the likelihood of tension in the area. The value of the ARE format is not just that it helps students to develop and understand arguments (it certainly does that), but it also provides a framework for people to comprehend arguments.

Building a case

Teams advocating the affirmative side should conceptualize and organize their research into the format of the case. The case is a cohesive set of arguments that justify the side of the topic that they have been assigned. More importantly, the case allows debaters to choose the ground that they would like to defend. The debate case allows debaters to focus on the arguments they think are important and how to interpret the topic to defend these arguments. The case is important because it sets up the framework for the rest of the debate. Making a debate case depends in large part on the kind of resolution being presented.

For a **policy-based resolution** or when calling for a change or advocating some transformation, then the problem solution format works best. In this situation they want to outline the problem that calls upon us to make a change, then indicate their specific advocacy and the reasons their solution will solve the problem. Students may also want to be aware

of the reasons why the solution is yet undone (ignorance, lack of political will) and be aware of any additional benefits that might stem from their advocacy.

An example is a debate on the topic "Educational reform is justified." An affirmative side might want to argue that the educational system should support same-sex based educational institutions. If this were their case, then the affirmative team might want to outline the harms of a co-educational system, particularly outlining the damage done to women. They might propose that the government provide funding for women-only educational institutions. Then they would want to present arguments that proved that the solution they have chosen would solve the problem they outlined.

For a **value resolution**, it is generally accepted to have a criteria-based case. In this case, one would want to provide a way to evaluate the values in the round. Because debates of value are extremely subjective, it is important to establish a way for everyone to think about the arguments in the debate. This means providing criteria for judgment, perhaps something as simple as suggesting that the debate round be judged on a particular value.

Consider a debate on the topic "The body is sacred." An affirmative team might want to use this topic to argue against recreational tattooing and piercing of the body and frame the debate using the criteria of bodily integrity. They would build their case by defining the notion of bodily integrity as the highest value in the debate round. They would talk about religious traditions that hold the body to be a gift from a higher power, and the practical dangers associated with piercing and tattooing (infection or disease). A negative team can present a counter-criterion that clashes with the affirmative's chosen criteria. In this example, a negative team might want to argue in favor of personal freedom as being the highest value in the debate. After providing the importance of personal freedom, they would then analyze the debate about tattooing and piercing through this lens.

For a **resolution of fact**, debaters should organize their ideas to support their position. Because resolutions of fact contest our perceptions of truth, these debates are most easily conceptualized through a case that

might prove the resolution. Within this framework, debaters might want to organize their arguments chronologically, or based on the topic being debated.

Critical analysis of opposing viewpoints

It is vital in a debate that each team be prepared to respond to the arguments made by the other side. The easiest way for students to do this is to brainstorm the best arguments on both sides and then during the research phase use holistic reading, keeping track of these ideas. Students should make a list of all the arguments they would use if they were on the other side of the debate. Debaters should put such an opposing argument at the top of an index card or a piece of paper and then think of arguments that respond to each one. They can then discover points of logic that are flawed, evidence that is missing, or weak points in the ARE format. They may want to research the arguments themselves – almost every advocate has a critic who is excited to point out their mistakes; this is often a quick way to find responses to certain arguments. Much of this work happens when students become familiar with the topics through their research phase.

Discovery, analysis, and preparing to defeat opponent's arguments are fundamental parts of debate.

Decision making

Debaters need to learn the skills of judgment because debates will never be simple contests. Inevitably, there will be more going on in a debate than the students are prepared for and they will have to make decisions about where they are going to invest their energy and what arguments they are going to have to abandon. Making decisions in debates is difficult because the ramifications of a mistake are substantial. If a person chooses to emphasize a certain line of argument in support of a side in the debate and the other side has excellent arguments to beat that argument, then the debater is in trouble.

The most important and difficult decisions that debaters will make are how to spend their time during their speeches. Coach your students to look for the weakest points of their opponent's arguments and make sure

to beat those arguments. This strategy is valuable because if they can point out substantial flaws in their opponent's arguments, the opponents lose credibility and some of their arguments can be defeated. This focus can be risky because sometimes one side of the debate will be careful not to make any obvious logical mistakes, or their mistakes will be so minor that a debater who is fixating on those arguments could lose out because of the time spent focusing on a trivial part of their opponents' arguments. We advise that debaters should focus on the most important arguments that provide the foundation for the other side's claims. These arguments represent the best that opponents have to offer, and if a debater can defeat these arguments then they can usually win the debates.

The decision-making skills that debaters develop are transferable to the important decisions students will go on to make in their lives. Austin Freeley describes this process:

> Scholars tell us that many problems in human affairs result from a tendency to see complex issues in black-and-white terms. Educational debate gives students a chance to consider significant problems in the context of a multivalued orientation. They learn to look at a problem from many points of view. As debaters analyze the potential affirmative cases and the potential negative cases, including the possibility of negative counterplans, they begin to realize the complexity of most contemporary problems and to appreciate the worth of a multivalued orientation. As they debate both sides of a proposition, they learn not only that most problems of contemporary affairs have more than one side but also that even one side of a proposition embodies a considerable range of values (28).

When it comes to debating there is often no quick and easy way to win. Decisions about what arguments to emphasize can make a significant impact on the outcome of the debate. This skill emerges with practice and experience. As students become more comfortable with their arguments and ideas they will be better able to recognize the turning points of debates and make important decisions quickly.

Oral communication skills

Regardless of the format of the debate, these skills are vital. Clarity of idea and speech are the hallmarks of a great debater. You can teach students the basics of these concepts even if you do not have a background in communication. The fundamentals of oral communication skills are common sense. Students should carefully prepare and organize their arguments so that they make sense upon first listening. The students should use a good tempo and tone to their arguments. The arguments should neither be all opinion or all fact, but a strong mixture of the two.

We teach our students to use the extemporaneous style of delivery – neither reading directly from a prepared speech nor speaking with no notes. Memorizing speeches is a time consuming and risky proposition because a mistake when memorizing can result in a student forgetting what comes next and a complete breakdown of a speech. It is much better to have an outline of basic notes and to speak from that outline, using it only to remind the students of where they are in their speech. The extemporaneous style is also good because it encourages them to maintain eye contact with the audience and allows them to adapt their speeches if things are going poorly. Imagine a team that prepares a series of arguments made irrelevant by the arguments of the opposing side. If the speech was memorized, then the team would be making those arguments because it was part of a memorized speech. However, with an extemporaneous style of delivery, students can swap parts of the speech for other parts, provided they are prepared to do so.

Fitting the time limits provided for the speech is a fundamental part of oral communication. Audiences expect that debaters will give their speech within the time provided. If a student speaks for too long or comes up substantially short then you will know that they did not really practice their speech. Being aware of the audience is a fundamental part of communication skills.

Practice is the common element in all of these skills. A good student can resolve almost all of the common complaints about beginning debaters simply by practicing arguments orally a couple of times. Eye contact will improve, confidence in speaking will increase, and phrases that seem awkward when spoken aloud will resolve themselves with practice.

Debate involvement naturally produces improved public speaking skills. Austin Freeley notes:

> Since composition and delivery of the debate speech are among the factors that determine the effectiveness of arguments, debaters are encouraged to select, arrange, and present their materials in keeping with the best principles of public speaking. Debating places a premium on extemporaneous delivery, requiring speakers to think on their feet. Typically, debaters will speak before many different audiences: a single judge in the preliminary round of a tournament, a group of businesspeople at a service club, or a radio or TV audience. Each of these situations provides new challenges. Constant adaptation to the audience and to the speech situation develops flexibility and facility in thinking and speaking (28).

Listening

You may be afraid that your students will be bored during the debate period itself. Because they are listening to debates, they may be tempted to zone out and ignore the performances that are going on in the classroom. Alternatively, they might want to get ready for their own debate coming up. Regardless, it is important that you set the class up to be active listeners. Remind them that the class acts as a community and that support for one another is fundamental. Every student in the class is working in a new medium, and many are worried about how they will do in the debates. Remind them that they will also be speaking to the class and that they should be the kind of audience that they would like to face. One of the most important parts of debating is active listening.

Students need to improve their listening skills in order to succeed, and debating can provide a method to achieve this goal. Austin Freeley explains:

> In their pioneer work on listening, Ralph G. Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens's research found that "on the average we listen at approximately a 25 percent level of efficiency." If we allow our attention to wander while an opponent speaks, our reply will be

> ineffective and "off the mark." And if we miss 75 percent of our opponents' arguments, we will be destroyed. Debaters soon learn to listen to their opponents with sharply focused critical attention, recording their arguments precisely on the flow sheet so that their own responses may be precisely to the point as they adapt the very words of their opponents, turning the subtleties and limitations heard to their own advantage. The ability to listen critically is widely recognized as an important attribute of the educated person. Nichols and Stevens found that a top executive of a large industrial plant reported "perhaps 80 percent of my work depends on my listening to someone, or upon someone else listening to me." The debater begins to develop this important skill of critical listening from the very first debate (27).

Two easy ways to foster active listening are to require students to take notes during the debate and to require a student ballot. Taking notes encourages students to listen carefully to the arguments that are being presented and to envision how ideas are interacting in the debate. Try to get your students to imagine what they would argue after each speech. Get them to think about the debate as though they were participants. Student balloting forces students to make a decision about which side they believe won the debate, encourages careful consideration of arguments, and gets them thinking about judgment. For more on student balloting, see Chapter 4.

Conclusion

Many of the skills associated with debate emerge after some preparation. Others come only through actual debating. Confidence in ideas, effective research, preparation, and communication skills are all concepts that build upon one another and create a foundation that will serve students for the rest of their lives. When you involve students in a debate it does much more than get them excited about the subject matter of the class; it also provides them with the tools they need to succeed in many different areas.

GOALS OF CLASSROOM DEBATING

- **Engage students in the subject matter**
- **Operationalize the issues of the subject matter**
- **Create advocacy-oriented education**
- **Teaching persuasion skills**
- **Teach critical thinking**
- **Create positive classroom atmosphere**
- **Create new patterns of knowledge**
- **Have fun**

Despite an interest in debate, many instructors still wonder if they should take time out of their busy classroom schedules to create time for debate. We believe that debate is not only useful to help you get your students involved in your classes, it also has educational benefits of its own. This chapter will explore the goals and advantages of integrating debate into your classroom curriculum.

Engage students in the subject matter

Debate provides a great opportunity to get students excited about the subjects they are studying. Educational traditions are often established in a formulaic top-down method, with instructors providing information and students simply receiving the knowledge. This educational format often is coupled with a heavy focus on examinations in an effort to test students' knowledge. While this method of education has a long tradition, many education experts question the value of this approach (Giroux, Whang, and Waters).

Arguing that students engage with material only long enough to memorize it and then move on, experts have identified this kind of learning as passive learning that often fails to stick with students. We have certainly seen this to be true at the post-secondary level in the USA. Many students arrive in our college classrooms prepared to memorize information and regurgitate it during examination periods, but unable (and often uninterested) in getting involved in the subjects we are teaching.

This kind of educational process is a learned one; students do not simply become disinterested. They are taught that their job is to simply absorb knowledge like sponges; as a result they become numb to the exciting potential of knowledge. If this kind of behavior is taught, then it can be challenged with the introduction of new kinds of teaching. Active, exciting educational methods get students involved in the subjects we are teaching and encourage them to be excellent students, not because they are preparing for a test but because they want to learn.

This is probably not new to you. If you have taught for a long time, you quickly realize that students respond to activities and opportunities that bend the traditional parameters of the classroom format. The diffi-

culty teachers have is how to do these exciting kinds of activities and still get information to the students. Debate as an educational method helps in both of these areas. Debate calls upon students simultaneously to perform their knowledge and to be informed.

These dual motivations work on students to encourage them to want to be informed. It usually takes only one debate where a student feels ignorant to create the intense desire to understand the subject and be prepared the next time. Performing a debate will often pull students to not simply be aware of information, but to process it in a way that they can then use it in the debate. Debate fundamentally encourages students to become their own educational activists, seek out knowledge and ideas, and then become engaged with those ideas so that they can use that knowledge in a clash of dialogue.

Debate fosters new visions of old problems. Because students become responsible not simply for a one-to-one transmission of knowledge (on an examination), but instead for a presentation to a larger group of people (the rest of the class), debate fosters a desire to understand the roots of issues. Debate encourages us to ask the monumental question, "why." This change of perception from someone whose interest in a subject matter is cursory, to a person who is responsible for defending an idea, requires that a debater know what he or she is talking about. As students prepare for debates, their approach to the subject of scholarship is radically transformed from a passive approach to an active one.

Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz in their book, *Everything's an Argument*, explained the forces that encourage students to pursue arguments to a greater depth when they are responsible for defending them. "When people write arguments themselves, they are also aware of options and choices. Typically, they begin an argument knowing approximately where they stand. But they also realize they'll need evidence strong enough to convince both themselves and others more completely that their position makes sense. And often they surprise themselves by changing their views when they learn more about their subject" (19-20). Debate calls upon students to follow this line of questioning – not to be satisfied with the cursory level of knowledge, but instead to pursue arguments to their depths.

Debate helps teachers to resolve the problem of disinterest — because

in many ways the responsibility of comprehension lies on the shoulders of the students. It also creates a kind of self-interest that encourages curiosity to explore the foundations of problems and issues. Regardless of your approach to education, when debates are integrated with your curriculum, debates can excite and stimulate your students.

Operationalize the issues of the subject matter

One of the chief benefits of debate is the transformation of knowledge into a useful form that students can operationalize. This simply means that through debate students become adept at the application of the knowledge of your classroom.

Most educational requirements call upon students to be familiar with a topic and able to use it in a fairly simplistic manner. Consider the subject of art history, for example. Most art history classes require students to memorize a large number of paintings and be able to provide the date created and creator. The purpose of this approach is to create a sense of history and to show how changes in art affect other artists. The application of this knowledge usually comes through reports or examinations where students apply this knowledge they have learned and usually in the same patterns that they learned it.

Debate challenges this kind of education because students have not only to learn the knowledge, but also to turn it into parcels they can manipulate into creative arguments and responses. This process requires that a student not only memorize vital concepts in art history, but also reorganize that information into a pattern they can use to make a particular argument.

Consider a debate on the topic "Advances in art are sudden and shocking." In order to support this topic, a student would have to draw connections between diverse artists and periods of art. Rather than talking about the cubists and recounting the important cubist artists, spaces, and paintings, debate requires a student to make new connections with information. In this instance a student might draw examples from Chinese artists, early impressionist artists, Andy Warhol, and Chris Ofali in order to make the point that art changes only when radical artists push for new space.

Some might respond that these kinds of connections could be just as easily made in a research paper. While this is true, in debates the application of knowledge is significantly different because students have to defend their ideas. In a research paper on this same subject, a student might have to plunder his or her brain to create these kinds of diverse connections; in a debate the student not only has to make these connections, but also has to defend these ideas. These ideas are then shared with the rest of the class. The student supporting the affirmative side of this resolution not only has to create these arguments, but also has to be prepared to respond to the argument that the impressionists were a particularly mild and complacent format of artistic change and they did not push the boundaries of art at the time. This assertion requires students to be able not only to make connections between dissimilar concepts, but also to defend them.

In addition, because debate provides for a live performance in the defense of ideas, the students learn to organize and utilize information during an intense interaction. This interaction results in a kind of utilization of knowledge that cannot be easily replicated in a classroom. Because students plan and organize their information and then implement those plans when challenged, they become aware of their arguments (and the subjects of the debates) at a level that is extremely complex. This kind of operationalization of knowledge creates new patterns of understanding in subject matters and can contribute significant gains to your classroom.

Create advocacy-oriented education

When we examine traditional educational instruction methods we can see that the stakes for the students are fairly light. Information is provided to students and they have the opportunity to acknowledge the invitation of knowledge and become participants by memorizing or familiarizing themselves with that knowledge. This process often results in halfhearted attempts to understand ideas or pursue concepts, particularly if they are confusing, in large part because there is no real need or justification that encourages that effort. This educational model is a disaster because it continues with students for the rest of their lives and they

become patterned to believe that it is the approach to learning anything.

We can identify this approach to learning as a "consumer" approach, where students peruse the possible educational options and then casually invest their money (or time) into learning something with the expectation that someone else will provide them with the things they need to know. Particularly dangerous is the acceptance of the parameters of educational frameworks – where students come to expect that simply fulfilling the class requirements will result in receiving knowledge (or a positive grade). The implication of this kind of consumer approach to thinking is that the drive to pursue knowledge falls behind an expectation that someone else will provide it.

Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher, described the perils of this approach to education in his 1874 essay, "On the uses and disadvantages of history for life," where he laments the current state of education that does not seek out the complex causes of historical problems, and is content to explore surface level effects.

> Individuality has withdrawn within: from without it has become invisible; a fact which leads one to ask whether indeed there could be causes without effects. Or is a race of eunuchs needed to watch over the great historical world-harem? Pure objectivity would certainly characterize such a race. For it almost seems that the task is to stand guard over history to see that nothing comes out of it except more history and certainly no real events! – to take care that history does not make any personality 'free', that is to say truthful towards itself, truthful towards other, in both word and deed. It is only through such truthfulness that the distress, the inner misery, of modern man will come to light, and that, in place of that anxious concealment through convention and masquerade, art and religion, true ancillaries, will be able to combine to implant a culture which corresponds to real needs and does not, as present-day universal education teaches it to do, deceive itself as to those needs and thereby become a walking lie (85).

Nietzsche positions education as a vital opportunity to ask critical

questions and to avoid a consumer approach. Education can be important because it helps us to become more informed participants in public life. Education of this type can help us to understand what things are valuable and good, it helps us to understand when leaders make bad (and even dangerous) arguments, and it helps us to speak up when necessary. Unfortunately, the consumer approach to education hinders all of this by encouraging simplistic approaches to learning. Debate, on the other hand, nurtures a kind of education that centers on advocacy and critical thinking.

Advocacy is vital, because active, engaged citizens are the most powerful advocates for social change. These kinds of change advocates are increasingly important in our world. Henry Giroux, the sociologist and critic, has argued that the status of American society was perilous because of the loss of informed democratic advocates. "Coupled with the general public's increasing loss of faith in public government, public institutions, and the democratic process, the only form of agency or civil participation offered to the American people is consumerism as opposed to substantive forms of citizenship" (3). The solution to Giroux's frustrating perspective on American political reality is to teach students to be active advocates, not necessarily by informing them of their opinions, but by teaching them how to research and critically reflect about public controversies and then teaching them how to persuade others that their opinions are valuable. This is the fundamental project of debate.

Choosing debate as a method of analysis has broad implications for the kinds of advocacy and analysis it urges on students. Douglas Ehninger and Wayne Brockriede suggest several mental experiments to prove this.

> To understand the full significance of the choice one makes in selecting debate as his method, perform five mental experiments: (a) Inquire, "Do fanatics and rigid sectarians appeal for arbitration or for unqualified belief and unthinking acceptance?" (b) Contrast the patient examination of evidence in a court of law with the impulsive, emotionally charged decision of a mob fired by its leader. (c) Recall how frequently a certain type of candidate for political office refuses to meet his opponent in public

> debate. (d) Ask, "Does the advertiser contract for equal time or space for his closest competitor, and request that buyers delay their decision until both sides have been heard?" (e) Most revealing of all, perhaps, listen to an hour of earnest debating in a courtroom. Then compare it with an hour's run of radio or television commercials (18).

Debate teaches students how to argue for and defend ideas. This lesson is central to the success of our public life. Debate is valuable because it provides a counter to the traditional consumer mentality of education. Debate helps to teach skilled, critical advocates for change. Debate is fundamentally about researching, thinking, organizing, and advocating, skills that are fantastic primers for public advocacy.

Teaching persuasion skills

This method allows students to be better able to persuade and teaches them the responsibility associated with that skill. The very conception of debate is premised around the idea of persuading an audience to respond positively to arguments. The performance elements of debate require that students not only be aware of the vital arguments and logic of their side, but also of the subtle techniques associated with persuasion.

One of the most impressive persuasive techniques that debate teaches is confidence. Advocates who are confident about their arguments and ideas offer up a very positive ethos to their audience. This is a vital element of preparation – students who are familiar with their arguments and ready to debate will appear confident. But debate teaches another level of confidence: the courage to remain calm when things seem to have fallen apart. Because debates have at least two sides to them, opponents often shock each other with an argument to which they were not prepared to respond. Debate teaches the quick thinking skills to be prepared for the unexpected. The ability to respond quickly often comes naturally to a person who has experienced a few debates. This level of confidence comes regardless of what is thrown at them.

Along with confidence, debate teaches a host of other persuasive skills, including powerful use of language, speaking tactics, organization,

and audience analysis. Students who debate become aware of these persuasive skills through the natural process of discovery. Even in a class where the instructor might not feel comfortable talking about the persuasive nature of language choices, the students will evolve their own sense of what works in the classroom. Debate fosters these kinds of realizations because of the nature of the activity, not necessarily because of the classroom subject. Whatever persuasive techniques a teacher might desire to include in the introduction to the debate will certainly be valuable for the students. In a language class, the power of particular kinds of phrasing might be emphasized. In a class about politics, an examination of persuasive historical speakers might be the focus.

Regardless of the subject matter or approach, debate teaches students about persuasion. In addition, it also teaches students about the responsibility associated with their newfound persuasive skills. Students may quickly recognize a debater whose preparation was deep in language choices and persuasive tactics while shallow in research about the topic. Debaters become aware that many politicians and leaders try to disguise their arguments in a show of flowery words. Debaters become inoculated against the use of persuasive techniques in exchange for good arguments because they are aware of the tactics that persuaders use to win the minds of their audiences. More importantly, debate encourages students to see the ethical relationship between a speaker and his or her audience. While students learn to persuade, it is not at any cost, and often the sense of responsibility of the persuasive act is even clearer after someone has been debating.

The skills of persuasion that come from being involved in debating are natural ones that flow from the performance and the preparation for the performance. The skills of persuasion that come from practicing debate are extremely valuable and cannot be overstated. Along with these skills emerge defenses against being persuaded and an ethical understanding of the possible negative elements of persuasion. These methods can have negative effects and thus the debater may gain a realization that "cheap" avenues of persuasion should be avoided.

Teach critical thinking

Debate is one of the most effective methods of teaching critical think-

ing. Because debate requires active learning and calls upon students to be prepared to defend their arguments, debate preparation and actual debating encourage critical thinking. While traditional educational methods teach students content and concepts, debate takes that knowledge and encourages students to use it as the beginning of a journey of self-exploration.

Because students are responsible for their own claims in the debate, debaters are quick to explore the roots of their claims. Rather than being satisfied with what they are told about a subject, debate encourages students to seek out their own understanding, and often to challenge ideas by researching and critiquing the foundation of arguments. This process is fundamental to critical thinking.

Critical thinking is the active skill of applying knowledge to new problems and controversies. However, critical thinking does not just mean thinking hard about a problem. It means applying ideas and concepts in new ways. Critical thinking happens when a student takes a concept they have learned and applies it to a new encounter — this application of knowledge in a situation that they previously had not been prepared to analyze. Consider what a student learns about the historical roots of agricultural globalization, including the 'green revolution' that encouraged majority world (or so called "third world") countries to use high yield crops and pesticides with a focus on export rather than home consumption. That student becomes aware of the devastating impacts that this approach had for most countries, draining the quality of their soil and often poisoning their drinking water supplies. This research is not critical thinking, it is the first step in critical thought – seeking out the roots of an idea. Critical thinking occurs when that same student encounters an article advocating the forgiveness of the debt of majority world countries. When that student combines these pieces of knowledge, and makes the connections between these two seemingly unconnected pieces of information, then he or she is engaged in critical thinking.

Empirical research seems to support the relationship between debating and critical thinking. Austin Freeley notes:

A number of studies that have investigated whether college cours-

> es in argumentation and debate improved critical thinking scores on standardized tests have found that argumentation students outgained the control students by a statistically significant amount. Kent R. Colbert found that, after a year's participation in either CEDA or NDT debate, the debaters significantly outscored the nondebaters on critical thinking tests (270.

Critical thinking doesn't simply emerge by teaching skills and content to students; instead, it must emerge from participants who learn the ability to make these connections – largely by simply thinking through the relationships between ideas. The best activity to teach these critical thinking skills is debate. Because the research for debate is focused on making precisely these kinds of connections, it is extremely valuable. When we combine this critical research skill with the necessity to stand up and speak for your position, we come up with a great educational combination to foster these kinds of critical thinking skills.

Create positive classroom atmosphere

One of the benefits of using debates in your classroom is that they make a more exciting classroom. Students are up and moving around, they are excited about the subjects, they are bringing their own ideas and research to share with the rest of the class, they are actively working with partners, and the classroom positively hums with energy. This is the kind of classroom that we all dream of having; where students are excited to be there and they take away ideas and experiences that will serve them well for the rest of their lives.

Debate helps to create this kind of atmosphere in the classroom by getting students involved and rewarding their interest with the public debate performances. Because students are responsible for their own performances, they become more involved in the educational process.

What many instructors don't realize is that this excitement will carry over to many other areas of the class. Students who are excited and stimulated will be anxious to learn more from a teacher because the knowledge that they receive has an outlet, a place where they can use that information. Debate answers the question of how students use their class-

room knowledge by allowing them to actualize their information into arguments. After a debate, students are more interested and some even excited to be involved in the class.

Create new patterns of knowledge

Debate encourages students (and teachers) to think new thoughts. The very nature of debate as an activity creates new cognitive spaces for all involved. Debates are living dialogues between informed advocates; we cannot predict what ideas a debate will reveal. Debates emerge between participants with a flow back and forth – with students making claims and counterclaims. It is in this space that new ideas emerge – through the critical application of knowledge.

Even the preparation for debates creates new knowledge in participants. Students who are assigned to defend an argument that they do not know very much about (or that they disagree with) will benefit from the research process where they get the opportunity to learn about new concepts that they may have never considered.

It is in the actual debates that students create new patterns of knowledge. Starting with a student being at the front of the room speaking while the instructor and the rest of the class are listening, debate is a transformative experience. The traditional structures of power in a classroom can be exposed and explored during a debate. Because the student is at the center of the educational nexus, the nature of the education is formally changed.

Henry Giroux calls for teachers to become involved in political education – what he means is intense critical exploration. Although Giroux doesn't explicitly advocate debate, his justifications for this kind of education resonate extremely well with using debates in the classroom.

> Political education also means teaching students to take risks, ask questions, challenge those with power, honor critical traditions, and be reflexive about how authority is used in the classroom and other pedagogical sites. A political education provides the opportunity for students not merely to express themselves critically, but to alter the structure of participation and the horizon of debate

> through which their identities, values, and desires are shaped. A political education constructs pedagogical conditions in order to enable students to understand how power works on them, through them, and for them in the service of constructing and expanding their roles as critical citizens. Central to such a discourse is the recognition that citizenship is not an outcome of technical efficiency but is instead a result of pedagogical struggles that link knowing, imagination, and resistance . . . (139).

Giroux expresses a vision for what education should be. His goal encourages imagination, critical thinking, and political thought, and explores the power relations in the classroom. Debate as a method of pedagogy does all of these things. Debate can bring students to a place where their own confidence and excitement can drive them to discover new ideas and concepts. Through debates in the classroom, students can make new connections and blaze new pathways of intellectual growth.

Have fun

Debates are enjoyable and exciting events to watch and participate in. Debates can bring your classes to a new level of pleasure. Despite the very serious benefits that debate can provide to your classroom, it can also help make your classroom fun both for you and your students.

Teaching is difficult, stressful, and often unrewarding. Debate represents an opportunity to share the work of teaching with students. Rather than teaching from the front of the classroom, you can help to guide students who are teaching other students through their debates. It can be enjoyable for you because you get to see an actualization of the knowledge that you help to share. It is often hard to know how much of an effect you are having on your students. Students who you might perceive as lazy may surprise you by representing arguments that you taught the class months before. The shy student who had significant trepidation about the entire debate process may blossom when called upon to get up and speak.

Students love debates because they are lively and fun. The education in the classroom emerges as students quest to make better arguments, or,

in the case of a role-playing debates, settle themselves more deeply into their fantasy roles. Debates are enjoyable for students because they are in charge of their own learning and get to follow their interests. When they discover something new, they can share that knowledge and receive the praise of the community of their peers.

Conclusion

This chapter brought the goals and benefits of debate to the forefront. Our hope was to encourage you to explore debates in your classrooms and to see some of these benefits yourself. Not every classroom debate will be flawless and you will have moments of doubt. But when you find the right formats to fit your class and make debates a part of your curriculum, and have had a few practice debates to get the kinks worked out, we believe that debate will serve you and your students well.

FORMATS FOR CLASSROOM DEBATING

CHOOSING A DEBATE FORMAT

SURVEY OF AVAILABLE FORMATS

- **Public forum**
- **Spontaneous argumentation (SPAR)**

TEAM DEBATING

- **Policy-making debates**
- **Parliamentary debates**
- **Role-playing debates**
- **Mock trial debates**
- **Model congress debate**

VARIATIONS ON DEBATE FORMATS

- **Changing the number of debate participants**
- **Reducing the number of people on a team**

OTHER FORMAT VARIATIONS

- **Panel of questioners**
- **Audience question time**
- **Multisided debate**
- **Extending debating/return to subject**

Classroom debates can be completely flexible to fit teachers' needs and lesson plans. If there is one overarching theme of this book, it is this: There is no right or wrong way to have a debate. Where there is space to think critically and argue about ideas, good things will happen. Beyond the basic goals of the debate (to have fun, to actualize knowledge, to explore speaking in public), the only constraints are the amount of time and interest the teacher has. One of the greatest fears that teachers have about debating in the classroom is that they are not sure how to set up the debates – they might not have any experience with formal debates. This chapter provides you with all the information you need to pick a format for your class.

This chapter will explore the wide variety of formats that can help fulfill the goals of your classroom. The purpose of this chapter is to bring you basic information about the setup and framework of various styles of debates. You should not feel constrained by the suggestions in this chapter; this is merely a beginning.

Choosing a debate format

Deciding what format of debate is right for your situation requires you to do some preparation. You need to determine what your goals are for the classroom, what kind of constraints you might have that would limit the kinds of activities you can do, and what kinds of debate formats will fit in with your educational goals. Navigating these questions can provide you with the best kinds of debates for your specific educational requirements.

The most important factor when preparing to do a debate in class is to keep in mind the teaching goals that you have. If you wanted to use a debate to warm up a classroom, you would want to have a format that ensured that everyone had an opportunity or a requirement to speak. If you wanted to use a debate as a final project where students were required to prove their mastery of a subject in a clash of ideas, then a formal debate whose ground rules were clearly established would give the participants enough time and opportunity to prepare. Be assured that there is a debate format that can supplement your educational goals and provide a way to involve and excite students.

You should also keep in mind any classroom-based constraints that you might have when selecting a format for your debate. These might include the amount of time that you (and your students) have available, the number of students in your class, awareness of the issues to be debated, language difficulties, and space considerations. These small elements can add up to make simple debate projects seem overwhelming if not considered before the debate begins.

Survey of available formats

We will profile a number of different formats for debates. Each format has its value and place in the classroom. For each format, we will look at the educational possibilities and limitations. We will also outline the preparation requirements for each debate and the practical setup steps of each format. Further discussions of this subject can be found in Chapter 7.

PUBLIC FORUM

Public forum debates mimic traditional assemblies of people gathered to discuss a controversy. In this debate, no one is required to speak or participate if they choose not to. Instead, a moderator introduces a particular topic and asks for participants. Volunteers choose to speak on the issue and make points to the general body. Often a particular question is presented that is voted on at the end of the session by the participants.

Public forum debates represent a great opportunity to encourage discussion and break the ice in a classroom. Because no one is required to speak, participants' anxiety is usually low and allows for a free-flowing discussion that encourages creativity and natural speaking skills. It can also be instructive as a tool for analyzing arguments and fallacies. Public forum debates represent a great way to discuss topics that are close to your students' hearts.

Public forum debates are limited. Because no preparation is required, public forum debates seldom bring new knowledge to the participants. This limitation can often be resolved by informing the students about an upcoming debate and assigning them research assignments. Occasionally, talkative students monopolize the space for discussion.

Preparation for a public forum debate can be as simple as explaining the activity to the students. But it can become much more involved, with some time for research. You may want to type up the format and speaking times for your students. If you are using a group of students that you don't know well, you may want to provide nametags to allow you to keep a list of speaking volunteers. You may also want to prompt a few students to start the conversation.

If you are going to use a public forum debate, you should consider the setup requirement. Public forum debate requires a moderator (often the teacher) who identifies students to speak. Sometimes making a list of students who volunteer and adding their names to the list as the debate progresses can do this most effectively. You will want to carefully explain the goals and format for the event. The important things for you to consider are how long speakers get to speak (one to three minutes is suggested) and if participants get to question the speakers when they are done.

Spontaneous Argumentation (SPAR)

SPAR debating has been popularized by John Meany of the Claremont Colleges, but has found its way into a number of college classrooms at top American universities. SPAR debating consists of two debaters drawing a topic for debate out of a hat and then, with a few minutes of preparation, engaging in a quick debate on the subject.

SPAR debating is an enjoyable, exciting, and confidence-building activity. It is an excellent way to reduce speaker anxiety and ensure that students feel at home in your classroom. Because the debate is quick and the audience gets to participate, it is usually a big hit with students. SPAR debates are also excellent tools to get students to practice speaking skills (organization, word choice, metaphors, and logic).

The creativity and excitement of your students limit SPAR debates, so they sometimes fall flat. The debates do not include any research and they can occasionally become more humorous than educational. If you expose students to your expectations and help to guide them, these limitations can be minimized.

In order to use the SPAR debate format, you will need to make a list of

topics that you are sure anyone could debate about without any preparation. Seemingly simple topics like crushed ice is better than ice cubes have been very successful. The topics can vary dramatically, and fit well with any classroom subject. You need to brainstorm a number of topics that seem appropriate for your students and the subject that you are teaching.

We have used this format with great success:

Affirmative speaker – 1 minute

Negative speaker asks questions of the first affirmative speaker – 1 minute

Negative speaker – 1 minute

Affirmative speaker asks questions of the first negative speaker – 1 minute

Audience questions and comments – 5 minutes

There is no reason that you cannot adapt the format to fit your needs. If you would like to eliminate the audience questions or the questions that the debaters ask of each other, feel free. You should be able to time the debates so that your whole class will fit into the time period you have available. You may wish to frame the SPAR debates with a discussion of what you expect in terms of your students' speaking style. Remind them that they are not held responsible for the contents of their argument, but they should be organized, give previews of their major arguments, and have solid arguments.

Setting up a SPAR debate is easy. Either write the format for the debate on the board or, once you are in the classroom, ask for a pair of volunteers to debate. Have the volunteers come up and draw a topic out of the hat. We sometimes allow them each to draw a topic and then pick the topic that they want to debate. If you do this, be sure to account for the adjusted number of topics when you are preparing. Send the students out of the class for a few minutes to prepare. Immediately repeat the process with another two students, so that there are two sets of students who are preparing at the same time. When you call in the first set of debaters, send out another pair so that the students are staggered and there is never a need to wait for debaters to get ready. After each student you should provide a little bit of commentary about their performance and connect the debate to the larger classroom issues.

Team debating

Students can be formed into teams of two or more. There are different formats for team debating, and they differ based on the role of preparation and research in the debate. Debate modeled after American and Japanese policy-making debate requires research and preparation. Debates modeled after British and American parliamentary debating is more extemporaneous. This section will expose you to some of these formats. It is important to keep in mind that not all of these formats require any specific team size – teams of a single person, or of multiple people are always possible. Debate is a flexible educational method.

Policy-making debates

Policy-making debate is defined by having topics that call upon debaters to advocate governmental policy changes, although for the purposes of classroom debating, different kinds of topics can be used, as explained in Chapter 5. For the purposes of this work we will refer to all team debate featuring substantial preparation as "policy-making debate." In American and Japanese policy-making debate, there is a formal structure of speeches, periods of questioning (called cross-examination), and a particular type of resolution that encourages a focus on significant policy changes. This is a popular format for both high school and college competitive debating. In 1964 Windes and O'Neil published their book, *A Guide to Debate*. In this book, they define tournament policy debating. "A tournament debate consists of an affirmative team and a negative team meeting under established rules to argue a given proposition. The debate will ordinarily be judged by one or more people . . ."(26). Although this format is most often associated with competition, it can be a valuable format for you to use and adapt for your subject.

The policy debate topic is framed to encourage affirmative advocacy of a significant change in a government policy. Here are some examples of policy-making debate topics.

The federal government should guarantee an opportunity for higher education to all qualified high school graduates

The USA should withdraw all its ground combat forces from bases located outside the Western Hemisphere.

Policy debate is intended to teach students skills of advocacy, research, evidence analysis, and quick thinking. The purpose is for students to spend some time in building a case or an example of the topic and then encourage clash over the major arguments. This kind of debate can provide the culmination of classroom work or it can supplement a topic that is already being discussed. An added benefit is the group work associated with policy debate. Because debaters will usually work in teams of two, a working relationship is built between partners that can be extremely valuable in a classroom setting.

Policy debate can be somewhat difficult for students to get used to. In order to discuss changes in governmental policy with confidence, this form of debate will probably require students to engage in significant research. Traditionally, policy debate does not have a period of audience participation, so in a large classroom you will need to take into account the role of the audience. Having each student write a ballot that includes an explanation of his or her decision is one possible solution. For more information see Chapter 8.

Since policy-making debate encourages research, it is valuable to introduce the debate project and the topic early. Provide a thorough explanation of how the debate will work, and the duties of each student. Policy-making debate is traditionally a contest between two pairs of students, with two students supporting an affirmative case and two students presenting negative arguments against that case. The first thing you will do is to establish teams and topics for the debates. You might want to use the same topic area for all of the debates in a class, and suggest different approaches for each affirmative team or you could have different topics for each team. This will increase the enjoyment of the audience as they get to learn about different topics, but increases the research work for your students. Traditional policy-making debate is switch-side, where debaters will be responsible for both being affirmative and negative. You may want to draft a schedule for your class that provides for each team debating on both the affirmative and the negative.

Using the example of the topic provided above: "The federal government should guarantee an opportunity for higher education to all qualified high school graduates," we can look at what a hypothetical affirma-

tive and negative team might argue. The affirmative team might advocate the federal government providing scholarships that would pay for a college education for any student who finishes in the top 10 percent of his or her class. The negative team might argue that there would be disadvantages to this policy change; for example, it would cost the federal government too much money and that money might trade-off with social services for the elderly. They can also argue that the affirmative case might dilute the quality of colleges and universities, effectively "dumbing down" the education for all students who attend.

Much of the preparation required for the debate will include guiding students through the research phase. Students will need time and occasionally help in finding and evaluating information for the debate. It will help all involved if both sides disclose their arguments to one another to aid in research preparation. If you are pressed for time, you might want to gather a selection of relevant articles and then provide them for your students to use as either the totality or the foundation for their research.

One of the major goals of the policy debate format is to encourage clash of ideas. The debate is set up to foster a vigorous back and forth of arguments in an attempt to resolve specific controversies. Therefore, policy-making debate provides for a constructive speech (where debaters construct their major arguments) and a rebuttal speech (where debaters refute their opponent's arguments) for each student. Consequently, the format winds up looking like a complex back and forth between sides. Here is the traditional policy debate format that usually takes about two hours per debate. (You may want to change the speech times in order to fit a single debate into a class period).

First Affirmative Constructive – 9 minutes
Second Negative Speaker cross-examines the First Affirmative Speaker – 3 minutes
First Negative Constructive – 9 minutes
First Affirmative Speaker cross-examines the First Negative Speaker – 3 minutes
Second Affirmative Constructive – 9 minutes
First Negative Speaker cross-examines the Second Affirmative

Speaker – 3 minutes
Second Negative Constructive – 9 minutes
Second Affirmative Speaker cross-examines the Second Negative Speaker – 3 minutes
First Negative Rebuttal – 6 minutes
First Affirmative Rebuttal – 6 minutes
Second Negative Rebuttal – 6 minutes
Second Affirmative Rebuttal – 6 minutes

Once you have given out topics and created teams, your students will create speeches to fill in their time. The first constructive speeches should be 99% prepared, while the rest of the speeches will flow off the arguments presented by their opponents and partners. When the time comes for the debate, you will want to prepare the rest of the class to be active listeners. If you have assigned them to write a ballot explaining whom they believe won the debate, then you can explain the parameters of the assignment. Of if they are just listening to the debates, you should remind them that they have an ethical duty to be an active, engaged audience and that they would want that kind of audience when they are debating. You should establish some way to watch the time of the debaters. You might want to have a student volunteer to be the time-keeper and use some index cards labeled with the time remaining. Or you can call out the time orally. You may require your students to keep track of their own time during the debate. Finally, you need to explain how the students will be graded or evaluated for their efforts.

Parliamentary debate

Parliamentary debate is modeled after the governmental workings of European parliamentary systems. Parliamentary debate emphasizes quick logic, wits, and a persuasive speaking style. Its format is similar to that of policy debate, with several vital exceptions. Parliamentary debate does not allow the use of evidence to be quoted and participants are allowed to stand up and pose points of order, including questions and brief statements, while their opponents are speaking. In addition, parliamentary topics are traditionally released several minutes before the debate and

encourage participants to use their mental acumen, rather than research, to interpret the resolutions. Competitive parliamentary debaters do engage in research, but it is of a very general nature.

The chief value of parliamentary debate is the quick thinking and persuasive skills that are emphasized. Students are rewarded for a quick wit and an ability to be inventive while making arguments. Because research is de-emphasized, the format is easy for new debaters. In addition, the audience is traditionally quite involved during parliamentary debates, usually letting their opinions on the qualities of arguments to be known by knocking on desks or by mildly booing bad arguments.

The chief downside to parliamentary debate is that it does not emphasize research. This format is probably not a good candidate as a final project in a class where research and knowledge of a subject are to be shown. Because the debaters are usually encouraged to be liberal in their interpretation of topics, the direction of the debate is often hard to predict. For example, the resolution "A penny saved is a penny earned" could be debated in very different ways. One interpretation might call for consumers to stop using so many credit cards because of high interest rates. Another interpretation could define the resolution so that they could argue that the government should not give welfare benefits in order to save money. The topic could also be interpreted to mean that the International Monetary Fund should cancel majority-country debt so that these lesser-developed countries would not starve under heavy debt repayment schedules. Because of the phenomenon of topic interpretation, there is a high degree of randomness in the actual arguments that will emerge. Of course, you could certainly provide topics that were more precise to counter this possibility.

The vital part of using the parliamentary format in classrooms is to explain to your students how the debates will occur and practice the points of order so that they will not be surprised. You will need to make a list of topics for the debate. You may want to release the topic area to your students to allow them to do background research before the debate.

The format for parliamentary debates is as follows:

First proposition constructive speech – 7 minutes

First opposition constructive speech – 8 minutes
Second proposition constructive speech – 8 minutes
Second opposition constructive speech – 8 minutes
Opposition rebuttal – 4 minutes
Proposition rebuttal – 5 minutes

The format for parliamentary debate varies from nation to nation. In Canada, the leader of the opposition gives the second opposition constructive speech and the rebuttal. In British tournaments, there are four different two-person teams in each debate, two defending the proposition and two opposing it. In Australian tournaments, there are three members of each team.

Parliamentary debates require little debate-related preparation on your part, but it will require you to make topics and time cards to inform the students of how much time they have left in their speeches. You will also have to prime the audience to be active participants in the drama unfolding in front of them. It is common for parliamentary audiences to become quite audible when they encounter arguments that they like or dislike. The traditional format for positive responses comes when the audience thumps the table repeatedly at the sign of good arguments. Negative feedback is often more outspoken with light jeers from the crowd. Of course, it is up to your discretion how much (if any at all) you want of this kind of behavior from your classroom audience.

Role-playing debates

Role-playing debates are persuasive speaking events where a historical or fictitious event is used to establish the framework of the debate. Students may be asked to play the roles of particular characters or interests, or they might be allowed to simply be participants in a particular scene. Blending theater with debate, these events are both fun and rewarding.

One of the most valuable things about role-playing debates is that they allow students to step away from the anxiety of playing themselves in a debate and give them a role to play. This role can reduce anxiety about debating and clarify what a person's arguments should be. Role-playing debates are also encourage imagination and work extremely well

with younger students. Role-playing debates are extremely easy to integrate into any classroom because all you need is a controversy and a willingness to try a debate.

Role-playing debates require a significant amount of preparation on the part of the instructor. Because the scene needs to be understood by the participants, it helps if everyone has researched the subject beforehand and the stakes of the debate are understood. The instructor must not only provide the scene, but also establish the opinions of many of the participants. Fortunately, this scene is usually the subject of a lesson the instructor was already going to prepare.

Role-playing debates require that an instructor find a controversy that has good arguments on both sides. Questions of history are particularly fruitful in this regard. One good example includes recreating great trials (or imagining new trials – like putting Truman up on war crimes charges for dropping atomic bombs on Japan). Another example would be a contemporary debate about the preservation of old growth forests, with the debaters playing the roles of lumber company executive, conservationist, government official, citizen, local business person, etc. Contentious issues in virtually any classroom subject can point to exciting role-playing opportunities. The format for the role-play will vary with the exercise. If there is a trial, then perhaps the teacher could be the judge, providing each side with opportunity to speak. If the role-play is a meeting, then the teacher could be a person with a proposal that sparks dialogue and discussion.

Role-playing requires that students be given their roles and the situation of the debate, as well as the clearly defined parameters of what they are supposed to do. The day of the role-play the students should be able to adopt their characters and not have to worry about what they are doing, only about persuading their fellow students.

Mock trial debates

The mock trial debate replicates the format of a court trial, with several debaters playing the roles of councilors for particular legal motions. This kind of debating lends itself to a rewarding understanding of how legal norms and ideas come to exist and also allows students to research legal

controversies. This format is the preferred debate format for those who might pursue a career in law.

Mock trial debates encourage students to explore ideas in a rigorously formatted debate process. Because an instructor can use as many courtroom traditions as desired, these debates can follow closely in the footsteps of the legal system. Instructors can teach not only the ideas of the law, but also the formats. Perhaps more importantly, the mock trial format enables students to envision how law evolves and works within a society. The very practice of jurisprudence can help to create a strong understanding of how law permeates a social fabric.

Mock trial format can limit creativity and occasionally the complex format of the debates can overwhelm participants. Both of these problems can be resolved if enough attention is paid to debate preparation. If the topic of debate is carefully selected, and the preparatory research is guided with faculty input, then students can discover new ideas about the law and feel confident enough to let their own creative ideas flow in the forum. If an instructor explains the use of the courtroom format and can be flexible in the use of jargon, then the second limitation can certainly be overcome.

Mock trial models itself on a country's judiciary. In the USA, this kind of debate generally involves a council on two sides arguing about a particular legal case or motion. These debates lend themselves to a kind of debate about legal rules and their application. Often a controversial court case is used as the format for classroom mock trial debates. By having debaters defend the sides of a legal case that is up for decision, students can research the legal precedents to such a case and then present their own arguments about the law. The teacher or a panel of students might be used as the presiding judge or panel. In some situations, it is possible to get actual judges to preside over student finals.

In many ways the law represents a model for many debate formats. It is only fair that we consider the mock trial format as a derivative of the kinds of topics that courts evaluate. Mock trial debates can present a challenge and a powerful opportunity for many students to debate about legal issues. It is in these situations that the value of debate emerges for both students and society.

Model congress debates

In the model congress format, students replay imaginary debates that a body of government might face. This format is a wonderful way to incorporate a large audience in a debate format. We have seen this format used with as many as 300 students. This format is used to create debating opportunities between classes, and even between schools.

The model congress format follows the template of the congressional debates in the USA, allowing for a large crowd of legislators to debate about public policy proposals. Traditionally students research and write a piece of legislation that they think should be passed. All of the bills are gathered together and copied, with a packet of bills distributed to each student participant. The bills should be distributed early enough to provide time for students to consider and even research the issues raised by their fellow students. Then the students gather in a room and, using rules of parliamentary procedure, the bills are debated. After each debate, the students vote on the bills to determine if the chamber supports them.

This format is exciting and challenging, and provides fast action and an informed discussion about current topics of interest in politics. Students generally enjoy this process because they are able to speak extemporaneously in front of large crowds.

One of the weaknesses of the model congress format is the difficulty in establishing the debates. Because students need to be guided during the research, and while writing bills, not to mention the debate format itself, this format is often daunting for teachers and students alike. Fortunately, these problems are easily resolved with some preparation. Researching topics is often a simple matter of having students read a newspaper for a week to pick out problems they would like to solve, and then using a generic template to write them up. One other risk is that mob opinion or the popular wisdom when debating a particular topic may sway students. This risk can be challenged through student discussion about the importance of making difficult decisions and the occasional need to go beyond their own personal politics when considering arguments.

The setup and format for model congress debates are straightforward. We suggest that students be given a week to research and author their bills, and then turn them in for review by an instructor. After possible

revision, students' bills will be copied for all and then distributed or read aloud to the assembled students. At the debating session, we suggest that a teacher serve as the chair to identify students who want to speak about each particular bill. Whenever possible, let the students drive the debate agenda. Let them suggest which bills they want to debate and then have the author of the bill give a short speech urging support for his or her legislation. Afterwards, allow students brief periods (two minutes or so) to ask questions of the speaker and then open the floor up for participants to volunteer to debate. It is up to you to decide if you would like every speaker to have a distinct question-and-answer period or if you would like students to choose whether to accept questions from the crowd. The debate should continue until specified time runs out or until the energy lapses on the topic. Afterwards you should allow students to vote for, or against, or abstain from voting on the legislation. Some model congress debates have volunteers that run messages. Some model congress debates call upon students to play the role of nations or particular states. The flexibility afforded by this format provides exciting debate opportunities.

The model congress format of debate allows large numbers of students to engage in self-driven debates about things that interest them. The capacity and speed of the event make it quite popular among students. It is extremely exciting and stimulating, and can fit a wide variety of debate needs.

Variations on debate formats

Regardless of the debate format you select, there are exciting variants of these formats that can spice up the procedures of your debates. These include changing the number of debaters on a team, including panels of questioners, and using debate as an extensive tool to analyze a subject.

Changing the number of debate participants

Traditionally policy and parliamentary debating is done in teams of two, while traditional SPAR debating is done with just a single debater on each side, although these numbers are certainly not requirements. Almost all debate formats work equally well with a single person on each side. Many lend themselves to increasing the number of debaters. This section discusses the logistics of changing the number of debaters in a debate.

Reducing the number of people on a team

You may want to reduce the number of students debating because you are worried about the time each debate will take, or because you want to be able to more successfully track the work of individual students. Reducing the number of debaters to a single person on each side makes preparation and debating much easier. The downside is that many students feel increased anxiety when they are solely responsible for a performance. The benefit may be increased flexibility in the classroom and ease of scheduling.

Increasing the number of people on a team

You may wish to increase the number of participants to get more students involved, or to ensure that everyone in a class gets to debate. There is a format of debate in central Pennsylvania, USA, that has four debaters on each side, with a single debater responsible for a speech. Other possibilities include different students taking responsibility for the questioning and the speaking. You could also increase the number of debaters on a team and shorten the speaking time. It is reasonable to have a three vs. three debate or a four vs. four debate. For these kinds of debates, you may want to have a single concluding rebuttal given by a participant rather than each student giving both a constructive speech and a rebuttal.

OTHER FORMAT VARIATIONS

Panel of questioners

One variant that has been used in public debates in the USA, but is seldom explored in classrooms, is adding panels of questioners to whatever format you choose. This student panel would be responsible for researching and asking high-quality questions to the debaters. This variant is beneficial because it gets more students involved and it encourages high-level dialogue on the issues. If you were to make teams for a series of parliamentary debates in your classroom, you might also assign two different students for each debate to be a panel responsible for drafting high-quality questions to pose to the debaters on their topic.

Audience question time

One of the big criticisms of classroom debates is that they lose the interest of the audience because only a handful of students are participating during each classroom section (depending on which kind of debate you are doing). Having a period where nondebating students can pose questions and make challenges to the debaters can be a valuable way to encourage participation among your students.

Multisided debate

Most debate issues are not clearly black and white. In fact Deborah Tannen, author of *Argument Culture*, takes issue with the cultural need to create these dualistic oppositions. "I am questioning the assumption that everything is a matter of polarized opposites, the proverbial 'two sides to every question' that we think embodies open-mindedness and expansive thinking" (8). In fact, most debate questions can be best answered by a spectrum of answers that travel along possible solutions. This realization points us to the value of multisided debates.

Consider a debate about what the United Nations stance should be concerning the nation of Iraq. One side of the debate might represent a hard-line stance that advocated strict sanctions and a vigorous bombing campaign to get the Iraqi people to rebel against Saddam Hussein. A second side might advocate humanitarian assistance to help rebuild the shattered infrastructure of Iraq and feed starving children. Yet a third position might represent a decided "hands-off" approach, arguing that the best thing that the UN could do would be to leave Iraq alone.

One of the values of debate is the quick thinking that comes from imagining different worlds. When debaters conceptualize what the world would look like with some significant change, they develop critical thinking skills that are otherwise difficult to acquire. These kinds of multisided debates can not only initiate this kind of thinking, but also help us avoid the simplistic black-and-white assumptions that many debates fall into. There is a value in comparing different hypothetical worlds.

Extended debating/return to subject

A reasonable fear of an instructor is that the debates suggested in this

book might be seen by their students as a brief respite from the primary goals of the class. We believe that debates not only provide useful exercises for these classes, but also can be deeply integrated into course planning. It is entirely possible that debates could be a method by which a teacher illustrates an entire class. More importantly, because debates call upon students to incorporate the things they learn into a new performance, it can often result in exciting new outcomes.

Consider a history class that was studying the classical Greek and Roman civilizations. The teacher could use different kinds of debates at various times during the class to illustrate major points. A public-forum debate on the value of Athenian democracy vs. Spartan military culture, a role-play on the trial of Socrates, and a parliamentary debate on the dangerous expansion of Roman military culture are all possibilities. Debates can illustrate each step of a class. There is no right or wrong way to debate.

Using the same class as an example, it is also possible to return to a single topic of debate throughout the duration of study. If the topic were "Greece and Rome are the cradles of civilization," then this subject could be a contentious debate at several points of the class. Returning to the same subject encourages that student to use and illustrate their deepening understanding of the classroom material. At various points in the class, the students could debate the importance of African and Asian contributions to knowledge, explore the learned society of Athens that held slaves, and highlight Roman architecture as evidence in an ongoing debate whose resolution is secondary to the educational goals realized. Extended debating revisits a major topic at various points in the class and builds upon previously realized knowledge

Conclusion

Debate is a fundamentally valuable tool for every classroom; the difficult thing is finding the right format to mesh your needs as a teacher with those of your students. This chapter provided the criteria to help you to select a format for your debates. The first task is to pick a format and then map out how it best fits into your current curriculum. Debates should help you as a teacher to actualize your student's learning.

TOPICS FOR CLASSROOM DEBATING

- **Topics set the stage for the debates**
- **Topics should explore important parts of the subject matter**
- **Topics should be interesting**
- **Topics should be debatable**
- **Topics should have the affirmative support change**
- **Topic should have one central idea**
- **Topics should be elegant**
- **Topics should use clear and neutral language**
- **Topics should not be too broad**
- **"Fact" topics**
- **"Value" topics**
- **"Policy" topics**
- **"Time period" and "reenactment" topics**

One of the most difficult parts of creating classroom debates is feeling confident with this setup. Establishing topics for the debates is often one of the most stressful parts of that process. This chapter is intended to relieve those anxieties. In it, you will learn how to create a debate topic and frame a constructive debate exercise that will fit with the goals of your class. The debate literature is surveyed to provide guidelines for topic construction. Then the three types of topics available (fact, value, and policy) as well as a nontraditional topic approach – reenactment topics – are discussed.

Topics set the stage for the debates

Every debate is "about" something. Without a topic, debate becomes little more than a bickering session. Having a topic allows the debaters to prepare sufficiently for their presentations and anticipate the arguments of the opposition. It informs the audience about what they should expect from the debate and creates a real focus for the "decision" that the participants are asked to make at the end of the event.

The topic provides an educational theme for your classroom. A poorly constructed topic can result in a debate that focuses on the peripheral elements of the topic. However, if you are careful in your choice of topics you can avoid this problem.

While competitive academic debating and the information landscape have changed in the last 100 years, the basic guidelines for topic construction have not. It is useful to draw on a number of guiding principles that are well established in the debate literature. It is also useful to refer readers to that literature because constructing a topic is something that everyone attempting to organize classroom debates has to do.

This chapter will draw on several classic debate texts to provide guidance for topic construction in the classroom context.

Topics should explore important parts of the subject matter

The topics used in a classroom debate need to complement the subject students are studying. Debates are most useful when they confront the important issues of an area of study and thus require students to grapple

with them in an argumentative forum.

Topics for classroom debates are often useful when they explore enduring controversies. Many fields of study have such contested areas, where people of honest intent simply disagree. Both sides of an issue are often composed of a set of good arguments, and thus are not easily reconciled. These areas of contention make them good subjects for debate.

Topics for classroom debates can often be framed within disagreements that are known to occur in the literature. There is almost always a "minority view" on the approach to be taken toward a given subject, and these views are often well phrased as a debate topic. The minority view often creates a good position for an affirmative team to take because the team needs to question the conventional wisdom in this field. It is vital that you consider the research implications of topics that you select. Will students be able to sustain quality arguments on both sides of the debate? Is the topic even in terms of research requirements? These are the kinds of questions you should consider when planning a debate topic.

Topics for classroom debates can also examine critical choices made by various actors, individuals, and nations. The study of history offers many difficult choices that can become fruitful topics for debate. Literature is full of critical choices that characters make, which can serve as useful debate topics. In the study of politics and government it is easy to find debatable choices about public policy, elections, and legislation.

Topics for classroom debates can also come out of the major areas studied during a class. Short and less formal debates can be used to illustrate issues that are part of the curriculum. Debates do not always have to focus on large issues; they can be adapted through shorter formats to become a way to pursue fairly specific areas of study. The larger topics, involving enduring points of controversy, often come up again and again and should be neglected or saved until the end of the class, but it may be useful to stage several shorter debates that explore parts of the larger issue at several points in the class so that student perspectives and applications can develop and mature.

Topics should be interesting

Not every topic makes an interesting debate. Some questions can be

debated but are of little usefulness when it comes time to make a decision about the topic. The more personally relevant the topic is to the students and to their course materials, the more interesting it is likely to be.

Many historic, well known debate topics have failed this first basic test. William Trufant Foster pointed out in 1945 that some debate topics simply do not lend themselves to exciting debate. Using the example of a debate about the comparative use of iron and coal, he wrote that it was uninteresting "not only because it is undebatable, but also because [hu]mankind cares little how it is answered." He continued by calling for debates to be vital parts of the classroom experience. "The scholastic disputants of the Middle Ages tried to determine how many angels can stand on the point of a needle, but that is no longer a live issue. The student should look about for matters of immediate interest Let [her or] him make note of questions which arise in [her or] his classes" (10). Foster's observations are as true today as they were in 1945. Topics should be engaging and student interest is an important variable to consider when designing them.

Topics should be debatable

Not all topics are debatable. Some topics are simple truisms that could be debated with a great deal of ingenuity, but probably not with any considerable value to the audience or the participants. A topic that has almost all people in agreement with one side becomes either a pep rally or a session for condemning those who hold the highly unpopular view. Likewise, a topic that all would prefer to oppose rarely elicits a good debate.

As well as avoiding truisms, some topics could never really be proven with any approximation at all. Foster writes:

> Propositions that cannot be proved approximately true or approximately false are not debatable. Such is the proposition, "Men have done more than women to advance civilization." One could as sensibly contend that sodium contributes more than chlorine to the value of salt. One of the early presidents of Harvard College wrote a dissertation on the question, "Whether angels speak any lan-

> guage; if so, whether it is Hebrew." Discussion of such futile questions has sometimes brought debating into ill repute. A question should offer more than an ingenious exercise; it should offer the possibility of reaching, through argument, a reasonably sound conclusion. (5)

Despite this, there may be value in exploring ideas that seem to be universally unpopular. These arguments and ideas can point to the value that is accessible even in the untenable argumentative strategies. What may be vital is to re-frame these kinds of debates to explore how certain ideas came to be popular – or make it clear that people are debating positions that are not their actual feelings.

Topics should have the affirmative support change

In the vast majority of debating formats the affirmative team (who affirms the topic or resolution) gives the first and last speech of the debate. This format is clearly an advantage for them. Giving the affirmative the obligation of overturning the conventional wisdom or existing policy usually counterbalances that advantage. This role is also well suited to the first presentation of the debate, where the affirmative spells out its case. By opening the debate in an attempt to overturn existing belief or practice, the affirmative has what is called the "burden of proof," and is the way most disputational communication situations are organized. Foster writes:

> He [or she] who affirms must prove. The common law holds that no one shall, in the first instance, be called on to prove a negative, or be put on his defense, without sufficient evidence against him having been offered, which, if not contradicted or explained, would be conclusive. The one who makes the charge is said to have the burden of proof; the defendant is said to have the presumption in his favor. To give the affirmative side of a debate the burden of proof is to call for progress in the first speech, and thus help to get the debating started at once (6-7).

Topics should have one central idea

The length of a single debate is seldom sufficient to discuss any complex subject. Yet, the debate does attempt to embrace issues on a complex level as opponents look for weaknesses in the other side's ideas. For this reason you should try to constrain the topic to one major idea. This constraint will allow the affirmative to develop a case for which the negative team might be able to imagine arguments in advance. A topic with several ideas makes preparation more difficult and the examination of important issues more difficult as well. Even if the ideas are related, such a bifurcated topic makes the debate a bit shallower. An exception to this rule would be a topic in which two concepts are being compared, such as, "The right to privacy is more important than the public's right to know."

Foster explains how this concept operates:

> Parliamentary law recognizes this difficulty through providing the "motion for the division of the question." This calls for a separate vote on each part, whenever members find it difficult to vote because two principles are involved. The proposition, "Resolved, that the present tariff promotes the commercial interests of New England," is suitable for debate, even though it involves many items; for, when the main issues underlying all parts are the same, no confusion need result from the number of parts. Such is not the case with the following double-headed proposition recommended in a book for debaters: "Military drill should be taught in the common schools of America, and all able-bodied citizens should be required to serve a term in the army." Here are different underlying principles, and consequently different sets of main issues. A satisfactory proposition has one central idea, and only one (11).

Topics should be elegant

Elegance refers to a stylish crafting that is not too ornate. We often admire elegant prose, such as that of Ivan Illich or Abraham Lincoln, where much is said but not through complex language or ideas. Debate teaches such rhetorical elegance, where important ideas are expressed in direct and deliberate language. Debate topics should likewise be crafted

in a straightforward manner. Many style guidelines have no better advice than to "use fewer words whenever possible." The topic becomes more confusing when more terms are introduced. Any word can be defined in several different ways, so multiple terms make a topic much more difficult to understand, define, and debate. The meanings of the words used in the topic should also be fairly clear. Extremely abstract terms should be avoided whenever possible. All terms contain much ambiguity, of course, but some terms are far more ambiguous than others. Robert Branham gives this example:

> At the turn of the last century, a leading textbook suggested the following standard question for young debaters: "Are the works of nature more beautiful than those of art?" Yet this topic almost ensures a fruitless and frustrating debate on the meanings of its key terms: nature, art, and beauty. The topic invites its proponents to define beauty in such a way as to advantage nature and its opponents to offer a competing standard of beauty that privileges art. Thus, the debate seems destined to focus (with little prospect for resolution) on the "proper" definition of beauty (33).

Topics should use clear and neutral language

Frame a topic so that it is neutral to both sides in the arranged controversy. Loaded language inserted into debate topics will influence the way the debate takes place and is perceived by the audience. If a loaded term is used, the debate may be slanted toward one side or another. Another risk is that the negative side may try to hold the affirmative to the standard of that term, thus confusing the debate. For example, a debate during World War I with the topic, "All nations should join together to fight the Axis barbarians," might be approached by the negative team through proof that the Axis nations are, in fact, civilized, and force the affirmative to disprove it. "Barbarians" is such a loaded, nonneutral word that an audience attracted to this topic might be biased toward one side or the other before hearing one word of the debate.

Topics should not be too broad

Because a debate is of limited duration, its topic must focus on a limited set of issues. However, this focus is required only if the debates are isolated and individual instead of part of a series. Often the national policy debate topic in the USA will be fairly broad, but there will be thousands and thousands of debates on this topic, allowing through repetition for coverage of a broad spectrum of concerns. The situation is somewhat different for classroom debating, where a given topic will be debated usually only once, or only a very few times at most.

Robert Branham discusses this need for narrow topics in classroom debates not to be repeated with broader topics available for repetitive debate treatment:

> If the same topic is to be used for an entire semester or year of interscholastic competition, it should be broad enough to permit diverse approaches and avoid tedious repetition of arguments. The full discussion of the topic would unfold over the course of the competitive season, rather than in any single debate. For most debates, however, the proposition should be clear and very limited. (…) Thus, the proposition must be sufficiently limited to permit satisfactory treatment of it in the time allotted. The proposition "Resolved: that the United States should expand its exploration of outer space" cannot be satisfactorily examined in a single debate; there are too many potential and dissimilar ways in which such exploration might take place. The proposition "Resolved: that the United States should send astronauts to Mars by the year 2000," although still a major issue, is far more amenable to discussion in a single debate. Narrow topics are also preferable because they facilitate clash between the disputants, enabling each side to have a better idea of what the other will argue and to prepare accordingly. Such focused preparation will almost always produce better debates and more informed decisions by the audience (34).

Now that we've considered the goals to keep in mind when constructing debate topics, we focus in the next section on the types of top-

ics available to teachers. In this section we will look at fact topics, value topics, and policy topics.

"Fact" topics

Topics of fact invite the debaters to argue about what "is," "was," or "will be." While this description tells us where these claims occur in time, they are not the only examples of fact topics.

Robert Branham describes four different types of topics of fact, including causality, definition, conditions of the past, and predictions.

> Propositions of fact regarding what is are generally either claims of causality (x results in y), as in the aforementioned television violence example, or definition (a belongs to classification q, as in the aforementioned "cold fusion" hypothesis).
>
> Propositions of fact regarding what was are hypotheses regarding events or conditions of the past. Such hypotheses may involve historical claims (e.g., "Vikings landed on North America before Columbus" or "Harriet Taylor was an influential collaborator on works credited to John Stuart Mill") or prehistorical claims, such as: "The mass extinction of dinosaurs was caused by the impact of a huge asteroid on the surface of the Earth" or "The 'big bang' theory best explains the origins of the universe."
>
> Propositions of fact regarding what will be are, of course, predictions. Predictive claims generally draw on an understanding of the past and present to extrapolate future events. In order to predict what the responses of China might be to increased economic sanctions, for example, one might examine Chinese (or other nations') responses to past sanctions. In order to predict the weather in a given area for next Thursday, meteorologists must know the current status of relevant fronts and the past directional patterns of wind and fronts (34).

In framing these topics it is important to include the proper determi-

nation of the time period being debated. It is also important to determine which of the above types of fact topic you are dealing with, and then insert the proper terminology into the topic.

A topic concerned with causality should include the proper causal terms, such as "causes," "leads to," or "significantly contributes to."

A topic concerned with definition should include the proper classification terms, such as "belongs to," "is one of," or "should be defined as."

A topic concerning conditions of the past should include the proper historical terms, such as the use of the past tense "was" or "did," or the statement of a period of time that the topic concerns.

A topic concerning predictions should include the proper terms, such as the use of the future tense, the specification of a particular condition or event to be predicted, and perhaps a statement of time frame so that the debate is not about the unlimited future.

These topics are highly debatable. Our interpretation of facts changes through time and often changes through the process of debate and discussion. Students can come to better understand what it is they accept as facts and how they come to accept them.

"Value" topics

A value topic deals with the evaluations of persons, places, things, or events. The expression of a value topic is the offering of an evaluative term and then the object to which that evaluative term is applied.

Often the value term being applied is fairly abstract, dealing with concepts such as beauty, importance, equity, morality, and ethics, all of which are open to wide variations of interpretation.

Robert Branham gives the following examples:

> Propositions of value represent claims of evaluation, stipulating something as good or ill, ugly or beautiful, important or inconsequential, great or mediocre, for example. Propositions of value are commonly associated with disputes on matters of ethics, religion, philosophy, or aesthetics, but are also a regular part of our own conversational arguments. When we dispute the merits of a movie we have just seen or a restaurant we have just visited, we are debating

> propositions of value. When we hope to "do the right thing" but are uncertain about what the right thing is in a given situation, we will probably dispute propositions of value with others or ourselves (in a struggle of conscience) in an effort to determine the proper course (35).

We often assume that questions of value need to be resolved in an absolute way, such that something is good or bad, ugly or beautiful. While this may be the case in some topics, such as "Murder is always immoral," it is also true that values can be debated in comparison to one another, such as "The pursuit of economic prosperity is less important than the preservation of environmental quality."

"Policy" topics

Topics of policy concern social or individual action. These topics ask the question, "what should be done?" In the USA this sort of topic has been the most commonly debated in formal settings. Examples of policy topics would include debates between candidates to gain the ballots of the voters, debates in legislative bodies about what laws to adopt, and debates about which product or professional service to utilize.

Robert Branham gives this explanation of how policy topics operate:

> The policies disputed may refer to potential governmental action at the national level (e.g., "Resolved: that the United States should permit the use of human fetal tissue for scientific research"), the international level (e.g., "Resolved: that all nations should cease the killing of whales"), the state or provincial level (e.g., "Resolved: that Quebec should secede" or "Resolved: that Maine should establish a state-run lottery"), or the local level (e.g., "Resolved: that the city of Lewiston should adopt mandatory recycling procedures").
>
> Propositions of policies need not, however, be restricted to the actions of governments. Policy propositions may focus on matters of personal decision and action, as in the resolution that "This house supports X for president of the United States." Members of

> academic debating societies or courses may also find it valuable to debate matters of school policy, such as "Resolved: that this university should establish a system of pass/fail grading," "This house believes that knowledge of at least one foreign language should be required for graduation from this university," or "Resolved: that the university should prohibit racist speech on campus." Debates on matters of school policy draw on issues and circumstances that are usually familiar to the disputants and audience. Moreover, such debates can sometimes play an important role in the actual decision-making process regarding the matter discussed, whether by raising campus awareness of the issues or by organizing diffuse campus opinions on controversial matters (36).

In crafting policy topics the following guidelines should be kept in mind:

An action or policy should be specified.

The agent of that action should be specified.

The word "should," (meaning ought to but not necessarily will) is useful for indicating the difference between a policy and fact topic.

It must not be assumed that these three types of topics (fact, value, and policy) are completely separate, because they overlap in important ways. For example, a topic of value will utilize questions of fact (the way things are or were) as well as questions of value (the way things should be). Topics of policy involve knowledge of facts and the application of values in order to determine what should be done (the policy being debated).

"Time period" and "reenactment" topics

Topics can be written so that they take place in a specific time period or with the debaters in specific roles. These settings could feature topics of fact, value, or policy. A time period topic would, for example, situate the debaters in a specific period of time (the UN debate over the creation of the state of Israel) and ask the debaters to engage in the debate as if she or he were living in that time. A reenactment topic, for example, would situate the debaters in a specific situation (a debate about whether an

old-growth forest should be harvested for lumber) and ask the debaters to play various roles that would exist in a real debate about such an issue (lumber company representative, local government official, local businessperson, environmental protection activist, etc.).

Time period topics can be extremely useful for studying either actual or fictional history as portrayed in a historical novel. Reenactment topics can be very useful for studying complex social phenomenon where competing interests are represented. These reenactment debates can help students understand the various perspectives of important actors in the situation being portrayed.

In both of these topic variations, the teacher needs to provide additional information that can assist students in making the debate a productive event. When preparing to engage in this kind of debate two things should be kept in mind.

First, students should be provided with the background for the debate. Because the debate is located in a specific historical and social context, it is important to communicate that to the students involved. This preparation might have already taken place through a study of a specific time period in the class, but without some detailed background information the practice loses much of its value.

Second, students who are asked to play specific roles (either historical or functional) need to be provided with brief descriptions or biographies of those they are to portray. Providing such information makes students feel much more at ease with their debating, but also allows them to do a much better job of actually playing the role assigned to them.

Conclusion

Topic choices frame the focus of the debates and direct the research and preparation of the students. Teachers should devote considerable time to drafting topics using knowledge of the subject matter as well as the guidelines presented in this chapter. Different kinds of topics produce different kinds of debates, and teachers need to be aware of this from the outset.

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PREPARING STUDENTS FOR CLASSROOM DEBATING

- **Brief introduction to debate skills and practices is sufficient**
- **The "better" debater**
- **The "less skilled" debater**
- **Teaching issue discovery**
- **Teaching speech organization**
- **Teaching basic oral communication skills**
- **Teaching basic note-taking skills**
- **Teaching students how to ask and answer questions**
- **Teaching students how to judge a debate**
- **Helping the affirmative prepare a case**
- **Helping the negative to refute a case**
- **Helping students disclose arguments before the debate**
- **Online assistance for student debaters**

This chapter assists teachers in preparing students to engage in classroom debates. While it is not necessary to engage in extensive student training, some basic procedures and skills should be shared. This chapter covers the information students might need in preparing for and executing classroom debates. A lot of material is covered here in brief, but additional materials can be located in the references at the end of this chapter.

Some teachers may wish to share the information in this chapter with their students to provide guidance and facilitate better debates. We urge teachers to do so, utilizing this chapter as a written resource or as material to be covered in detail during class time.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO DEBATE SKILLS AND PRACTICES IS SUFFICIENT

This book is not only aimed at teachers of debate classes, but also at those interested in using debate as a method in a wide variety of subject areas. Recognizing that teachers have full schedules, we realize that it is not possible for them to spend a large amount of time on teaching complicated debate skills to students. Fortunately, they do not have to. The debate process is easy to grasp, but difficult to master. Students do not need to receive extensive periods of instruction on "how to debate" for most of these exercises to be useful.

One description we have found useful for a student is a simple checklist of behaviors that distinguish the good debater. One of the authors was asked by several of the New York Urban Debate League coaches to come up with a list of characteristics that describe a good debater as well as those that describe a poor debater. Since the debate is supposed to be won by the team who did the "better job of debating," these rather abstract and symbolic characteristics very often translate directly into competitive success. We also think they translate into success later in life. For your use we provide this brief checklist:

The "better" debater

Is a gracious winner and a respectful loser

Gives strong rhetorical reasons for the probative force of his or her arguments

Makes needs of and benefits to others the focus of the debate through their arguments, instead of focusing on his or her own competitive triumph

Argues through excellent evidence, but always makes argument the focus, not evidence. These good debaters use evidence to support their own arguments and do not assume the audience recognizes the importance of their arguments.

Debates dynamically, with enthusiasm and commitment

Sees the big picture, is aware of how ideas influence one another, and uses those relationships to enhance analysis in the debate

Knows the value of having a working command of the knowledge base. There is no substitute for knowing what it is you are debating about.

Understands the need for organization in order to identify the critical tipping points in the debate

Portrays an image of an intelligent person who is seeking to understand and discover the truth

The "less skilled" debater

Becomes frustrated when debate success isn't easy or automatic and loses the benefits of debating through lack of determination

Whines that everything is against her or him: judges, situations, other teams, fate

Fails to show respect to all participants -– opponents, judges, audience, hosts

Speaks from a position of privilege – demanding that you trust and accept his or her ideas over those of others without demonstrating why

Fails to make connections between various issues and arguments in the debate

Speaks only in generalities or only in specifics, not understanding that both the big picture and the minutiae are important at all times

Fails to have fun in the debate because of an overly competitive nature or disinterest

Fails to pay rigorous attention to the judge's critique, learning neither from failure nor successes

Fails to focus during the debate at hand, allowing his or her mind to wander and be distracted by outside events

Discerning who is the better debater is a difficult task, requiring a teacher to be carefully involved in the debate's progress and observing each debater's behavior. This list is based on our years of experience as teachers and coaches and is a guide for you to use in your classrooms. It is not a list of goals or even a guide to evaluate students, but rather a point sheet that allows us to focus our educational efforts.

It can be very difficult to instruct students to be good debaters because people come to debate skills by being involved in debate. These lists of good and bad debating styles can point you in the right direction, but they are not teachable in the traditional senses. Instead, we encourage you to spark the desire in students to follow their own path and discover the natural value of being a positive debater. A teacher's brief introduction to debating should be sufficient to allow classroom debating activities to begin. After they begin everyone learns by doing and performances improve.

TEACHING ISSUE DISCOVERY

Students need to discover the issues that they should be concerned with in debating any given topic. People usually are aware of their own opinions about various controversies and the reasons they hold them, but they are usually not familiar with the arguments and reasons in support of positions they do not agree with. When students become debaters, they need to take this extra step and determine what the various issues are concerning the controversy in general.

Robert Branham describes this essential process:

> Before you debate against an opponent, you should debate against yourself. Adopt the viewpoint of your opponent and think strategically from the opponent's perspective. Examine your position from the critical perspective of your adversary. It is only by coming

> to know the strongest arguments and strategies that your opponent might make in support of his or her position that you will truly be prepared to debate. The process of argument anticipation is the cornerstone of strategic planning for debate and the key to the success of most outstanding debaters (96).

An issue can be thought of as an idea or concept that is both essential and unavoidable in a meaningful discussion of a topic. For example, whether an unborn fetus is a human being is just such an issue in the debate about abortion rights for women. It is essential because quite often the resolution of that issue directs the position one has on this question. It is unavoidable because no debater can engage in a debate about abortion rights without discussing this issue. This is not to say that an idea must be absolutely essential and absolutely unavoidable in order to be thought of as an issue, but that if it loosely meets either of these standards it needs to be considered and prepared for. Different sorts of resolutions can have their issues revealed through a look at the basic "stock issues" (primary themes) or "points of stasis" (major arguments) that inhere in that type of resolution.

Students discover issues through basic methods they can then use repeatedly throughout their lives. Some of them include interpreting formal course material, examining controversies in the field, using brainstorming techniques, and engaging in thought experiments.

Formal course material may provide students with insight into issue discovery, especially if the instructor features differences of opinions and various perspectives when covering the subject matter. Students can react to ideas presented in readings, lectures, and discussions that they find relevant to the topic they will be debating.

Every living and growing field of knowledge has controversies. An examination of these controversies not only leads to the creation of good topics for classroom debates, but also reveals different approaches to the subject matter that the student may not be aware of and can apply to the topic to be debated. Instructors should be ready to inform students about such topics and the individual scholars associated with them.

Brainstorming is an excellent tool for issue discovery. This practice

involves a small group of people deciding to have a discussion to determine what the important ideas are within a given topic. A public list is created of all ideas presented, and criticism of any ideas is delayed until a later time. The creation of such a list should continue even when the flow of ideas begins to slow, because that is the point at which the group's real creativity begins to operate, simply because the obvious ideas have already been posed. After such a list has been constructed, criticism and analysis can begin. Duplicative ideas can be grouped together, related ideas can be put into larger categories, and irrelevant or unacceptable ideas can be excluded. The list that remains is often quite an excellent survey of the issues.

Thought experiments are another useful technique for discovering issues. While none of us may be as insightful as Albert Einstein thinking about travel at the speed of light while in an Austrian streetcar, this sort of critical and creative imagining can be quite revealing. In a thought experiment you imagine that something has taken place or is true and then you project this idea to other ideas that seem relevant. In a thought experiment about significantly raising income taxes on wealthy citizens, one would imagine that such a program was in existence and then relate that to other factors. The result might be a revelation that many would move their income out of the country to avoid paying increased taxes, that the use of charitable donations as a tax benefit might increase, that more people might cheat on their taxes, that the additional funds might be poorly spent, and on and on. The vast majority of people have very powerful and creative imaginations, and those forces can be harnessed in the process of issue discovery.

Ultimately a good exercise in issue discovery will necessitate additional research by the student debaters. They will need to seek out, locate, and prepare to use information that supports their point of view or assaults the point of view of their opponents. In this process, issue discovery is a natural result.

TEACHING SPEECH ORGANIZATION

Excellent ideas can be sabotaged by poor organization. In a similar man-

ner, average ideas can be enhanced and successful if properly organized. One of a debater's most important goals is to present material in a way that makes logical sense, relates ideas to each other in meaningful ways, and allows the audience to connect responses to the arguments the speaker is answering. Unless ideas work together well and unless the audience understands the answers to the arguments, victory will be difficult.

When building arguments and advocacy positions in a debate, it is important to remember basic outlining techniques.

❖ MAJOR POINTS: Divide ideas up under major headings. These major headings might represent major argumentative burdens, such as stock issues. Make sure that the major points are distinct from one another. If an idea is unavoidable and vital in coming to the conclusion, it should be included as a major point. Put major points in the proper chronological order: causes before effects, background before conclusions, etc. The statement of the major point should be relevant to all of the points arrayed under it. It is also important to organize speeches into major points in order to help students conceptualize their ideas. You should encourage your students to give previews of their major arguments and to keep all of their important points in their head throughout the debate. The organization of a speech into major points is vital in this process.

❖ SUBORDINATE POINTS: Within each major point should be all of the specific points that support it. Some of these subordinate points will naturally group together into further subgroups. This sorting of ideas is critical to debate success and to becoming a critical thinker. Ideas can be sorted by distinct idea or concept, general or specific nature, different steps in a logical process, or some other logical way.

❖ NOTATION: Outlines (and debate arguments) have letter and number alternations so that one level of substructure can be differentiated from another. Major points are often expressed with roman numerals (I, II, III, IV, etc.), subtopics of major points are letters (A, B, C, D, etc.), and particulars about subtopics are numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.). It takes two particular ideas to begin a subdivision of any point; otherwise the single subdivision would be the more general point. You need a B to justify an A, and a 2 to justify a 1.

Other organizational guidelines include critiquing arguments by others, and applying certain issues to positions taken by the other team. In these instances, it is essential to organize smaller groups of arguments. For example, if the affirmative case has stated that X is harmful, the negative will need to organize responses to this concept. Here are two distinct ways to organize responses.

❖ LIST OF REASONS – USE NUMBERS: Often debaters will provide a list of independent reasons why something is or is not true. If the affirmative side claims that gay marriage would ruin the family structure, the negative side could come up with three independent arguments why this is not true: gay parents love their children as much as straight parents, studies show that gays can be excellent role models for children, and gay parents often have higher income levels that provide opportunities for children. Each of these would be a separate idea, not a repeat of a previous idea. Thus, opponents would have to answer each of these separately.

❖ CHAIN OF REASONING – USE LETTERS: Often arguments are more complex than one idea, and involve several steps. These steps can be thought of as chains of reasoning. Thus, a debater would say that: A. gay marriage destroys the family structure, B. this undercuts our nation's international prestige and this leads to conclusion C. therefore, our enemies are more likely to attack us. Like any chain, it is only as strong as its weakest link. Thus, opponents would only have to break the chain at one point, for example, disproving that gay families destroy the family structure.

❖ WHY DO THIS: It is very important to be able to tell the difference between a situation where arguments in a list are independent and one where there is a chain of reasoning. If you organize arguments this way you will always be able to tell the difference easily.

As we noted in Chapter 2, it is important for students to realize how a single argument should be structured. Each argument has three components: the ASSERTION, the REASONING, and the EVIDENCE. These components form the ARE model.

ASSERTION: This is the label for this argument, and it is what the debater wants the audience to write down and remember. It should be rel-

atively short and snappy, and express an argumentative relationship. A bad label would be "X is not bad," while a good label would be "X is good for your health" or "Studies show no harmful effects." The more expressive label does more than just say "we win;" it gives a reason why.... and giving reasons why things are true is the basis of argumentation. The assertion labels a statement that expresses a relationship between two ideas and that should communicate those ideas well. But, keep it short!

REASONING: Here is where the debater explains the logical basis of the argument. There is a difference between a "claim" and an "argument." A claim merely states that something is so, but does not explain why. Thus, a team could just keep making claims ("we win," "our arguments are better," "our case is true") without making progress in the debate. An "argument" expresses a REASON why something is true. It uses some logical principle to compel belief on the part of the listeners. Quite often debaters will leave this step out as they use simply prepared briefs in an assertion-evidence pattern. They do so at their peril, as will be explained later.

EVIDENCE: Here is where the debater uses some fact, testimony, example, or expert opinion to bolster the point being made. Evidence often comes in the form of a "piece of evidence" or "evidence card" that has been researched prior to the debate. Such evidence should be relevant and in direct support of the assertion label used. It is not necessary to have formal evidence to make an argument, especially if it uses some sound logical principle that can be demonstrated rhetorically. A logical demonstration of the argument can also serve as evidence.

An important organizational tool for use during debate speeches is called "signposting." When driving around in our cars, we get lost if the road signs are not clear and easy to follow. The same is true while debating. The best way to ensure that the audience understands the order in which the speakers address issues is signposting. Transitions between arguments also help the audience to follow the order in which the debaters move from argument to argument. Having a coherent discussion of the issues helps the whole debate to move in a much smoother way and allow more clashes with the other team.

Signposting allows the audience and other teams to identify the spe-

cific argument being addressed within each major argument. Signposting should be done throughout each speech, by distinguishing between and labeling each argument. Transitions provide information about which issues will be dealt with next, while also providing the audience time to organize their notes and "shift gears" mentally. One of the most important functions of signposting is to assist all in effective note-taking.

TEACHING BASIC ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Students will be engaged in oral communication during the debate. This opportunity and requirement allows students to develop their public speaking abilities. However, that does not mean that the instructor needs to spend a considerable amount of time teaching students how to speak, because they already speak in the classroom and probably use oral communication skills many times each day. There are, however, some basic ideas about public speaking that you can share with your students.

The primary goal of any speech is clarity and comprehension. Unless the audience clearly understands the ideas, the persuasive potential of those ideas cannot be realized. Good speaking technique also increases the speaker's credibility, because good delivery makes the audience want to believe the speaker. Effective speaking can also enhance the listener's memory, because every debater wants the audience to remember what was said.

Audiences tend to prefer speakers who are dynamic. You are a dynamic speaker when you speak with energy, enthusiasm, commitment, and variety. You are not dynamic when you are unconcerned, unconfident, boring, and monotonic. Speakers who act like they care about the arguments are more likely to win the debate.

Dynamism can be achieved in public speaking through the application of three delivery principles:

❖ Variation: Be careful not to overuse particular rhetorical techniques;

❖ Emphasis: Use delivery (voice, gestures, etc.) to emphasize and highlight the important arguments and the important words in evidence;

❖ Naturalness: Be genuine, because if the audience believes the speaker is trying to be fake, they will not want to believe them. Speakers

should remain within their natural range.

These three principles can be applied to the various physical dimensions of oral communication delivery.

❖ Volume: Change it for emphasis but do not talk too loudly or too softly;

❖ Tone: Change it for emphasis but do not speak in an unusual or out-of-character tone;

❖ Speed: Slow down for the important ideas, but don't go too slow or too fast;

❖ Hand gestures: Used to emphasize important points, gestures make the speaker look more energetic and increase his or her dynamism. The focus of the speech, however should be the ideas, not the student's performance.

❖ Face: The face is the most expressive part of the body, and studies show people pay attention to the facial expression. Use facial expressions that match the points being made to avoid sending mixed signals.

❖ Movement: Don't be afraid to move around a bit, but don't stray too far from notes and the podium.

A debate can be thought of as a sort of drama taking place in the classroom; every student debater needs to assume the proper role. First impressions are important. In interview situations, most people are "hired" in the minds of the interviewer within the first three minutes based on their appearance alone. Below are some guidelines for good debaters who want to assume the proper role.

❖ Competitive (serious demeanor, ready to debate on time)

❖ Confident (well prepared, up on time, feel good about what they are saying)

❖ Courteous (friendly, mature)

❖ Credible (informed, dynamic, of good character)

❖ Commanding (appropriately dressed, using no street language, unafraid, courteous)

Many of these guidelines are common sense, but they are ideas that we have found useful in helping students quickly become much better public speakers.

TEACHING BASIC NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

Taking notes properly ("flow sheeting" or "flowing" is the debate term) is an essential entry-level skill for debaters. In order to answer arguments by opponents, debaters must be able to write them down so that they can remember them and respond to them in order. Likewise, the flow sheet becomes a set of notes and the text debaters use when they speak. After speaking itself, flow sheeting is one of the most important parts of the debate experience.

Students should prepare their flow sheet by separating their papers into separate columns that represent each of the major speeches. These columns allow students to take notes for each speech and organize their ideas. They can then organize their rebuttal speeches to directly clash with their opponents' major ideas. If everyone involved in the debate uses this format, the result is a debate where the ideas become hotly contested and arguments are developed. On the other hand, if a student simply writes ideas down as they come out of an opponent's mouth and then writes down what they want to say, the arguments will seem disjointed and chaotic. Worse, a student might miss a vital argument. Practicing note-taking specifically for debates is important.

Here is some advice to debaters about note-taking.

❖ What should a debater write with? Write in black, because it is easier to read. Use a writing instrument that moves smoothly over the paper, allows you to write quickly, does not smear, and is comfortable in your hand. Try a medium point pen, though if you write small use a fine point, and if you write large you can get away with a broad point pen. Always have lots of the right kinds of pens.

❖ What should a debater write on? Most debaters flow on yellow legal pads. Yellow because it is easy to read (especially with black ink!), and a legal size (8.5"x 14") because it allows for more room to write. Legal paper in pads allows you to have several pages attached together at the top.

❖ How many columns should the flow sheet have? Note-taking in a debate usually involves creating a column on the page for each speech. This format allows arguments to be traced from left to right across the

page and throughout the debate. Draw these columns on pages well before the debate starts. You should flow the entire debate, even after the rebuttal, so that you can help your partner.

❖ It is often useful to have several different note pads, and put different kinds of arguments on each one. For example, in a policy debate the affirmative case could be on one pad, the negative arguments could be on another. This use of separate pads allows you to keep your notes organized around major types of issues in the debate. You don't want a bunch of loose sheets of paper flying all over.

❖ Leave room on your flow. As a speech is given, write down what is being said in that speech's column. If, for example, it is a negative argument against the case made in a negative speech, you would flow it on the case pad, in a column next to the part of the case the argument clashes with. But it is very important not to crowd things together. If things are all packed together on your flow it will be hard to refer to it and read from it when you are speaking. Do not be afraid to use many pages, with a different major point on each page. Also, when you flow issues just being introduced into the debate, do not try to put them one right under another on your flow. Space them out. Leave open space in the beginning and then it will be there if and when you need it.

❖ Use a symbolic vocabulary. People speak more quickly than you can write; therefore your flow will not contain a word-for-word version of what you or your opponents say; instead, it will contain a shortened and meaningful version of the ideas being expressed. One useful way to take notes is to use symbols that stand for concepts we commonly encounter in an argumentative situation. By turning their statements into a new symbolic and abbreviated form, we can boil down what they are saying into what they mean.

❖ Logic symbols include: ↑ means increasing or increases, ↓ means decreasing or decreases, = means is, or the same as, → means causes or leads to, > means greater than, < means less than. Also, all of these can be negated (turned into not) by putting a line through them, so you get not increasing, not decreasing, not equal to or not same as, not lead to or not cause, etc.

Other debate symbols include:

X for piece of evidence used by speaker,

? no answer to this,

▲ change,

Θ assertion which should have been proven,

⊗ evidence does not prove argument claimed.

Develop your own abbreviations for common debate terms as well as common terms in the topic. If you are making an abbreviation for the first time, try just leaving the vowels out, thus "hospital" becomes "hsptl." As you become more familiar with an abbreviation you can drop out more and more characters to increase efficiency.

Combine logic and debate symbols with debate and topic abbreviations to be able to quickly write down what the arguments of your opponent mean in a way that can make sense to you and that you can interpret to the critic.

If students are unable to flow, don't worry about it. Encourage your students to enjoy the debate process even as they learn to take notes properly.

Offer these pieces of advice for students trying to take notes in this way for the first time:

Never give up. If you miss something, get the next argument. Once you stop flowing in a debate, you are opting out of meaningful participation in it.

Try and write down everything you can. Pour your entire attention and energy into this task.

Ask to see the flows of your teachers and fellow debaters. Learn from them.

Practice, and when you watch a debate try to take the best flow you can.

Look at your flows and see how many of these techniques you have used.

Use structure. Structure and label all the arguments on your flow the same way that the speaker you are flowing is structuring and labeling his or her arguments. Be sure to write down all the numbers and letters you hear on your flow so that you can refer to your partner's or opponents'

specific subpoints later in the debate.

Use your partner. Use the other team's preparation time to talk to your partner about arguments you might have missed.

These guidelines should help students take better notes and perform at higher levels in the debates.

TEACHING STUDENTS HOW TO ASK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS

This section refers to audience members asking questions of debaters, debaters asking questions of each other, and debaters answering questions.

Questions may serve the following objectives:

To clarify points

To expose errors

To obtain admissions

To setup arguments

To show the audience the debater's skills and entice that audience to WANT to vote for that debater.

Too many debaters tend to ignore the value of good questioning technique. Remember, in many formats a substantial portion of the entire debate is spent in question and answer – it should be a meaningful and essential part of the debate. If nothing else, debaters tend to underestimate the importance that question periods may have on the audience. Behavior during the question period will indicate to the audience just how sharp and spontaneous the debaters are. Invisible bias always occurs in a debate and audiences like the sharpest team to win. Good, effective question periods can play an important psychological role in winning the audience's support.

As in all oral presentations, it is advisable for speakers to be dynamic. The debaters should have questions ready; they should answer questions actively and with confidence whenever possible. The image they project will be very important to the audience. This question period is the one opportunity the audience has to compare opponents side-by-side.

Guidelines for asking questions include the following:

Ask a short question designed to get a short answer.

Indicate the object of the question, what it refers to.

Don't advertise the intent of your argument or make it too obvious.

Don't ask questions that won't be answered properly, such as "So, we win, right?"

Make questions seem important, even if they are just an attempt to clarify.

Be polite. If the respondent is rude, audiences will notice.

Approach some points from a non-obvious direction to trap the respondent.

Avoid open-ended questions, which allow a respondent to make a short speech.

Face the audience, not the opponent.

Integrate answers into arguments made during a speech whenever possible.

Try to build up a chain of questions that can get you some advantage.

Guidelines for answering questions include the following:

Give a concise answer whenever possible.

Refer to something already said whenever possible.

Answer based on the position of your side in the debate so far, as this will keep options open.

Qualify answers with words like "often," "sometimes," and other linguistic limiters.

Be willing to exchange documents read into the debate.

Answer only relevant questions.

Address the audience.

The question-and-answer portions of a debate can be exciting and dynamic, and can reveal the abilities of the various participants. Debaters should use these periods actively and strategically.

TEACHING STUDENTS HOW TO JUDGE A DEBATE

Students can better understand the debate process when they also see it from the judge's perspective. While an audience member can observe and learn from the performance of others, putting students in a position to

evaluate others assists them in understanding what they must do to gain a positive evaluation when they debate.

Judges can assume several different roles, which are explained in Chapter 8. The judge can take on the role of judging whether the debate influences their opinion (and at the end they vote for the side they most believe in), they can judge the presentation skills of the two sides, or they can judge the debate based on who did the better job of debating. Because it is the most educational, this last model is the one that we will analyze here.

In the "better job of debating" role the judge tries to determine not which side is "right," but which side did the better job performing the debate. The judge strives to be as objective as possible, realizing that no debate decision can be totally objective. In this role the judge would try to disallow their opinions to influence the decision. He or she would try to avoid their own argumentative intervention in the debate, and base the decision purely on what the debaters themselves argued and articulated. Just as the student debaters would not want the instructor's evaluation to reflect a specific ideological bias but rather the skills shown by the students, student judges should attempt to do the same.

Within this "better job of debating" model, there are three major qualities of a good judge. The judge should be diligent and attentive, as fair as possible, and knowledgeable about the debate topic.

Student judges should also be diligent and attentive. Judges should attempt to be active listeners, trying their best to understand the debaters' arguments. This active listening involves taking copious notes during the debate, attending to the speaker, and trying to avoid distractions. It is important that such judges should also give nonverbal signals that indicate attention and put the debaters more at ease.

Student judges should be as fair and objective as possible. Absolute objectivity is not possible, since every person is influenced by his or her background, education, parents, knowledge of the subject matter, and language skills. The judge needs to control potential biasing factors and strive for objectivity. Individuals should be aware of their own strongly held opinions, as well as their political and moral beliefs. This awareness can be used by individual judges to keep their biases in check. The judge's

goal should be to evaluate the debate going on in front of them, not the one going on in their minds. This guideline implies a lack of intervention on the part of the judge. The process of judging the debate is not one of comparing the performances to a set standard but one that compares the performances of two sides. In this way the judge strives to be fair and objective to all debaters.

Student judges should have some knowledge about the topic being debated. Students make good judges in this regard because they tend to know many of the same things as other students. Students have been in the class studying the subject matter along with the other students, and thus judges and debaters have some common ground of understanding the issues. Each student will, of course, know different things about the subject matter at different levels of detail.

HELPING THE AFFIRMATIVE PREPARE A CASE

Students generally enjoy building their own case to support the debate topic. They get to decide what it is they want to talk about and what they want to do. The ideas are in their control. They get to think in strategic terms about how they wish to organize the debate. They can set traps for negative teams, hide answers to their arguments, and lure them into supporting weak arguments. Affirmative debating is a great place to learn and develop communication strategies that they can apply later. Debaters can exercise their advocacy in preparing their case for the topic. They can decide what they want to stand for, what they want to be an advocate of. They have a chance to propose changes in a public forum where other people can oppose and test their ideas. In the future they will need to stand up and be advocates, and now is the time to get the training they need!

Students selecting and preparing such a case should use forethought and care in doing so. Students may wish to select approaches for their case based on the strength of the literature associated with this question. They will need good evidence to support their case. It is beneficial if the case idea has articles and books written about it so that they can learn to marshal the data and facts to fulfill their purpose. They should not be

concerned if there is a lot of evidence about their idea. Since they initiate this discussion, they can almost always stay ahead of the opposition if they know the literature. Mastering a body of knowledge is an important way in which preparing for the debate enriches the students' encounter with the subject matter.

Students should not be discouraged if evidence goes against their case, since there probably are no truly perfect ideas. They can learn to anticipate the negative arguments, but they also want the preponderance of evidence to be on their side of the issue.

While it is not essential, students should be encouraged to choose a case approach that they personally believe in. Certainly, advocacy of attitudes not held by the debater can be intellectually valuable, following the aphorism that "You do not understand your own position unless you understand the arguments against it." However, beginning debaters might find it easier to pick an approach they believe in. When they do so, they will do a better job of debating. They will be more interested in learning about it and so find the research and the preparation easier. They will also make fewer contradictions when they debate because the affirmative case they are supporting fits their other beliefs and values.

It is also valuable to debate about ideas one does not agree with. Debate encourages scrutiny about ideas and concepts. Debating both sides of an issue encourages flexible thinking and adaptability.

Students are advised to pick an affirmative case that has a predictable negative approach. If they find that the negative arguments against their case tend to be repetitive, they will be able to prepare for a relatively small number of negative arguments.

Research may be one of the most important skills students will learn in debate. Students should go to the library and start by doing a search. Scan is the important word here. They do not start reading whatever they find or they will never get anywhere. They need to scan what a library has, see what the best materials are, and read them first. They should make sure to look for all kinds of literature on their subject, including books, professional journals in the area of research, government documents, Internet sites, general periodicals and newspapers, and specific prints put out by specialty groups in the field.

Once they have found a variety of materials they should sort them and start scanning the best items first by looking at the chapter headings and finding the ones likely to have what they want. When they scan a chapter they should read the first few paragraphs and the last few paragraphs. If that information looks good, then they should scan the chapter a paragraph at a time. They should scan a paragraph by reading the first and last sentences. If those sentences look good for their research area, then they should read the entire paragraph. This way they find the paragraphs that are really needed, not hundreds of pages of irrelevant material. Students should not forget to look up the keywords about their case in the index of the book. They should also scan articles and other publications in the same way. Students need to learn to scan vast bodies of literature to find exactly what they need to position themselves to be winners in the information age.

Using holistic reading, students should make sure to find and process the negative evidence and arguments as well. They do not understand their own case fully until they understand the arguments against it.

Students should pay attention to the evidence and arguments that they need but are not finding. They will have to do a special search for such information or else figure out a way to use the affirmative case effectively without it.

The student debaters are now prepared to write their first speech to introduce their advocacy of the debate topic. The affirmative case is the audience's first impression of the side, and we know that first impressions are very important. The presentation must give a good impression of the debaters and their ideas.

Debaters should, in their case, use colorful but sophisticated language. They should avoid bland language, also putting in strong statements explaining what their arguments prove and why their arguments are important. They should choose language carefully to explain their case to the audience.

In the beginning of the affirmative case it is advisable read the resolution and then give two or three sentences that explain the thesis behind it. It is always a good idea to have the judge on board with the general ideas before presenting evidence and minor but supportive arguments.

Students will want to present their major arguments in a clear organized way, through the identification of several "contentions" or major issues. They should keep their contentions few, clear, and match them with the topic's stock issues. Word the contentions clearly and simply so that judges and the audience can write them down easily. It is advisable to avoid using too many subpoints; instead, make the ideas sound big, not fragmented and trivial.

Students should gather their arguments in meaningful groups, such as all the arguments about why the proposal solves the problem being presented in one section of the speech. Also, they should follow a problem-solution format in building their speech. For example, in a debate about adopting a specific policy, students should try this pattern: problem, cause, solution, and workability. This structure will make sense to a judge and to most people.

In Chapter 5, four types of topics are mentioned, including topics of fact, topics of value, and topics of policy as well as those of historical reenactment. Each of these approaches might utilize a different format in the presentation of the affirmative case.

In a topic of fact the debate is about whether something is or is not true. These topics generally fall into one of four different categories, including claims of causality (smoking causes lung cancer), definition (birds are descended from dinosaurs), conditions in the past (better to be an Athenian than a Spartan), or predictions (missile defense systems increase nuclear proliferation). While no debate will determine the absolute truth of a fact, a debate can help to establish the social relevance of a fact as a working idea (Branham 35).

An affirmative case on a topic of fact might have the following major contentions:

- ❖ Explanation of which type of fact resolution it is (causality, definition, past events, or prediction) and establishes a procedure for how to prove that sort of claim;
- ❖ Establishment of the fact through the use of various forms of proof;
- ❖ Anticipation and refutation of potential opposition arguments.

In a topic of value the debate is about the evaluation of something. Topics may describe something as good, bad, ugly, beautiful, great,

mediocre, etc. These sorts of topics are most often found in the areas of religion, philosophy, ethics, and art. An example of a value topic would be, "The death penalty is immoral." Generally a value topic contains an evaluative term (immoral) and an object of evaluation (death penalty).

An affirmative case on a topic of value might have the following major contentions:

❖ Explanation of the evaluative term and how to prove whether that term is applicable;

❖ Application of the evaluative term to the object of evaluation and arguments that supports that application;

❖ Anticipation and refutation of potential opposition arguments.

In a topic of policy the debate is about whether the specific proposal of the affirmative team should be adopted. These sorts of topics are most often found in the areas of politics, international relations, government, institutional reform, and personal planning for the future. An example of such a topic would be, "The national government should adopt a guaranteed annual income." Generally a policy topic argues that, on balance, it would be better to adopt a policy suggested by the affirmative.

An affirmative case on a topic of policy might have the following major contentions:

❖ There is a problem that exists.

❖ The present system is not able to solve this problem.

❖ The specific plan of the affirmative is outlined and explained.

❖ The specific plan will reduce the problem identified.

An affirmative case on a historical reenactment topic will vary dramatically based on the parameters of the assignment given. Students may be called upon to use the formats of fact, value, or policy topics, or perhaps intermingle the three. It is this vital interchange that makes this debate format all the more exciting and educationally rewarding.

These are the general guidelines that a teacher can provide to students who are developing their affirmative case for almost any debate.

HELPING THE NEGATIVE TO REFUTE A CASE

One of the defining characteristics of debate is the clash of ideas. Specific

disagreement is what judges and audiences look for in deciding who did the better job of debating. The center of that clash experience is the negative team's analysis and refutation of the first affirmative speech – the affirmative case. Here are some basic guidelines to help the negative team in attacking the affirmative case.

Utilize challenges. A "challenge" is an argument that indicates inadequacies in the opponent's arguments and urges their rejection or degradation. We prefer the term "challenge" to "press," because the latter term has been used to characterize weak demands for perfection uttered by some debaters. A challenge specifically identifies logical and developmental inadequacies in argumentation and then reevaluates the argument based on these inadequacies. Failures by the affirmative to deal with these challenges and fill in these inadequacies means that the negative reevaluation of the argument stands.

The format for an effective challenge is simple and direct:

❖ Specify the lacking element. Something is missing or imperfect about an argument. Perhaps an argument is missing a logical step, involves an argumentative fallacy, or confuses the specific with the general. These elements can be highlighted out in attacking the affirmative case.

❖ Demonstrate the objection's importance. Now that a problem has been found in a particular argument, it needs to be reevaluated based on this new finding. The error that many debaters make is in assuming that because an affirmative argument is not perfect it should be rejected. Rather, it is far more credible to say that the argument is not as strong or lacks relevance to the point it is trying to prove. This approach is much harder to answer than mere pleas for perfection. If and when such challenges are not answered by the affirmative, then the negative can begin discussing why this inadequacy means the entire argument is logically inadequate. The important points to remember are how to reevaluate an argument based on the challenge and the extent to which the challenge is not responded to by the affirmative.

Indict affirmative evidence. Evidence is the support upon which many arguments rest. It is essential for the negative team to undermine this evidentiary support by addressing major inadequacies in affirmative evi-

dence. Here are some simple techniques for indicting evidence:

❖ Match the evidence with the claim. Often the claim that the affirmative uses to support their argument is much broader and stronger than the actual wording of the evidence. Negative speakers should monitor the actual content of affirmative evidence as closely as possible, and then launch challenges against important pieces of that evidence that seem particularly vulnerable or important.

❖ Attack the strength of evidence. Probability is a continuum that begins at "absolutely will not happen" and runs to "absolutely will happen." Few ideas exist at either end of the spectrum, and most fall somewhere in the middle range. It is essential to analyze and identify the qualifiers contained within the evidence. Once again, the challenge serves as the appropriate mechanism for dealing with this situation.

❖ Question recency and its relevance. In general, recent evidence is better than less recent evidence. However, depending on the context of the debate, current evidence is very important in some evidence and not so in other evidence. Competing evidence about the yearning humans have to be loved and respected would not be decided based on one piece being six months more recent. For example, competing evidence about Algeria's intention to acquire nuclear weapons may be very timely, especially if the situation has recently changed. Lack of recency on the part of affirmative evidence should be pointed out and criticized only if events are likely to have changed since the evidence first appeared. In this case recency can be important, but it is not an ironclad standard for refuting evidence.

❖ Qualify sources. The reason we use evidence in a debate is to back up our arguments with expert fact and opinion. High school and college students are not subject experts on the topics about which they debate, thus they attempt to quote subject experts to bolster their claims. Negative teams should demand source qualifications while at the same time reading qualifications for their own sources. A quick and easy standard to be established is that without qualification, evidence fails its argumentative role. The negative side then asks the critic to opt for qualified negative evidence over unqualified affirmative evidence in any instance where sources conflict.

❖ Point out source bias. Often those who write about important topics are fervent believers in a specific approach to the controversy. Some sources have direct vested interests in making certain statements ("US foreign policy is promoting peace," says the US Secretary of State; or, "My new invention will replace the current gasoline engine," says Wallace Minto, inventor). Everyone who has an opinion is not a biased source, and some source bias is rarely grounds for rejecting the evidence entirely, but serious source bias should be pointed out and the strength of that evidence should be reduced.

❖ Check source conclusions. Many scholarly sources tend to evaluate controversies thoroughly, dealing with all of the relevant issues on both sides. Often these sources get quoted as making statements to support affirmative conclusions that they did not make at the end of their own analysis. This practice brings the use of that evidence for affirmative conclusions into question. While the evidence is not discounted 100 percent (since the original author did think it was a relevant issue), the value of such a claim should be substantially reduced.

Negative teams must be prepared to disagree with conditions of harm or damage which affirmative teams may claim. It is essential that a negative team reduce the impact of the affirmative claims. These claims of harms or damage usually are phrased as qualitative claims (the type of harm) or quantitative claims (the extent of harm). At times debaters might claim both.

Qualitative claims are usually thought of as those that are not readily susceptible to numerical evaluation. Freedom, equality, justice, all of these are important concepts, but they can rarely be evaluated in numerical terms (such as 11% more justice or 25% more equality). Of course, these claims do have their numerical dimensions, which is the beginning of our list of techniques.

Techniques for attacking qualitative claims include the following:

❖ The number of people impacted. Indicate that this qualitative impact occurs in a small number of cases. When freedom is compromised in an individual case, it is unfortunate. However, this qualitative concept has its numerical dimension, since it would be far worse if millions of people had their freedom compromised. While the rhetoric that "If one of us

is not free, none of us are free" is inspiring and poetic, it does not necessarily carry much weight with all audiences.

❖ The amount the value is infringed. Indicate that qualitative claims must not escalate beyond the specific dimensions described by the affirmative. Another numerical dimension of qualitative impacts may be the extent to which each qualitative deprivation takes place. For example, the affirmative may claim that high school students are not allowed to write what they want in their school newspapers and that this is a violation of the First Amendment. As they describe their position, they will usually talk about how important First Amendment rights are and how they must be preserved. The negative team must make sure that the discussion of this incident does not elevate itself to an affirmative claim that the entire weight of the First Amendment should be given to this argument, since it is really only a few high school students who have lost their freedom of the press rights in the forum of the high school newspaper. Do not let the affirmative claim the whole value when it is only partially compromised.

❖ Not a preferred value. Indicate that those who are experiencing qualitative losses do not mind it. Freedom, justice, privacy, and other rights are only as valuable as individuals make them. If people value privacy, then its loss might be serious. However, if they do not value privacy, its loss would be hardly noticed. If individuals did not seem to mind experiencing the affirmative qualitative impact or did not protest against it, then they can hardly be said to have been victimized. Negative speakers should attempt to force affirmative teams into proving this preferred value or demonstrate that these qualitative elements are not important to those who are experiencing the deprivation.

❖ Trades off with other values. Indicate that by affirming one value another is compromised. Many values that we hold dear trade off with other values that we also hold dear. Some values can be said to be "mutually eroding," in that achievement of or movement toward one may reduce achievement of or movement toward another. Liberty and security, privacy and community, equality and justice, these are just a few of the values that can be seen as mutually eroding in some situations.

❖ Cultural bias. Indicate that affirmative values are not very important

because they are too culturally embedded. The controversy over whether values are universal or relative need not be fully explored here for us to realize that some value claims are very much based in a specific cultural context. These values, of course, would be less important than values that were more broadly recognized and globally accepted. Denial by the affirmative that this was so might lead the negative to make a charge of ethnocentricity on the part of the affirmative.

Just as quantitative claims (those easily susceptible to numerical evaluation, such as dollars, tons of gold, numbers of human lives, etc.) have distinctly quantitative dimensions, so quantitative claims are often best analyzed in terms of their qualitative dimensions.

Here are some common and simple ideas that might be useful in refuting quantitative impact claims.

❖ The amount of times it happens. Obviously, an event that costs 10,000 lives is more significant than an event that costs 1,000 lives, or even 9,999 lives. Make the affirmative prove a number with evidence and then try to reduce that number. However, in no case should that number be inflated, and negative speakers should be consistent in repeating a low number.

❖ The amount of harm of each instance. Each instance of impact described by the affirmative should be evaluated for its seriousness. Many impact claims may be of wildly differing severity. Cancer and the common cold are both illnesses, but we would hardly say they were comparable. Something may happen to one million people, but if what happens is not very serious, it can hardly be seen as tremendously important. Once again, this tactic makes it easier for other negative arguments to outweigh affirmative claims.

❖ Probability. To the extent that the affirmative is claiming some impact in the future, they must indicate the probability of that event. Bayes Theorem has traditionally been used by debaters to evaluate impact, as it states that impact is a function of probability times harm. A 50 percent-probable event costing 10,000 lives is worth 5,000 lives, etc. Too often future scenarios are evaluated as being 100 percent or 0 percent, when the reality should be somewhere in between, especially if the negative is clashing substantively with affirmative claims. For example,

the affirmative team may have slightly better evidence that nation X will attack nation Y than the negative team does, but that does not mean that X will attack Y, only that there is more probability that they will than that they won't, allowing the harms of that scenario to be reduced accordingly.

❖ Time frame. Traditionally, those events that are coming up sooner tend to dominate our attention. This is not simply because human beings are stupid and shortsighted, although this may be the case for some individuals. Actually, events coming up sooner are given more attention because our understanding of them is much firmer than events that are more distant in time. We know less about the distant future than we do of the immediate future, thus we are better able to act in relation to it. This is traditionally called "future discounting." Thus, negative debaters should challenge affirmative scenarios for their time frame, "When will this happen and how long will it take?"

❖ Reversibility. Losing your wallet and losing your innocence are two different types of events. One can be reversed (you can get a new wallet, identification, money, etc.) but your innocence, once lost, cannot be regained. Traditionally, we think of events that can be reversed as less important than events that cannot. Again, this is a logical distinction, because mistakes made in terms of reversible events can be repaired while mistakes made in terms of irreversible events cannot. For example, some evidence indicates that once the Amazonian rain forest is chopped down, it will not be able to grow back and repair itself, thus making it more important than some other ecological disaster that can be repaired. The negative should point out if affirmative scenarios are reversible while negative scenarios are not.

❖ Moral imperative. Some quantitative benefits or harms may be explained away by contrasting them with a notion of moral requiredness. For example, a high-paying job might be foregone because it involved being an assassin. There may be no doubt that money is good, but we may be morally required to forego it. In a more serious example, a parent might be unwilling to kill their child even if it was necessary for the betterment or even survival of the entire community. The utilitarian logic would be clear, that the "needs of the many outweigh the needs of the

few, and the one" (as Vulcan philosopher Spock has said in Star Trek), yet the parent would not be able to do the deed because of moral requiredness of protection of offspring. The negative may be able to justify a quantitatively unfortunate situation because of the morally required actions involved.

❖ Voluntary risk. Some situations involve risk, such as cigarette smoking and car travel, which are voluntary in that we choose to smoke or go on a car ride. Other situations, however, involve risk which is involuntary, such as being killed by an intruder in your home or having your water poisoned by a polluting factory. Traditionally, this notion of risk has been cross-applied to the value of personal freedom. Mill, for example, thought that as long as you damaged no one else, you should be free to damage yourself. More current thinkers have felt that while voluntary risk is different from involuntary risk, the former, while not a social good, was not nearly as serious as the latter. The negative should feel free to argue that affirmative impact scenarios involve voluntary risk. While this argument would not eliminate the affirmative scenario, it might make it easy to outweigh the affirmative with negative scenarios that involved involuntary risks.

❖ Percentage of the total. One way to make something seem small is to compare it to something big. While 3 percent of the population affected by some malady is still an impact scenario, it does not seem nearly as important given that 97 percent of the population was untouched. This tactic, however, is only marginally effective and needs to be utilized in combination with others in this section.

❖ Comparisons through time and space. Descriptions of impact scenarios are always statements that are based on expectations and are trapped in time and space. We do not expect a level of sanitation today, for example, which we might have expected during the Middle Ages, thus what seemed like a clean city to them might seem quite dirty to us. Comparisons can be useful in reducing the apparent magnitude of affirmative impact scenarios. For example, while things are not perfect, they may be: a. better than at any time in history; or, b. better than in any other country in the world. In both cases, negative arguments based on this concept might be characterized more as pleas for perfection than as

legitimate impact scenarios.

Affirmative policy proposals are only as valuable as the problems they can solve. If a policy is not workable and will not yield positive results, there is little reason to adopt it. If the problem isn't solved, the affirmative gets no credit for simply identifying the problem. Negative teams probably won't prove that the plan will be completely useless in solving the problem, but they ought to make the results of the plan as small as possible.

Here are some basic techniques for attacking affirmative solvency. Let's use the example of a plan that requires school uniforms because they say it will reduce school violence and improved academic achievement.

❖ Find the NUMBER in their solvency evidence. Even the best affirmative solvency evidence will not claim to solve 100 percent of the problem. In fact, most affirmative teams can only find evidence that indicates that "some" or "much" of the problem will be solved by the plan. Point this out and start specifying amounts – the plan will only solve 30 percnt of the problem, less than half of the problem, etc. Make them QUANTIFY their solvency, and if they can't suggest a high number with evidence, you should suggest a low number.

❖ Attack specific approaches. The affirmative will use a specific technique to solve a problem. Acquire and use arguments that indicate that this approach is not effective.

❖ Attack their solvency evidence. Often the affirmative will find an example of where something has been done before and then say we should do it on a national level. Just because school uniforms helped academic achievement in an upper class neighborhood in Chicago doesn't mean it will work in Harlem or South Central Los Angeles, or that it will work in Las Vegas, Nevada. The place where it was tried might have been atypical, the study size was too small, the thing being measured was not very specific ("better learning environment," what does that mean?), and it was probably carried out by researchers who picked only the best schools and the best teachers to be involved. If students volunteered to be in the program, it has more chance to succeed than students who are forced into it. Any time the affirmative tries to generalize their solvency from a small example you can make these kinds of arguments.

❖ Find alternative causes. Most things have no one single cause, like school violence. Uniforms only deal with one small cause of school violence (gang-related clothing, supposedly), while the other causes of school violence (poverty, media, poor conflict resolution skills, violence at home, etc.) remain unchanged. Find those alternative causes and show how the plan does nothing about them.

❖ Find ways for people to sabotage the plan. If the affirmative policy has not been adopted because people don't like the plan or don't want the plan, then those same people will want to sabotage the plan. To create this argument first find a reason why people will want to sabotage the plan (gang members will hate the uniforms) and then find a way for them to sabotage the uniform requirement (they will adopt new and different gang markers, such as hairstyle, gestures, etc.). The result is that uniforms fail to solve gang violence.

Many other techniques of refutation exist, and negative teams should use a variety of approaches. In policy debates specifically, negative teams have other strategic options, such as counterplans, disadvantages, and critiques. These are discussed in Chapter 5.

HELPING STUDENTS DISCLOSE ARGUMENTS BEFORE THE DEBATE

One of the things that a teacher can do to improve the quality of classroom debates is to encourage student debaters to engage in pre-debate disclosure. Pre-debate disclosure is a process whereby each of the sides in a debate discloses their major arguments to the other. Affirmative teams would disclose the basic outline of their case. Negative teams would disclose their major arguments.

The use of disclosure in legal proceedings provides an example of how this practice can facilitate the coming discussion, as William Foster explains:

> In the law courts, inconsequential discussion and waste of time are sometimes obviated by the submission of briefs. The lawyer informs the court and the opposing counsel of [her or] his argu-

> ment before the case comes up for trial. In the most satisfactory college debating courses, each side is required to submit its brief a week or two before the debate. For first practice, there must be a common Introduction, containing the necessary definitions, historical matter, admitted matter, clash of opinion, and resulting main issues, all of which is agreed to by both sides. … The object of the conference is to guarantee a real debate. The agreements tend to prevent quibbling over terms, failure to meet on the issues, and the waste of time occupied in proving at length what the other side admits. The resulting debate is worth much more to the auditor who wants to learn something about the question, and to the student who wishes preparation for the contests of business and professional life. Such a debate is less academic. The rebuttal is more likely to come early when the need arises, rather than at the end as now frequently happens in intercollegiate debates. The submission of briefs, containing full Introductions to which both sides have agreed and bare outlines of the arguments on each side, seems as desirable in informal intercollegiate debates as in law courts and college courses (250).

Disclosure is a very valuable process, especially for those who are relatively new debaters. While disclosure may or may not be advisable in a competitive context, it is extremely valuable in an educational context. The discussion of the major issues will be improved by disclosure. Debaters will also feel more relaxed going into the debate because they are not as concerned with being surprised and unprepared.

Disclosure is useful when it is properly implemented. Some debaters will be motivated to avoid full disclosure, believing that it will improve their performance compared to their opponents. Here are some simple guidelines for implementing disclosure in a classroom context.

- ❖ Require disclosure to the other team.
- ❖ Require a date by which disclosure must be accomplished.
- ❖ Specify the level of detail required in the disclosure.
- ❖ Warn debaters not to add major new elements after disclosure.

ONLINE ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENT DEBATERS

There are a number of Internet resources that are available to assist debaters. The resources mentioned here have been developed by one or both of the authors and are available on the World Wide Web.

For general materials to assist debaters in preparing:

http://debate.uvm.edu/

For specific materials to assist in preparing for a policy debate:

Alfred C. Snider, Code of the Debater: Introduction to the Way of Reason, http://debate.uvm.edu/code/001.html

as well as numerous online policy debate training videos http://debate.uvm.edu/policyvideo.html

For specific materials in preparing for a parliamentary debate:

Robert Branham and John Meany, Parliamentary Debate, http://debate.uvm.edu/meanyparli.html

as well as numerous online parliamentary debate training videos at http://debate.uvm.edu/parlivid.html

For materials about the process of argumentation:

Robert Huber, Influencing through Argument,

http://debate.uvm.edu/huber/huber00.html

This chapter has guided you through the process of creating a classroom debate. We have helped to establish your expectations of what a good and bad debater are, and how to navigate some of the problems you might face when creating debates in your classroom. By working through the basic skills needed to debate, and helping affirmative and negative teams create their arguments and speeches, this chapter will be a vital resource for your debates.

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STAGING CLASSROOM DEBATES

Planning and scheduling classroom debates

Physical arrangement of the classroom

Announcement and warning about debates

Preparation time

Timing and continuity

Discussion after debates

Videotaping debates

Inviting outside observers

Publicizing debates

Staging a showcase debate of the best students

Taking student debaters out of the classroom

This chapter attempts to give practical advice for staging classroom debates. There is a logistical discussion of scheduling, staging, and timing classroom debates. Suggestions are made for leading discussions after the debate. Debates can also be documented through videotape and then used to train future classes. Finally, there is a discussion of how to use debate events to enrich your school and community through publicity, public staging of events, and outreach activities. These outreach efforts can be extremely useful in gaining public as well as colleague support. Hopefully, if more teachers see how useful debate as a classroom technique is, then the method will spread.

PLANNING AND SCHEDULING CLASSROOM DEBATES

Time is the most critical variable in planning and staging classroom debates. The one thing that might keep you from using debates more often in the classroom is that they take time. If you stage a forty-five minute debate with four students involved, assume some start-up and close-down time, and the need to get 20 students involved, it will take five hours of class time, over seven hours for a class of 30 students. In planning and scheduling debates, make sure you have allowed enough time.

Planning for the use of debates in a class must begin early, preferably well before the current term begins. As the above example illustrates, it is possible to determine how much time will be needed. A simple formula is to take the time of a single event and multiply that by the number of students involved divided by the number of students in each debate. Thus, a series of twenty-minute one-on-one debates with five minute start and stop times to serve 30 students is represented by:

20 min. + 5 min. X 30 students by 2 students in each debate
= 6 hours 15 minutes

The length of your class period is also critical when planning for classroom debates. Whenever possible, a debate event should not take place

on two separate days. The attention of the audience and the focus of the student debaters will be dulled by such a break in the action. For example, if you have 50-minute periods, it is unwise to schedule two twenty-minute events and half of another twenty-minute event. The format you choose for the debates must fit in with your available time.

It is advisable to schedule some time for the transition between events as well as the fact that such events rarely start precisely on time. We recommend you schedule some time for class discussion of the debates, which is where some of the most potent learning can take place.

Forming teams and topics as early as possible in the term can facilitate scheduling. Once teams and topics are arranged, a schedule should be printed and distributed to all students. Such a schedule could also be posted in your classroom space.

It is advisable to save some time at the end of that sequence of debates or the end of the term for make-up debates. Inevitably one of the members of a given debate will be absent through no fault of their own, and this eventually needs to be accounted for in the schedule.

If a classroom debate simply takes too much time to fit in to your schedule, there are some possible alternatives. Debates can be held outside of class and videotaped so that you can watch them when the time is available. Debates can be scheduled outside of class and select nondebating students can be assigned to act as judge and complete ballots about the debate.

PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE CLASSROOM

The physical space in which the debate takes place is important for creating a proper environment for observation, attention, and presentation. Fortunately almost any classroom will do. If it is large enough for the number of students in the room, it is appropriate for staging a debate.

There are certain factors that should be kept in mind when setting up a classroom for a debate. With some formats, such as a trial, these may not be appropriate, but for the vast majority of formats these arrangements should be sufficient. These elements include placement of debaters, location of the speaking area, orientation of the audience, and

placement of the timekeeper and others officiating at the debate.

The debaters should be placed at the front of the room facing the class. If there are two teams they can be located at the right and left front of the room. If possible a table should be provided for each team. The teams and tables should face the audience. It may be advisable to have the participants write their names and the topic on a blackboard or on sheets of paper that can be taped to their desks.

The speaking location should also be located at the front of the room, but is often best placed between the two teams. The speaking place then becomes a sort of "common ground" while each team occupies only their appointed spot when they are not speaking. If at all possible, a speaking surface, such as a podium, lectern or even a music stand, should be provided. This speaking surface can hold notes and other materials while the speaker addresses the audience. It is important, however, not to allow the podium to obscure the speaker and it should be adjustable for those of different heights. Often it is useful to put a school symbol or perhaps a design created by the students on the front of any podium or lectern.

The audience should be comfortably seated during the debate and face the debaters and the speaker at all times. If possible the audience should have access to desks or tables so that they can take notes and work on ballot comments during and immediately after the debate.

There should be a designated timekeeper, who should sit near the front of the room and is easily observable by the speakers. A stopwatch can be used, but the preferred timepiece of debaters is the countdown timer easily found in any cooking supply or electronics store. Such a device indicates how much time is left in the speech and emits a beeping noise when time has expired. The timekeeper should make sure that the debaters are aware of their time remaining through the use of large timecards, holding up an appropriate number of fingers, or just calling out the number of remaining minutes. Make sure the timekeeper is attentive and precise. When the time is elapsed, the speaker should finish that sentence and sit down.

ANNOUNCEMENT AND WARNING ABOUT DEBATES

The beginning of each debate session should involve the announcement of the topic to be debated and the participants so that there are no misunderstandings. If there is more than one debate event during that class period, whichever debate has all participants present should begin. Don't use a "first debate" and "second debate" distinction.

The end of each debate session should feature a warning about which students will be participating in debates during the next class period. This practice gives ample warning to the less-than-diligent student and clarifies any misunderstandings about the schedule.

PREPARATION TIME

Preparation time consists of those periods in the debate between the end of one speech and the beginning of another. Instead of allowing students to decide when and if to take a moment to prepare the next speech, it is advisable to allow each side a set number of minutes to use during the event as they wish. During a debate of four or fewer speeches, preparation time will be primarily used before the second speeches. You may want to eliminate preparation time and encourage students to speak instinctively. We find that preparation time is valuable for students to help them gather their thoughts and consult with their partners. We have also found that preparation time provides the teacher with an opportunity to talk to the class about the debate. You can provide comments (usually positive) about tactics and arguments that have been used that you want the class to note.

During preparation time, students think about how to answer specific points made by the opposition, and often write out in shorthand some of the arguments they hope to make. During preparation time, members of the same team may confer about ideas and strategies for the next speech.

The amount of preparation time given to each team is determined by several factors. If the teams do not disclose their arguments to each other before the debate, additional preparation time will enhance the quality of the debate. If the subject matter is complex, additional preparation

time might be useful. In general, the longer speech necessitates more preparation time. Very little preparation time is needed for a short three-minute speech, while a speech of eight or ten minutes requires far more preparation.

Students should be advised to save their preparation time until later in the event, but to always use up all available preparation time in an effort to improve the quality of the last speech.

The timekeeper should call out the minutes of preparation time for each team as they expire. It is also possible for a timekeeper to expose cards showing the debaters the number of minutes remaining.

TIMING AND CONTINUITY

Each debate is a fairly intense exchange of ideas and information. Critical advocacy of this sort is stimulating but can be taxing to individuals unfamiliar with it. It is for this reason that a short break should be taken between debates. Breaks may allow students to finish ballots and notes, prepare for the next debate, and perhaps even use the facilities. Breaks will keep audiences more attentive. Make sure students know how long the break is.

DISCUSSION AFTER DEBATES

Often a classroom debate will generate ideas and questions students will wish to pursue. This can be done by scheduling a period of time after each debate for students to ask questions, express their own opinions, and introduce new ideas related to the theme of the debate. This can be a very important learning opportunity for students, as they become personally involved in the issues under debate.

Discussion periods should begin with a request for questions and comments from the audience. Failing to gain such class participation, the instructor should have a series of question to ask the class and the debaters.

Such questions might include:

- ❖ Who made a better presentation and why?
- ❖ Who had stronger arguments and why?
- ❖ Who had stronger evidence?
- ❖ Did you learn anything new in this debate?
- ❖ How has this debate made you reconsider your previous stand on this issue?
- ❖ Was there an important argument missing from this debate?

It is important to guide your students to positive commentary on the debates. Because students will have just performed, they will be anxious about the judgments of their peers. This period of responses can be very stressful for the participants. It is important that you recognize this and help to provide positive comments to balance out criticisms.

Another form of class participation is to invite members of the audience to give a brief one-minute speech in support of one of the sides. These are known as "floor speeches" and are described in Chapter 4.

VIDEOTAPING DEBATES

Videotapes of debates can be highly useful tools. If you have captured a good example of a classroom debate on tape, it can be used later to show to future students as an example and a model of the process. There is no perfect debate, so choosing one that has some errors can be useful. Students need to see that mistakes are made and that the process is never perfect and often they find such mistakes comforting. When showing such a debate to a class to demonstrate the process, it can be useful to have students react as if it had actually taken place in front of them. Encourage students to take notes on the debate they observe on tape. After the debate, invite a discussion and perhaps even some floor speeches for students to express their own points of view. The students can then cast ballots on the debate. It might also be useful for them to write out ballots to accompany their voting. These ballots can then be collected, examined for the purpose of giving brief comments on the way in which

they are written, and then returned ungraded to students.

Videotapes of debates are also highly useful for students to observe themselves. If you can arrange to have a simple VHS camera in the classroom during debates, it is easy to simply start taping as the debate begins. You can require each debate participant to provide a blank VHS tape to use for that particular debate. Students can then take the tape and share it among themselves to watch their own performance.

Most of us are not totally familiar with how we appear while making presentations and speeches. Viewing themselves on tape can be very useful in revealing to students how they present themselves and how they sound in a way that can have far more impact than any list of critical comments and suggestions you might provide. Such observations will usually show students some of the things that they may not otherwise notice. Some of the features students commonly identify include:

- ❖ Verbal pauses ("um," "ah," etc.) that they normally do not hear;
- ❖ Distracting gestures and physical behaviors;
- ❖ A lack of gestures and physical movement;
- ❖ Monotone voice quality (our voices always sound a bit better from within the resonating chamber of our skulls);
- ❖ Lack of clear organization in dealing with major points;
- ❖ Clumsy phrasing of arguments and points;
- ❖ Insufficient explanation of arguments and ideas;
- ❖ Failure to address major points made by the other side;
- ❖ Failure to summarize the arguments in the debate to aid in decision making by the audience.

Videotapes of debates can also have other important uses. They can be used to document for administrators and superiors what you are doing in your classroom. Such individuals are usually trying to promote innovation and pedagogical developments that enhance student performance and the transition of taught concepts into student behavior, and often find such tapes to be an impressive demonstration of your efforts. Videotapes of this nature can also be used to demonstrate to other colleagues what you are doing in the classroom, and they often find it to be a very persuasive argument in favor of their own experimentation with

the use of debates in the classroom.

It may even be possible to broadcast the results of your classroom debates. Many communities have public access cable television stations that broadcast videotapes produced by members of the public. Usually state law in the USA requires cable companies to provide an outlet for "public" use of the airwaves, so this service is required rather than is an act of generosity on their part. These stations are often eager to receive "serious" content and this is exactly how your videotape debates will be perceived. Beginning and ending credits can be attached to your tape and it can be aired easily. This viewing will provide considerable publicity to your efforts and you will reach a potentially huge audience. Administrators, colleagues, and others will see such broadcasts and your work will become known. Students also love being shown on television, and they often find that people in the community recognize them on the street and mention that they "saw them on television." We have engaged in many hundreds of such programs and they have been very potent mechanisms for publicity and promotion as well as education about the topics being debated. Even if members of the community merely flash by your program while they are "channel surfing," they are prone to comment that "that teacher who hosts debates is on the air again."

A final use of videotapes is as archived material. Years later they provide an interesting (and often entertaining) documentation of student performance. Our experience is that past students often want to see such tapes of their youthful activities. Videotapes of past students are also of interest when they gain some notoriety or run for public office, but we would advise against sharing them with the media or political opponents if such conditions arise.

INVITING OUTSIDE OBSERVERS

Classroom debates can be educational for the participants, but they can also be very informative for those observing them. Students say that they learn almost as much by watching debates as being in them. Given this result, it is advisable at times to invite others in to observe the debates in your classroom.

Several categories of observers should be invited to observe your debates. These would include administrators and supervisors, other teachers, students who are interested in what you are doing, parents, potential supporters and contributors, and perhaps those interested in the topic being debated. Such invitations can be given along with a schedule of debates so that they can drop in unannounced and see what the debates are like.

It is advisable to gain the assent of the students before inviting outside observers into the classroom. This way students feel they have a degree of control of "their space" and you can be sure that students are ready to be observed before actual observation takes place.

Outside observers should be limited in some ways. It is not advisable to invite them to observe debates until the students are more comfortable with the process. Often the classroom becomes a safe space within which students can debate and perform in relative comfort. While students are rarely comfortable with their first debate experiences, after a series of such debates they become a bit more comfortable and at this point outside observers should not be too distracting.

Outside observers should remain as observers. They have not been a consistent part of the discursive community you are creating and as such have not "earned" their right to be full participants. Therefore, we suggest that they not be allowed to engage in discussions, ask questions, or give floor speeches. We often find that students resent being questioned by an "outsider" who has not been through the same experience as they. This is especially true of observers who are likely to be highly opinionated, such as parents of participants and those vitally interested in the topic being debated.

After outside observers have seen your classroom debates in action, make sure to have a brief meeting with them to gain their reactions and feedback. This exchange is an ideal opportunity for you to spot problems that you have previously not noticed, to receive positive feedback for your classroom activities, and to invite them to support or become involved with your work.

PUBLICIZING DEBATES

If you want people to come and see the debates you are holding in your classroom or elsewhere, you will need to engage in some simple publicity. This exercise should not take too much effort but can reap substantial rewards. Publicize debates only after you are sure that your students are ready to be observed. It is important to get the permission of all participants before extending your classroom debates into the public sphere. There is obvious value in connecting the goals of your classroom with larger community issues.

Basic publicity should provide simple information for interested parties, such as time, place, and topic area. It may not be advisable to also provide the names of the students participating to avoid people attending because they want to see "Jill debate Bob," which is not the proper motivation for such observation and can put specific and unwanted pressures on those individuals. Always provide a contact telephone number or e-mail address so that interested observers can contact you.

Debate events designed primarily as a showcase for outside observers would, of course, be more widely publicized than your classroom activities.

There are several easy ways you can publicize these classroom events. They include:

- ❖ Simple posters produced from any word processing program that can be posted in your classroom, outside the classroom, in areas where students and teachers gather, or other high-traffic areas;
- ❖ E-mail messages to those who might be interested, including any listserv that exists to provide information to those in your school;
- ❖ Inclusion of the information in daily announcements. Many schools have daily morning announcements heard by the entire school, which include the day's events.
- ❖ Inclusion of the information in any schedule of events that exists for your school.

In time it might be useful to create a template for such announcements that can be used over and over again. You can merely insert the time and topic as necessary and thus make such publicity easier.

STAGING A SHOWCASE DEBATE OF THE BEST STUDENTS

If your students have staged a particularly good debate in the classroom, it might be worthwhile to consider restaging this debate in a more public way. As we have indicated, debates can be useful and educational for observers as well as for participants, and this is a strong justification for staging one of your stronger debates in a more public way.

Just as art students have exhibitions, students who engage in debating deserve their own exhibition. We have found that there is strong support within schools and colleges for showcasing student efforts in a positive way. The format need not be changed for a showcase debate; however, the staging should be considerate of a larger audience, perhaps with a public address system and a more formal introduction of the topic and the participants.

There are a number of examples of venues for such an event. They include:

❖ A secondary school assembly. Often schools are looking for good assembly programs and have scheduled times for such events. You may well find that a showcase debate will be very welcome.

❖ An event coordinated with parent and teacher organizations. They are often in search of ways to showcase the work of the students and the school.

❖ An after-school event targeted at students.

❖ A demonstration of debating given to a group of administrators, a school board, a university board of trustees, or even another school.

❖ An event organized for a community group that is interested in the topic being debated.

Publicity for such an event should be increased as necessary and designed to promote that specific event to potential audiences. Listing the event in local newspapers, newsletters, and community calendars is extremely useful. Publicity for such events is most effective if it takes place three to four weeks before the event itself and is continuous up until the time of the event.

TAKING STUDENT DEBATERS OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

There is considerable potential for taking these debate activities beyond the classroom and beyond the school. Here are two potential venues for debate outside of your institution.

Most communities have service groups or social clubs composed of citizens who gather to network, socialize, and work on charitable projects beneficial to the community. In the USA many of these groups have luncheon meetings once a week or once a month. Meetings of these groups are almost always in search of a program to fill that meeting. Your students could provide a very short debate on a topic of interest (one they are already using in the class) followed by a discussion with the audience. These groups can be contacted easily with a one-page letter offering your services. You will be surprised at how welcome such an offer will be. These groups can often provide an excited audience, an established venue, and perhaps a free meal. The benefits of this sort of activity are plentiful, including public education, excellent training for your students, outreach from your school into the community, networking with community leaders and businesspersons to enhance future job prospects for students, cultivating supporters for your programs and efforts, as well as excellent publicity.

Most communities also have radio programs that can be characterized as "talk radio." These stations feature both syndicated and local programs that discuss important issues and invite members of the listening audience to call in. These stations are usually looking for topics and programming, especially for local originating programs. A small group of students could go to the radio station, engage in a short debate on a topic they have previously debated, and then answer questions telephoned in by the listening audience. Radio stations can be contacted easily using a one-page form letter offering to stage such an event. You will be surprised at how welcome these offers will be. Such an event provides a great experience for your students, enriches community discourse about important subjects, provides publicity for you and your school, and helps educate citizens about the values of public debate.

You can host a public debate that you will invite the communi-

ty at large to attend. This venue involves selecting a germane public controversy, publicizing it through the media and word of mouth, and then presenting a debate in a community venue. These debates might be held in community centers, churches, or schools. The benefits of these kinds of debates include sparking discussion about issues, encouraging participation of audiences, and publicity for the educational value of debates.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to provide a comprehensive, although somewhat clinical, examination of how to stage educational debates. Although we have given many suggestions, we encourage each teacher and organizer to use his or her own best judgment in turning a potential debate into a real debate. It is through your exploration and your students' growth that new ideas and practices will emerge.

AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT IN DEBATES

Students as audience

Student audience and note-taking

Students as judges and critics

Audience ballots

Audience questions

Audience speeches

Announcement of voting

One of the most critical complaints about classroom debates is that they focus classroom energy on a few students and leave the rest of the class to listen to the debate. Recognizing this challenge, we dedicate this chapter to techniques you can use to involve all of your students in classroom debates.

In this chapter we explore the way in which the audience can be used to improve the debate process and how the debate process can benefit the audience. The needs, obligations, and potentials of the student audience for classroom debates are discussed. Students can also serve as participants, judges, and critics as well as mere observers. The audience actively listens, contributes, and engages in the decision process at the end of the debate.

STUDENTS AS AUDIENCE

Students watching a classroom debate face different pressures. The entire debate situation calls on them to be critical of the arguments they hear and the performances they see. The role as critic is new and different for many of them, and they engage in it tentatively at times or too enthusiastically at others. Students feel a sort of unity with each other, as they all have to engage in debates and perform in front of the class. These pressures may seem contradictory, but can be used in a mutually reinforcing fashion. The discomfort students feel at engaging in something different and risky, like debate, can be dealt with by heightening the sense of mutuality they feel as they learn how to be supportive of each other.

What the teacher wants to create in the audience is a communicative environment that is comfortable and safe. Students standing up and answering arguments made against them need to look out on an audience of friendly and supportive students. We advise all teachers who plan to use debates in the classroom to remember to make this point to students, and our experience shows they take the advice to heart. The teacher should try to model the proper behaviors to create such an environment that is, at the same time, active and questioning.

If serious critical comments need to be given to the students who are debating, we advise that they be given confidentially and in private. The

challenges of being a debater are substantial, producing significant vulnerabilities in students: Limiting overt public criticism early in the term is proper. Students seem able to handle criticism, but it is better understood and absorbed when given in private, and never in front of other students immediately after a debate. A better way to make public oral suggestions is for the teacher to summarize several debates with a list of things that need to be improved. You can also focus on the positive things that the students have done. By highlighting successful tactics, students receive positive reinforcement that creates a friendly learning environment. Criticism does not frighten students; it is public, individual criticism about their personal performance that intimidates them. You should reassure students they will not be criticized in public.

At the conclusion of each debate the class applauds the debaters for their efforts. Although this may happen spontaneously at the end of the first debate, we advise that you begin to applaud and without fail the other students will follow along. This gesture sets procedure every student will follow and helps to create a positive supportive atmosphere.

Not all students know exactly how to behave in a debate. The situation may be new to some of them, and they may respond in unusual and thoughtless ways. It is essential for the teacher to maintain control of the situation and the audience. Strict discipline is not essential, but we believe it is advisable for the instructor to intervene (either during class or privately after class) when certain basic standards of behavior are breached.

Basic standards of behavior in a classroom debate are:

- Respecting the individual;
- Respecting difference of opinion;
- Retaining the freedom to communicate ideas.

STUDENT AUDIENCE AND NOTE-TAKING

A useful way to engage the classroom audience is to invite them to take notes during the debate. Taking notes intensifies listener focus, helps students retain ideas, and dramatically improves their comments and ballots after the debate. Note-taking methods have been outlined in Chapter 6.

In our experience, note-taking allows students to understand and interpret the complexities that emerge in any debate. Notes are a graphic representation that allows the audience to understand arguments and issues that have been clashed with and or ignored by one side or the other. Unlike some debates we see in everyday life (political debates come to mind), refusal to answer arguments made by opponents is a serious error in the formal debate. Notes make such occurrences obvious. Notes also allow discovery of relationships between ideas. Notes make it easier to discover when an advocate or a team is in contradiction, another serious error for any debater. Audience members can point to two different places in their notes when an advocate or team has made contradictory remarks.

In an effort to monitor student notes, give suggestions on improving notes, and make sure students are endeavoring to take diligent notes, instructors can ask students to turn in their notes with their ballots after a debate. These notes can be reviewed, graded, and returned at the instructor's discretion. This process can also provide a number of teaching opportunities that explore the vital parts of a debate.

If you wish to grade notes taken during debates watched, do so quickly by scanning the notes. We suggest evaluating student notes based on the following criteria:

- ❖ Detail in transcribing the arguments;
- ❖ Complete notes on all speeches;
- ❖ Proper format and organization (as indicated in Chapter Six);
- ❖ Recognition of vital or weak arguments.

STUDENTS AS JUDGES AND CRITICS

Student judging can present a wonderful opportunity not only to involve students more fully in the debate process, but also to learn about the intricacies of scholarly topics.

Our classes are filled with young people, and peer pressure has a powerful effect on them. We often focus on the negative aspects of peer pressure, but in this instance it can be used in a positive way. In our experi-

ence students can teach each other many valuable lessons, and comments from students often produce action and learning.

Peer pressure sets the stage for students as judges and critics of classroom debates. Students become responsible for learning in the classroom, which fundamentally transforms the learning process of your class. Instead of a situation where instructors stand in judgment of student efforts and performances, in classroom debate everyone present, students and instructor, becomes the audience, the evaluators, the critics, and the judges. In our experience, students work harder when they do not want to disappoint their fellow students. Students will not only be more diligent but will also be better behaved in general. This process goes a long way towards creating the safe intellectual environment we mentioned earlier.

Students often ask for criteria they should use in judging the debate. There is, of course, no correct answer, so you might want to give different answers based on educational goals and the nature of the subject matter. There are several models that can be used, and you can suggest one or more that are appropriate. One possible option might be to point your student toward the "better debater" lists in the Appendices or to material in Chapter 9.

In the "your opinion" model, students would vote for the side that presents the arguments they most believe in. This is not a vote about their fellow students' performance. This kind of evaluation can be useful in debates about fact issues and on controversies upon which students do not have a firm set of opinions.

In the "better job of debating" model, students would vote for the side that does the best job of arguing their case, not on which side they personally believe to be correct. Students are asked to judge the performance that has taken place in front of them, not to use the debate as a measure for truth. This criteria is useful in communication strategy classes, which study such topics as argument or persuasion.

In the "better presentation" model, students would vote for the side that did the better job of presenting its ideas in terms of delivery, organization, and composition. The evaluation is of the debaters' performance more than the debate's content and is useful in a public speaking class.

These various models can be merged together in interesting ways. We

often urge our students to vote based on a balance of argument and presentation, recognizing that a good presentation assists the argument and that a good argument is far easier to present in an effective manner.

Instruction to audience judges is very important to the success of the classroom debate experience. Instructors should decide which model or models make most sense to them and are most appropriate for the debate's subject matter. The suggested judging model should be communicated to the audience before the debate.

AUDIENCE BALLOTS

While it is not essential to have the student audience write out ballots on the debates held in the classroom, we suggest it as a valuable practice that increases audience attentiveness and prepares each student for her or his turn as a debater in front of the class.

Some guidance is appropriate for students who write ballots. These guidelines make this practice more productive for both the writers and the receiving.

Ballots should always retain a sense of civility. Criticisms should not become personal insults. Students should feel free to criticize ideas, but should exercise restraint when criticizing individuals. Students should be encouraged to conduct themselves on the ballots as they believe their instructors should conduct themselves.

Students should be encouraged to evaluate reasons given and arguments made, and not rely on simple "impressions" to make their decisions. It is not very revealing to write comments like "seemed to make more sense" and "seemed to know what she was talking about"; instead students should focus on specific ideas, facts, and arguments. This suggestion engages students in a deeper form of analysis and critique than most citizens use when considering persuasive messages they receive. The ballot-writing process can serve as a method of training students in critical thinking.

Students should be encouraged to include considerable detail in their ballots. Some may want to include a small number of ideas and considerations on a ballot in an attempt to make the task easier. However, debates

are complex communication events that are rarely determined by only one or two ideas. The more detail students use in explaining their decision, the deeper their analysis of the debate has become.

Students should be encouraged to weigh the various issues offered in a debate. There are very few debates where one side has its way on all of the arguments. Usually each side has done a better job on some of the arguments, and a student must weigh the various arguments. For example, in a debate about medical care reform, a team may win that there is a problem in the current health care system that needs to be addressed, but may not win that their solution will be very useful in addressing it. In this case, even though they have "won" the argument about a need to act, the action they support does not effectively address the problem. So they would not "win" that debate. Students need to be encouraged to discover which issues have been "won" by which side, and then see those issues in relation to one another to decide whether to vote for or against the topic being debated or the teams making the arguments.

Student ballots can be given to the debaters after the debate for inspection, a very important part of the learning process. Debaters can compare the different reactions of the student judges, and will be especially impressed by the comments found on a number of ballots. In our experience students read ballots from their peers much more intensely than they do those from an instructor, because of the novelty and multiple perspectives.

We believe that student ballots should have the name of the student judge on them, because students need to be responsible for the comments they have made. Names will temper their remarks and allow student interaction, as one student might ask another to explain a point she or he made. However, if you believe that comments will be more pointed and more useful if they are anonymous, reserve anonymity as an option.

AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

In some formats, and at the discretion of the instructor, students can be encouraged to ask the debaters questions at the end. This process can reveal strengths and weaknesses in the arguments, explore important

issues not dealt with by the debaters, clarify arguments, and provide the audience with personal interaction.

Questions can be taken at various times during the debate. One option is for questions to come before the last speeches by both sides. With the summary speech by each side still to come, the audience might ask questions of each side. This question and answer raises issues important to the audience so that the debaters can take them into account in their final speeches. This practice does, however, interrupt the flow of the debate.

Questions can be asked at the end of the debate as well. This arrangement allows for a longer question-and answer-period, the questions can also cover the full range of the debate without interrupting its flow.

Questions can come from the entire audience or a panel of students selected to ask questions of each side. If anyone can ask a question, there may be less attention and care given to each question asked. If a panel of students is assigned to the task, there will be fewer questioners but the questions are likely to be more serious and well thought out. Students who perceive asking questions as their "assignment" are likely to take it seriously and put more effort into it.

In any debate, questions can be asked verbally or submitted in writing. In a public debate it is often advisable to have written questions when the feelings of the audience about the issue are quite intense, as hostile questions can be screened out and questions can be easily alternated between sides.

In a classroom debate questions can be either verbal or written. Written questions (submitted during the debate) are easy to ask, tend to be a bit less personal, and can be edited so only the best questions are asked. Verbal questions tend to take longer to ask, are personal, and provide a feeling of open discussion. We encourage you to chose the option that best meets your needs.

AUDIENCE SPEECHES

Instead of or in addition to questions, audiences can be invited to give short speeches, commonly known as "floor speeches." These speeches

give the audience a chance to join in the debate and make their views known.

Floor speeches are generally used instead of question periods and are placed at the same points in the debate format. Floor speeches are best inserted either before the last two speeches or after the debaters have finished. Floor speeches are times for audiences to make their decision.

Make sure audiences are aware that they will be given the opportunity to give floor speeches. An announcement at the beginning of the debate allows the audience to compose their floor speeches before they give them and thus improves the quality of the speeches. When the point in the debate for the floor speeches is reached, the instructor or debate moderator asks for the audience to deliver their remarks.

Floor speeches are generally one minute in length, thus allowing a number of people to give their views. There is also some attempt to stagger the speeches in terms of which side they are in support of. As one student is delivering a floor speech, those waiting their turn can be asked which side they support so that there is a balanced presentation of views. No student should be allowed to speak more than once.

Generally there will be few volunteers for floor speeches until one person has actually asked to present one. Once a member of the audience breaks the ice, it is common for others to come forward as they observe the procedure going smoothly and they have mentally organized their remarks. If no student comes forward, be encouraging and try to get one or two students to volunteer.

There should be a limit, based on the time allotted in the schedule, for floor speeches. Do not have too many floor speeches, because they may dilute the debate proper.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF VOTING

Students may be asked, based on instructor format design, to vote for one side or the other, and to write a ballot explaining their decision. It is not necessary to call for a vote or ask for ballots, but we recommend this practice. A debate calls for a decision, as our definition indicates, and voting and balloting provides this point of decision.

Voting can take place immediately after the debate. When the speeches are concluded, there can be a brief pause, and then the instructor can ask for a show of hands, count them, and announce the decision. Though immediate and exciting, this process creates some stress and tension.

Delayed voting can take place when ballots are turned in. The instructor can receive the ballots at the beginning of the next class. These ballots can be inspected and then the result announced in the next class after that, giving a two-class delay in announcing the results. While less immediate, this process provides feedback about the decision without some of the attendant stress.

The announcement of voting can be either general or specific. A general announcement of voting involves the instructor indicating which side received the most votes, but not indicating the margin of the votes. This method is a bit less precise but does avoid having to announce that the negative won the debate on nuclear disarmament twenty-five to one. A specific announcement of voting would indicate who "won" the debate, but would also specifically indicate the vote count. This announcement can be a good indicator of whether a "close" debate occurred, as a fourteen to twelve decision would indicate, but it also indicates a debate clearly won by one side.

CONCLUSION

Classroom debating is an activity not only for those students actually in the debate, but also for the entire class who can make a productive and substantive evaluation of the arguments and points being made. Audience involvement as suggested in this chapter can contribute to creating learning opportunities for all students every time a debate takes place.

EVALUATION OF CLASSROOM DEBATES

PURPOSES OF EVALUATION

- **Evaluation of the exploration subject matter**
- **Evaluation of debate skills and preparation**
- **Evaluation of arguments**

METHODS OF EVALUATION

- **Student ballots**
- **Teammate evaluations**
- **Using your own ballot**
- **Checklist for evaluation**
- **Evaluation of improvement through repetition**

This chapter covers the purposes and methods of evaluating classroom debates. After choosing the type of debate that fits your classroom and setting up the debate, a teacher faces one last hurdle: how to evaluate student performance. You may not use this entire chapter, for instance, if you were not going to evaluate students on their persuasive skills, only on the content of their arguments. We believe that this chapter can not only help you set up a framework for grading your students, but also can provide you with some innovative ideas about how to involve the audience in the classroom debates through evaluation and get students more excited about the process.

Because debate is a fundamentally subjective event, it is difficult to judge students performance. Another factor is that many teachers are not familiar with debate. This chapter presents some criteria that can help you evaluate your classroom debates. It is divided into two sections: the philosophical basis of evaluating debate performance and some pragmatic teaching methods to help you evaluate your debates. This chapter also offers guidelines for students to evaluate their peers.

PURPOSES OF EVALUATION

This section looks at the purposes behind evaluating debates. It explores some ways to determine if the students have become involved in the subject matter as well as how to evaluate debate-related skills, preparation, and arguments.

Evaluation of the exploration subject matter

For most classroom debates the value of the event is girded by the idea that it provides an opportunity for students to use the knowledge presented in the classroom. One of the primary challenges a teacher faces after a classroom debate is determining if the students have engaged the material of the course in a suitable manner. We need to know if the students involved have connected with the subject matter of the course. This section helps to guide teachers in answering that question.

Much of this evaluation is common sense. As an instructor in a sub-

ject, you will probably be aware if students misunderstand a concept. More difficult is evaluating how much they have absorbed. Because debates are specialized, it is difficult to test whether a student is familiar with a wide spectrum of information.

One possible solution to this problem is to vary the scope of the debate topics. Rather than having a specific subject such as "This House believes that the UN should send peacekeeping troops to Macedonia," you might want to pick a more general topic allows students to draw out the themes that you have worked on in class. You might have a public forum debate on the topic "This House believes that the UN should act." This kind of open-ended topic allows students to develop arguments using material from class discussions. It can be a very rewarding experience to see a debate unfold around classroom subject matter. For more information on constructing debate topics see Chapter 5.

When you are using a debate as a replacement for a test of your students' mastery of a body of knowledge, your concerns are different. In this case, you are probably using the role-playing or policy-making debate formats, because those formats require in-depth preparation and you are probably looking for a sense of completeness of information, a feeling of comprehension that comes through in the debates.

To prove that students are familiar with the material, they need to understand their responsibilities, which include providing topics ahead of time and having a list of ideas to cover when they debate. If you have a template of the content you would like to see in each debate, then you should include those expectations when introducing and judging the debates.

Students can also show their familiarity with a subject matter through research. When you evaluate students for their research preparation for their debates you may want to focus on these core questions:

Did the student use classroom information and the shared knowledge base of the students? These debates do not occur in a vacuum. The entire class should be aware of the concepts you have worked on throughout the class. Student ability to seamlessly integrate this kind of information shows student participation throughout the class and also a sense of involvement with the materials.

Is the research recent? Many students will do research, but they will often use old or out-of-date texts to support their arguments. The importance of this qualification varies with the kind of debate topic. If the question is largely historical ("France was complicit with the Nazis"), then current information may be unnecessary. However, if the subject is a hot political topic ("Asian economies are heating up"), then recent and diverse sources are important. Keep in mind that even historical debates changed dramatically with discovery of new information and publication of new arguments. The fields of archaeology and religion are constantly in flux based on new publications that call for dramatic changes in the way experts view their areas of expertise.

Is the research complete or are there large gaps of knowledge? If you are familiar with the topic, then this flaw in research will be seen almost immediately. Even if you aren't familiar with the literature of a particular topic, it is likely that this gap in knowledge will be exposed in the course of a debate, often because the other side will bring it up. Remind your students that arguments about recent and relevant sources can be important parts of the debate.

Is the evidence presented biased in some way? While researching their topic, many students will encounter advocates who make strong, even bombastic, arguments. Often the best quotations for debate evidence come from people who have a decided interest in the outcome of the discussions. These people may be fiercely biased and willing to twist ideas and evidence to support their own views. Remind students that this kind of evidence exists and should be supplemented with other kinds of research.

Evaluation of debate skills and preparation

Debate skills are natural abilities that grow as a person becomes more involved with the process. Quick thinking and confidence develop as your students participate in more debates. However, student preparation and practice can augment this process. You may want to evaluate your students on their debate skills; the following questions may help you grade your students' performance. Assuming that most of your students don't have much of a background in debate, the focus of this section is

on those skills that can be augmented with practice and preparation.

Does the student seem persuasive? Persuasion is one of the skills that emerge through a combination of confidence and practice. It involves not only the content of arguments, but also the presentation and delivery. You might notice if your students are watching the audience when they speak, commanding the attention of the audience, or simply reading from notes? Does your student have a powerful delivery? Does she vary her tone and voice to call attention to her arguments? All of these skills make up persuasive ability and can be cultivated through practice. You should be able to tell if a student has not practiced her speech, taking into account that the student may suffer from speech anxiety, and even with preparation and practice, still have a difficult time persuading the audience.

One of the best standards for evaluating persuasive speaking is the amount of time students put into their word choices. Visualization, the use of metaphors, analogies, and powerful words are all indicators that a student has taken their debate preparation seriously. If a participant took the time to work out the phrasing of a particular argument and make sure that they were explaining themselves fully, then they should receive credit for being persuasive and well prepared.

Is the student well organized? Organization is an important skill in presentation and delivery. Does your student seem prepared to give speeches and does he or she have notes and ideas prepared to follow the information path no matter where it goes? Depending on debate format, students need to be prepared to move in an unusual direction. In this case, you can evaluate the flexible thinking that emerges in such a situation.

Organization also manifests itself in speeches themselves. Do your students speeches fit the time parameters given for the assignment? Dramatically short speeches and extremely long speeches are symptoms of a lack of preparation and a poor organization strategy. Your student's speech should begin with a preview informing the audience of what they are going to argue. In addition, it should stick with the major points that have been previewed. The speech should flow and each argument should be distinguishable. Clarity of purpose and implementation are all signs of

good organization. Even with impromptu debates, like SPAR and parliamentary debate, students should organize their speeches into major arguments and give a preview of them. Regardless of how much time students have to prepare, you can evaluate their preparation based on the organization of their speeches and arguments.

Does your student focus on the central ideas of the debate? One of the most important skills that debate teaches is the ability to discern important from irrelevant arguments. Often students become excited about an idea or distracted about a particular subject and spend a lot of their energy focusing on what they know or what they think is vital, while ignoring core issues.

One of the easiest ways to check this is to think how you expect the debate to occur before you get to the classroom. If you have an idea of what the major arguments are in a debate on "Animals should have rights," then you will be prepared to evaluate what kinds of arguments your students put forward. One essential question is whether students connect their ideas successfully to the resolution.

There are exceptions to this kind of analysis. In British parliamentary debate, you are rewarded in large part by your willingness to take on difficult interpretations of the topic. If you were to interpret a resolution so that you had an easy burden of proof, then you would receive fewer points, but if you carved out an extremely difficult series of arguments, then you might get significant credit for going this route. Even with this standard in mind, you can analyze the connections and justifications that students make in order to tie arguments together.

Evaluation of arguments

Entire textbooks are written to explore the quality of argumentation, so we will not pretend to cover all the vital information in this short section. Instead, this section is a primer to help instructors who do not have as much experience evaluating public arguments.

There is no clear-cut right or wrong way to argue. Often textbooks decry certain kinds of arguments as not logical or sound, when in certain situations those kinds of arguments are extremely successful. Many sources decry arguments based on emotional grounds. Consider this sec-

tion from Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz's book, Everything's an Argument. "Untempered by reason, emotional arguments (and related fallacies such as personal attacks and name-calling) can wreak havoc in democratic societies divided by economic, racial, religious and philosophical differences" (43). Placing the blame for social breakdown at the feet of emotion-centered argumentation is shortsighted. In reality, every kind of argument can be used in a good and bad manner and there is nothing particularly villainous about emotional argumentation. In fact, many circumstances call for emotional reasoning. Inspiring a crowd or speaking at a funeral are clear examples.

When you are evaluating the arguments in a debate, you should feel confident that you already have all the training you will need. Life has prepared you by facing hundreds of arguments and questions every day. You can listen to a debate and make judgments about the arguments with no additional work needed. Because your classroom debates will be on subjects about which you are well informed, you will be able to critique successfully because you can provide specific suggestions about the content.

What follows are some easy tips that we use to evaluate arguments in our debates. These tips, thematic templates, may help you in your classroom by allowing you to look at arguments that are quickly presented in a debate. You can use these questions to evaluate any argument. You can also use our debate evaluation sheet located in Appendix 1.

Do the arguments presented relate to the rest of the arguments in the debate? Many debaters prepare arguments that they envision as central to the debate, only to have the material move in a direction they had not considered. A good debater will follow the path of argumentation and make relevant arguments. Unfortunately, many students will simply continue to make their prepared arguments, regardless of relevance. You should always check to make sure that the arguments presented in your class relate to the debate, because even seemingly strong arguments can be peripheral to the main points presented.

Consider the example of a debate about affirmative action. An affirmative student might justify race-based preferences for entry into colleges and universities by arguing that multicultural education is valuable for all

participants and that white students are at a disadvantage without a multiracial learning environment. A negative debater who responded by arguing that current generations should not be held responsible for previous generations of intolerance might have a strong argument, but it is not relevant to the claims made by the affirmative debater.

Does the argument have assertions, reasons, and evidence? In Chapter 2 we talked about using the ARE (Assertion/Reasoning/Evidence) format. We find that conceptualizing arguments in this manner not only helps students build their arguments, but also can help you to evaluate them. Most problems in debate arguments come down to a failure to use the ARE format. At the same time you should be prepared to reward your students for their innovative use of evidence in this format. Stories, anecdotes, poetry, pieces of art, and references to common knowledge can all be used as high-quality evidence to augment traditional pieces, such as quotations and statistics.

Have the students correctly assessed causality? The notion of causality is both a valuable and risky element in student debates. Students are quick to recognize that arguments based on causal connections can be powerful. However, be aware of two risks when exploring causal arguments. The first is the impulse to extend lines of causal argument to their extreme in order to accrue an impact. The second is to simplify causality to a single cause for an event. Both of these notions will be profiled in the following example.

Consider a debate on the topic: "We should go back to nature." A debater who was supporting the affirmative might argue that western industrial civilization is doing great harm to the earth by cutting down the rain forests to furnish western cities with lumber. Her causal chain of reasoning might include the idea that cutting down the trees prevents them from engaging in photosynthesis. The lack of oxygen causes pollution-laden areas to become unbreathable "dead zones" and turn these former rain forests into deserts.

While this is a powerful argument, and she has included elements of truth in each of her steps, several missteps of causal logic emerge. For example, the leap from the loss of photosynthesis to the loss of oxygen in certain areas assumes that oxygen is a regional product rather than an

atmospheric element that flows easily from one place to another. And while many climatologists agree that cutting down the rain forests may lead to desertification, the reasons are not that there won't be enough oxygen, but that the soil underneath rain forests will become too dry without the complex system of roots and the foliage cover that slows evaporation.

This debater attempted to take the scientists' line of argument too far in order to persuade her audience. Rather than using the causal arguments that were supported by her evidence, she wanted a powerful impact that could be used to win the hearts and minds of her class. The risk of drawing out lines of causal argument to their extreme is that your original claims, which might have had merit, become lost in the hyperbole of your vision.

Similarly, many debaters (including the one in the example above) simplify causality in an attempt to make their claim stronger. What causes clear cutting of the rain forests? The above debater attempts to claim that there is one single cause to the cutting down of the rain forests – western industrialized cities and their need for lumber. This attempt is a significant simplification of the causal chain. In fact, we can point to myriad causes when we consider this question. Some believe the need for countries to export lucrative crops has caused them to cut down rain forests in order to get more land to grow on. As our global populace increases its desire for fresh meat, forests are cut down in order to provide more area for beef cattle to graze. Many believe that local populations cut down trees in rain forests in order to find places to live as local areas swarm with people. To identify the western desire for lumber as the sole cause in the clear cutting of the rain forests is a simplification.

On the other hand, all claims of causality are subject to these kinds of criticisms – there are usually alternative causes to any event. The skill of a good debater and a good teacher is to evaluate where the primary responsibility for causal chains lies. In the above example we can agree that the local people who are carving areas out of the rain forests to live and grow a few crops are substantially less responsible than are multinational corporations that clear cut thousands of acres in order grow coffee for export. Exploring causality requires us to look at the scope of causal responsibility.

What are the implications of arguments? Many debaters are content to make their arguments by explaining their reasons and supporting their assertions with some evidence. They may build an entire case and never talk about the implications of their arguments. Ignoring implications is very common. The single biggest failure of a debater is the lack of a solid explanation about why their argument is important. Many debaters become so involved in the minutiae of winning that they forget to answer the more fundamental question, "So what?"

Explaining the impact of arguments is vital to understanding why we are debating at all! Consider a debate about Russia-China relations, where one side of the debate argues for increased engagement of Russia with China. Many debaters might argue that the advantages of such a policy would be increased information sharing, reduced military tension, and civilian exchanges to increase social understanding. Yet, the implications of this argument could be much more. The unspoken element is what happens if these moves fail? There would be the looming risk of a conflict between two of the world's most powerful nations. Even a cold war between these two superpowers might be catastrophic. To engage in this debate without exploring the implications of this kind of argument ignores the stakes of this dialogue. It is vital that debaters recognize and be prepared to discuss what the highest levels of implications are for the debates in which they are participating.

Evaluating arguments is simultaneously simple and complicated: simple, because you have all the fundamental tools you need; complicated because each argument contains nuanced elements that you can draw out using some of the tools that we have explored in this section. By looking at the relationships between arguments, the value of the ARE format, questions of causality, and the implications of the debate, you can add to your own understanding of argumentation and feel more confident in your ability to evaluate debate arguments.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

This section explores some of the pragmatic methods of evaluating debates. We will look at five methods that implement the ideas we have

discussed in the above section. We encourage you to explore different kinds of evaluation in your classroom debates – use your own experiences to guide you to the kinds of evaluation that work for you.

STUDENT BALLOTS

Student ballots are a way to evaluate the debaters and get students involved. They consist of assigning a written justification of what debate team each student believes won the debate. If you looked around while students were giving presentations to the class and found students napping or looking out the window, then you may assume that the student audience is intellectually absent. Student ballots provide for a way to pull the rest of the class into the debates – especially if the ballots themselves will be graded.

Debates are a good educational experience for the participants and the audience. A student can never receive enough experience in evaluating arguments and judging performances. If students are required to be active listeners and take careful notes during the debate, then they will get involved in the debate and experience the arguments and ideas. Even more powerfully, they will have to take their time and compare the merits of arguments. As the audience, they will have to contrast the relevance of arguments, the clash between ideas in the debate, and the evidence in order to make a decision.

This process will probably be difficult for your students at first. Because they do not have any experience in this area, they may feel frustrated by the open-ended nature of the ballot. Therefore, we advise that in the beginning you provide a form for them to use. You can write the same categories listed above on the board and explain the goals of the evaluation. After some experience of watching debates, you may want to assign every student a take-home written assignment to explain their decision to you.

It is up to you to consider the ballots when you grade the student participants on the debate. On one hand, the student ballots can show how effective the students have been in persuading an audience. On the other hand, if there are personal difficulties between students, the students may

be tempted to take out their problems in the classroom. If you decide to use the student's perspective when assigning a grade to the debate, you should get the audience's comments to the debaters, who will find them extremely valuable. If you decide to give copies of the audience ballots to the debaters, you should make sure that the class knows this ahead of time and writes respectful comments. For more on this subject see Chapter 8.

TEAMMATE EVALUATIONS

It can be very difficult for students to participate in group work. Despite the benefits of group work as a pedagogical tool, many students are critical of the process because they view the preparation burdens as uneven. We have experienced many students who have privately complained about the division of labor while preparing for a debate. One solution is to use debates that do not require teamwork or to focus on spontaneous approaches. You could use teammate evaluations to help remedy this perception of imbalance.

Regardless of student perception, we believe that team preparation is extremely valuable. When students work out ideas together and prepare to debate, they can create a kind of synergy that enhances this process. Teamwork is a vital skill used in most debate formats. There is an obvious need to work as a team in a debate so that the individual can succeed.

If you assign students to prepare for debates in a team format, we advise the use of teammate evaluations. They inform you if one student did significantly more work than teammates. They also alleviate the stress associated with teamwork, because the students have the opportunity to vent any frustrations. Moreover, they inform you of your students' preparation levels.

USING YOUR OWN BALLOT

Your own ballot can be an extremely valuable artifact for learning. As you judge the debate, you should take notes on all of the goals of the debate listed above. Your notes or a more polished version of your per-

ception of the debate can be extremely valuable for your students. If students spent a lot of time preparing, they want to know how they did and where they can improve. The teacher ballot provides the feedback they want.

Checklist for evaluation

You may feel uncomfortable using a free-form ballot or a typed evaluation sheet like the one included in Appendix 1. A checklist evaluation form might be the correct evaluation tool for you. The checklist format provides a template for you to use as a standard method of evaluation. You can list all the goals that you have for the debate and then create a scale. It could be as simple as checks, check pluses, or check minuses. It could involve using letter or number grades, or a scale of boxes that you can check off. If you do use a checklist, you might want to include space for a few comments to explain why someone receives a particular evaluation.

Evaluation of improvement through repetition

If you successfully integrate debate into your classroom, you might want to have more than one debate. You can also explore the possibility of using an extended debate format where debaters return to a particular subject throughout the term. (For more on this subject, see Chapter 4.) If you decide to have multiple debates in your class, then you might want to consider grading students through the lens of repetition.

If people debate more than once, their skills will improve. That should be a factor in your evaluation. You may want to use the successes and failures of earlier debates as the foundation for the grade of the next debate. If a student failed to organize major arguments in the debate, that might be a goal for the second debate. If a student was soft on research, then another debate might be a great opportunity to work out those kinks. You might want to have a single grade for all debates, and allow students to work on getting that grade up by reworking in the places that they need improvement. If you take this approach, it would be valuable to keep all of the student's evaluation sheets together to allow you to compare performances in different debates.

CONCLUSION

Evaluating debates can be extremely difficult because it is hard to quantify a performance and difficult to know exactly how to interpret the diverse goals of a debate project. This chapter helps to organize these goals and skills of debate into a template that teachers can use to evaluate debates. If a teacher goes through section one and selects the core goals to stress in the debate and then selects a method of evaluation, then that teacher will be well suited to judge the debates in his or her classroom.

USING DEBATE IN SPECIFIC SUBJECT AREAS

- Art
- Civics, politics, government
- Criminal justice
- Current events
- Education
- Environmental studies and earth sciences
- Foreign languages
- History
- International relations
- Law
- Literature
- Mathematics
- Media studies
- Multiculturalism
- Philosophy
- Religion
- Science
- Social services
- Sport and recreation
- Technology and society

ART

Art and debate

Humans have been making art for as long as we have been alive. Art is a fundamental impulse of all societies, and every historical epoch and every nation in the world has a vibrant culture of artistic achievement. Great controversies over music, poetry, theatre, painting, sculpture, and graphic art have rocked the world. Debates about style, format, and content have long been a part of the art world. These issues make for fruitful subjects for debates.

Murray Edelman, in his book *From Art to Politics*, positions art not only as a creative impulse in our society, but also as a building block of our very consciousness.

> Art creates realities and worlds. People perceive and conceive in the light of narratives, pictures, and images. That is why art is central to politics, just as it is central to social relationships and to beliefs about nature. . . . Because they create something different from conventional perceptions, works of art are the medium through which new meanings emerge (7).

According to Edelman, art is a fundamental part of who we are as humans. His argument points to the importance of art not only as an aesthetic concern, but also as a socio-cultural-political topic. Debates can point us to new understandings not only of art, but also of who we are.

Why debate is valuable to art classes

It may seem that art classes would be subject areas where one would learn the skills of artistic production, and that debate would be superfluous. We believe that debate can contribute a valuable sense of history and importance to a subject matter. Debates about art can provide the context of a student's own artistic efforts and explore subject matter that might be controversial or new to the student body. Debates are a great way to get students excited about projects and teach them background information. While some teachers may believe that the purpose of art classes is to pro-

vide the skills to create art, we believe that, inevitably, perspectives on art are produced as well. Rather than foment subtle value judgments about artistic styles or artists themselves, why not have a debate in the class to help illuminate ideas?

Using debate in art classes helps teachers explore the difficult line between theory and practice. Christopher Knight, in the Los Angeles Times, wrote this polemic:

> For art students, practice is more important than theory because being an artist is not a scholarly discipline. To approach making art as a scholarly discipline is to attempt to establish an authoritative society of learned persons—to establish, in other words, an academy. The goal is academic art. Art has always been a difficult fit with school because making new art does not conform to objective criteria that schools can readily test and evaluate. That's one reason most art schools are bad art schools. They emphasize technique because technique fits the demands of pedagogy and testing for the typical academic curriculum. The color wheel doesn't change, and an excellent spot weld can be measured (C7).

When facing this quandary of how to teach art, debate addresses technical and even practical ideas as well as theoretical innovation. Through debate, this polarization between theory and practice that Knight complains about can be resolved. Instructors can teach the theories of art concerning the practice of art and the outcome can be both scholarly and critical.

Sample debate topics for art classes

Art cannot escape politics.
The artist does not really matter.
Art cannot be defined.
Public monies should not finance art.
Censorship can never be justified.
The good life is best measured by aesthetics.
We should dramatically increase public funding for the arts.
Life imitates art.

Art imitates life.

Government censorship of public artistic expression is an undesirable infringement of individual rights.

Advertising degrades the quality of life.

Sculpture has a more beneficial effect on the intellect than painting.

Modern art is less moral than art in the Middle Ages.

Drama contributes more to mental enjoyment than the study of real life.

Gunpowder has done more for the benefit of humanity than poetry.

The critic does more injury than good.

The composer is greater than the author.

The recent history of the stage proves that spectacle is of more importance than intellect.

Lyrics are more important than words.

Fashion is art.

Tibor Kalman was right.

Changes in art predict changes in society.

Art follows the lead of society.

There is no such thing as obscene art.

Artists should avoid politics.

The art market turns great art into just another commodity.

X was a superior artist to Y.

X is a superior work of art to Y.

SAMPLE DEBATE FORMATS FOR ART CLASSES

In this section, we profile three model debates for a variety of art classes. These models are not the most important subjects nor suggestions of where to begin. They are meant to help you understand the role of debate in the classroom.

Teaching an Introduction to Art class is difficult because of the massive scope of information an instructor needs to provide to students. Add to this the lack of interest that students sometimes show when facing a new trial, and you can have a frustrating first few days. Why not begin the class with a role-playing debate about the innovations and impact of

new kinds of art? Divide up the class into five groups and assign each group an area of art to think about and defend. Stage a role-playing meeting where students represent different, perhaps controversial kinds of art in a public forum: rap music, collage, slam poetry, video-game animation, and graffiti writing.

You might want to set the scene at a meeting for parents of students enrolled in the school. There might be a movement afoot to revoke funding for art classes (a common occurrence in the USA). You could position the students to defend the value of each area of art or talk about why it is valuable to defend all kinds of art regardless of content. Another approach is to have students decide which category of art is least defensible and which might have to be sacrificed if funding is cut.

Teaching Graphic Design, a class whose purposes seems tied to commercial advertising, provides significant space for debates. Consider a debate on the topic "Resolved: Designers should use their skills to fight against consumerism." This topic would pit student against student to discern the stakes and purpose of what they are studying and can have a lasting effect on a student.

Consider this quote from the magazine *Adbusters*.

> But design-based behavior modification doesn't have to be ultimately banal and destructive. In the right hands, it can be used to do something much more interesting than just speed up consumer purchasing cycle. Take everything you know about design and throw it out. Try to take a completely different tack. Instead of obsessing on the glitz, the salability, the cool of the object you're designing, think about other, perhaps opposite, psychological states your design might induce. Instead of increasing desire, you attempt to reduce it. Instead of saving time, you s-t-r-e-t-c-h it. Maybe you design a car that a whole neighborhood can share, a chair that eventually tells its user to get off his butt, a radio that even a child can repair. Maybe you forget about planned obsolescence and start designing products to last a hundred years. You give your designs a human, not only a commercial significance. Some fun, huh? Once you break out of the consumer design box and start

> playing with the ecological and psychological dimensions of design, the can of possibilities explodes (53).

In the exact same issue, California Institute of the Arts Graphic Design Professor Keedy attacks this vision of activist designers.

> In the context of graphic design, anti-consumerism is a radical idea precisely because it doesn't make much sense. The graphic designer as anti-consumerist is a lot like the liquor company promoting responsible drinking, or the tobacco company discouraging underage smoking—maybe they're sincere, but it's hard to believe. Perhaps the bursting of the e-commerce bubble and the sudden interest in anti-consumerist design is more than just a coincidence. Are the designers who lost their jobs designing Websites for the home delivery of butt toners now designing Websites about the butt toner industry's use of sweatshop labor (46)?

In this magazine whose content contributes to this very question, the issue of whether graphic designers should use design to fight against consumerism is a hearty debate. While Adbusters paint a picture of activist designers whose lives revolve around creating new and positive meaning through design, Professor Keedy believes that this outpouring of activist sentiment comes because designers have lost their jobs.

The value of this kind of debate is that it highlights the stakes of a class. What is the purpose of a class on graphic design? Why should the students care about what happens after they learn the skills that the class promises to teach? What are the most important things that you want to share with your students about why we do these things, not just how? Debates can help teach your students to think about issues that affect what they are learning.

CONCLUSION

Debates in art classes can be vibrant, exciting, and challenging. Teachers should keep in mind that one of the greatest strengths of debate is that it

is extremely flexible. Students should be encouraged to use pieces of art as evidence in their arguments, to explore radical and exciting new ideas, and to push the boundaries not just in their creations, but also in their thoughts. Debate can expose controversies in the artistic community and public policy, and illuminate ideas.

CIVICS, POLITICS, GOVERNMENT

Classes that explore these topics are some of the most debate-friendly educational opportunities. It is in the questions of how we govern and are governed and how our nations are created and sustained that some of the most exciting debates occur. Debates take existing controversies and allow students to become knowledgeable about the importance and the difficulties in making decisions. Through debate, participants can work through the very foundations of national identity and discover the meaning and importance of civic life.

Debate is valuable when studying civics, politics, and government
Debate allows students to learn about public policy and explore the intricacies and meaning of government decisions. Debate also provides an incentive for students to learn more about their nation's laws. Through debate students become aware of the value of the civil society that may or may not constitute their nation and learn about the process of governing. Public issues come alive through debates. When students find their voices, they discover that the perception that governing is easy falls quickly to the wayside.

Debate teaches students to question and understand government policies and the social norms that gird a nation. It is through this interrogation that classroom debates inform students of concepts that are often hard to teach. A role-playing debate can get at the historical context that informed the creation of a law; a parliamentary debate can help teach students to rely on their own voices to question state norms. As a teaching tool, debate encourages critical thinking about the value and importance of our national norms.

Students who might otherwise be disinterested in a class about gov-

ernment and the workings of society might find debates an exciting way to become engaged in the topic. Because debates are active they allow students to express their own opinions. This expression can be liberating because students get the opportunity to see how their ideas match up against the very laws that define a nation.

Some may see debate as a dangerous teaching methodology that encourages the questioning of governments. We believe that is a faulty view. Debate certainly teaches students to ask difficult questions, and express themselves, but we believe that this form of expression makes those institutions grow stronger. Through debates, students often come up with a perspective that verifies the value of existing governmental policies and norms. Debate does not necessarily challenge the state; often it conveys the value of governmental norms and the realities of political decision making.

Sample debate topics for civics, politics, and government

We should tax the monarchy.

Royalty is irrelevant.

Nations of the Western Hemisphere should form a permanent union.

The U.S. Supreme Court, on balance, has granted excessive power to law enforcement agencies.

The realist world-view does not adequately represent the world.

We should assist other nations through foreign aid.

The power to tax is the power to destroy.

We should support a two-party political system.

Only the elite can successfully manage national affairs.

We support the strong state.

We believe in the separation of church and state.

We should use force to make peace.

We should reject big government.

Strong dictatorship is better than weak democracy.

We should support sanctions for citizen nonparticipation in the democratic process.

We should have term limits for national officials.

One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter.

Negative political advertising is significantly detrimental to the democratic process.

We should support strong laws to protect the flag from desecration.

Old enemies can become new friends.

The public deserves the politicians it elects.

Collectivism is better than individualism.

We should support open borders.

Justice in country X can be bought.

We should support social unity over cultural diversity.

Special interests have ruined democracy.

The right to privacy is more important than the freedom of the press.

Freedom has been taken too far in the western world.

We should dissolve the House of Lords.

Results are more important than character in national leaders.

Compulsory national service for all qualified citizens is desirable.

The judicial system has overemphasized the rights of the accused.

Country X is justified in providing military support to nondemocratic governments.

Significant government restrictions on coverage by the media of terrorist activity are justified.

Membership in the United Nations is no longer beneficial to country X.

Significantly stronger third-party participation in the national elections would benefit the political process.

Violence is a justified response to political oppression.

United Nations implementation of its Universal Declaration of Human Rights is more important than preserving state sovereignty.

The national news media impairs public understanding of political issues.

More severe punishment for individuals convicted of violent crime would be desirable.

Country X should adopt the cabinet-parliamentary form of government.

The national government should significantly strengthen the regulation of mass media communication.

More rigorous academic standards should be established for all public elementary and secondary schools in one or more of the following areas: language arts, mathematics, natural sciences.

One or more of the existing restrictions on the freedom of press and speech should be curtailed or prohibited.

Initiative and referendum are the best form of legislation.

Sample debate format for civics, politics, and government

A debate on the topic "One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter" is virtually guaranteed to be an exciting exercise in the classroom. Because of the long-standing controversy about this topic, and the possibility that someone in the class has been personally affected, some preparation is advised.

By guiding research, the topic can be addressed in ways that minimize the real possibility of students becoming angry in the classroom. Teachers can help point students to different examples and ideas that can broaden the focus and not fixate on a particular political struggle. It is also important to provide a fixed time period in which students can express themselves and their opinions. This topic, like others in these areas, must have a pressure-release valve, where students in the audience who are bursting with excitement to make an argument or ask a question are allowed some moderated time. You might suggest that students write reaction papers to the debate to allow some time and the use of the written word to temper heated ideas.

Consider this topic of terrorism as the subject of a researched parliamentary debate. The affirmative team or the government must present a case that someone can legitimately see every terrorist as a freedom fighter. The militant Palestinian group Hamas might be the focus of their arguments. Developing their arguments, they might want to use examples of the Irish Republican Army, the Jewish militants who rose in the Warsaw Ghetto, or the African National Congress of South Africa who fought against apartheid. Each of these groups was labeled terrorists and as having some value by citizens of these nations. Remind students that they are not only fighting against the logic and arguments of the other team, but are challenging the conceptions of their audience.

Crafty negative teams could identify some tactic (such as killing civilians or using anonymous bombings) that differentiates terrorists from freedom fighters. They might also pick a single group of 'terrorists' that they believe are indefensible and try to prove that they are the exception to the rule. However, we believe that this approach will fall victim to the argument by the affirmative that regardless of our negative perception of terrorists, someone out there perceives their actions as justified in the fight for freedom.

Instead of these approaches, a negative team might want to interpret the resolution in a new way. An opposition team could argue that terrorists are defined not by their affiliation, but by their tactics, and that some members of the Irish Republican Army are freedom fighters, but others who use assassinations, for example, are terrorists. By coupling these arguments with the argument that these kinds of tactics actually discredit an organization, an opposition team could define the debate to give themselves some debating room. Another approach might be to define the ownership and use of nuclear weapons as the definition of terrorism because these powerful weapons hold the entire world hostage. In this case, the debate could be about nuclear weapons ownership and usage by the USA, because that country is the only nation to have ever used nuclear weapons in wartime. By creatively interpreting the debate, students can find new arguments for and catch their opponents off-guard.

CONCLUSION

It is through debates on these kinds of topics that the very nature of who we are as citizens emerges. By exploring how governments create and change laws, the value and virtue of those laws, political possibilities and realities, as well as civil norms and dialogue, students can become involved and excited about these topics. As an educational tool, debate illuminates these complex issues and fits well within the classroom curriculum.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The study of criminal justice is full of opportunities to debate. In every nation's complex law enforcement system is the potential for important and powerful debates on legal, tactical, and ethical issues. In this section, we explore the value of debate to the study of criminal justice as well as some of the possible debate topics and formats that can be used in the classroom.

Why debate is valuable to criminal justice

The study of criminal justice is a fundamental pillar of any society. As law enforcement officials are being trained, the complexity of their relationship to the law, the citizenry, and the government are constant points of dialogue. Debates contribute to these studies by helping students actualize the topics they are studying, encouraging them to appreciate their roles in the community and become aware of their own power.

The criminal justice classroom is filled with nuanced, subtle concepts. Many of these ideas seem so minor that they may slip by your students. Because the details of law are so important, future law enforcement officers must be aware of the complicated concepts, history, and justification for laws, rules, and regulations. These ideas can be brought into clear view by judicious use of role-playing debates, and by debating the complexities of these themes.

As future law enforcement officers, it is vital that your students be aware of their role in the communities in which they work. Using debates students can take turns making arguments from the citizens' perspectives of problems with various law enforcement tactics. Consider a public forum debate about a civilian review board for police officers in a community of color. Your students can work out some of the ideas that might arise and then be more sensitive to these ideas when they are on the streets.

Awareness of their own role in the scheme of law enforcement and society is often difficult for students. Uncertainty about what kinds of jobs they will be expected to perform can contribute to a sense of frustration. Classroom debates can help to work out these anxieties by

exploring the goals and philosophies of law enforcement. One exercise we suggest is to explore common concepts such as justice and peace, and have your students explore what they think these ideas are. By providing the students with the opportunity to express themselves about these issues, you can help position them in the community and prevent future difficulties. By positioning future law enforcement officers to be sensitive to many perspectives in these debates, they are better prepared to deal with a variety of ideas and opinions.

Sample debate topics for criminal justice

We should always protect personal rights.

We should have some limit on freedom of speech.

We should curtail police powers.

The police should have additional powers.

We should allow for vigilante justice.

Victim-offender reconciliation should be explored.

Justice is more important than peace.

Nonviolent drug offenders should not be jailed.

Corporal punishment is essential for juvenile delinquents.

We should liberate the jails.

Power is fluid.

The rights of the accused have been increased too much.

The exclusionary role for evidence should be eliminated.

In criminal justice, human intelligence is more important than machine intelligence.

Police should only be armed with nonlethal weapons.

Guns should be outlawed.

Punishment is as important as rehabilitation.

Sample debate format for criminal justice

A model congress debate format works well for prospective criminal justice students. Guiding the students to represent themselves in a parliamentary or congressional format and using Robert Rules of Order, you can involve multiple students and have a free exchange of ideas.

Select a topic like "Resolved: Nonviolent drug offenders should not be

jailed" and assign two students to be primary advocates in favor of the topic and two students to be primary advocates against the topic. These students are expected to present a variety of arguments and data that will provide the foundation of the debate. You might assign a pair of information-laden articles for the rest of the class to read in preparation.

Acting the role of moderator, direct each of the primary advocates to speak for a few minutes and then take questions from the audience. Afterwards you can build a list of students who want to speak on the topic. Remind students that they can accept questions after they finish speaking. Encourage students to speak multiple times and keep their speeches short, perhaps a minute or so.

You can set up several debate topics in a single class, assigning different students to become primary advocates. If you want to invest more time in the project, have the students research their topics a couple of weeks ahead of time and then encourage each student to present a change in criminal justice policy that he or she thinks is important. Have the same format of questions and speakers. After each debate, ask the students to vote in favor or against the change.

Do not worry too much about the format or the rules. Students speaking out of order or a lull in the debate is part of the natural process. Instead, focus on keeping the ideas flowing in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

Teaching criminal justice is more than simply conveying information to students. Teachers of criminal justice need to impress on students the ideas and themes that will save their lives and the lives of the citizenry. Along the way, students need to learn about ethics and to reflect on their own positions and privilege. Debates help us to become aware of the meaning behind rules and laws and to teach students to explore their own role in society.

CURRENT EVENTS

Current events is an exciting area for teachers and students to explore

emerging controversies. The potential for heated discussion points to debate as an excellent pedagogical tool for teachers. This section discusses the valuable intersection between debate and the current events classroom.

Why debate is valuable to current events classes

Debate is valuable for current events classes because it provides for new perspectives on subject matter. Debates allow students to examine and challenge topics that might receive scant attention from media outlets. The very nature of debates forces students to clash with news stories that are emerging; spontaneous criticism comes when a person is forced to defend a seemingly indefensible argument. Minds are often lazy, finding easy paths of disinterest. Debate pulls students into positions where their minds are challenged, intrigued, and forced to look critically at ideas. Imagine a debate that occurs on the day after a political protest turns into a major riot in your nation's capital city. Your students are assigned to debate this riot, with some of the students responsible for defending the rioters. The students are aghast. The entire nation, the newspapers, their parents, and peers all appear to be criticizing these rioters. How are they supposed to defend this position? After a period of frustration (and perhaps guided by a strong teacher), they discover some of the protest's root causes. Perhaps they find some reference to police violence during the rally. Slowly they begin to understand that the rioters who seem crazy have firm political beliefs and might have been pushed into a rioting situation. The students then find that they are looking forward to the debate. Because successful debates hinge on the recognition of multiple sides, each with its own value and support, debates call upon students to explore new terrain within topics.

Debates' flexible formats allow students to explore controversial topics in depth. As new and exciting world events emerge, there is a tendency to sketch them in the broadest strokes. Because media sources and experts often give short shrift to the complex background that inspires these events, students expect a simple background template. Debate can challenge this kind of understanding. Because debate is a teaching method that can be used in almost any situation, it can foment the need

to get beyond simplistic understanding of issues and reach real explanations. Perhaps as a lead-in to a classroom unit on anti-immigrant racism, this kind of debate can expose prejudicial norms. A role-playing debate where students represent the opinions of different parties on an emerging political scandal can put students in the hot seat and bypass sensationalistic journalism. A model parliament or congress might require students to exhaustively research an upcoming piece of legislation.

Because students are responsible for the content of the debate, they strive to discover ideas on their own, rather than being led to these ideas. Students who participate in debate often realize that they are supposed to support a side they have little or no knowledge of and jump into a process of self-exploration. A teacher can accelerate this process by exposing students to research skills, thereby providing them with the tools they need to explore most topics.

Debate allows teachers to fit complex ideas into structural contexts. It might be very difficult to teach students why good ideas so often fail in our public arenas. With debates and role-playing debate exercises, students can discover the difficulties in making changes within a constrained system. Students can also integrate historical precedent and ideas into the debates, providing a long view of how and why political problems exist and continue to plague politicians.

Debate topics for current events classes

Country X should unilaterally disarm its nuclear weapons.

The European Union should coordinate European economic finances.

Immigration is a plague.

We should free the people.

The future is now.

The Balkans should fix their own problems.

The international community should prosecute war criminals.

All nations should act to forestall global warming.

Russia/Israel/China should withdraw from Chechnya/West Bank/Hong Kong.

It is better to combat terrorism by reducing its causes than by fighting its symptoms.

Sample debate formats for current events classes

A possible debate in a current events class might be about the Middle East peace process. This kind of complex topic is difficult to broach in traditional classroom situations. Simply conveying information about the political make-up of the Middle East is extremely difficult given the number of players and the intricacies of their political justifications. While many educational opportunities layer knowledge of geo-politics, international affairs, culture, and religion to try to give an overview of the Middle East, debates can help students to become engaged in this topic.

If a current events class were to use debates as a recurring event and the topic of the Middle East peace process were a central topic, students could seamlessly connect their debate skills with the real knowledge about the subject. The class might start with a public forum debate where students could voice their own opinions and expose their own level of knowledge about the subject. Using these ideas as foundations for a debate, the teacher might assign readings that explore the issues of the peace-process negotiations, the justifications for Israeli control, and the Palestinian arguments for statehood. After some research and discussion, a multisided debate on the same issue where students represented various factions of Israeli doves, Israeli hawks, Palestinian militants and moderates, the United States, and Syria might help them envision the complex issues in this drama. Later in the class, the teacher might assign a parliamentary debate about the role of Israeli settlements in the peace process. The class might also pursue the foundations of the controversy by debating historical land disputes from both the Jewish and Arab perspectives.

By using debates as a tool to learn about the issues and returning to the subjects, students will build upon their own knowledge. Their understanding of issues and ideas will culminate in knowledge that they have not simply memorized but have a deep commitment to. This process creates an understanding that surpasses traditional teaching methods.

CONCLUSION

Debates about current events mesh with teaching goals: to encourage students to become interested and involved in issues. Through debating,

students become aware of issues and can also conceptualize them in a complex manner. Debate helps students understand the contexts, difficulties, and constraints that result in modern policy-making decisions.

EDUCATION

Why debate is valuable to education classes

Debating has a special relevance to the field of education as a classroom method and as a way to provide training in specially related subjects of study. In this section, we look at debate as a tool for the education classroom. As a method of teaching content and a process for learning skills, debating can help teachers to become more aware of important issues and ideas. This section is a guide to debating in an education class.

The learning model debate provides is useful to all education students and professionals. The relationship of gaining information, trying to use it, receiving feedback, and beginning the cycle again is one that expresses the ongoing process of learning. Using debates, students take class information, use it in their performances, receive critical response to their work, and then use that new knowledge. This process is very similar to the process of becoming a teacher, where an educator learns a subject, uses it in his or her own teaching, and then evaluates the success of the teaching process. The debater knows that no issue can be fully explored, no discussion is ever complete, and the debate never ends. In the same way, education is a lifelong process.

Debates create a good atmosphere for disagreement in the classroom. Intelligent people of good will can disagree about a wide variety of issues, and students as well as professional educators are advised to incorporate that fact into the classroom. Too many classrooms contain only one voice, that of the authority figure hired to supervise it. Educational debating can create what Robert Branham has said about debate in general, that the process demonstrates the "harmony of conflict." When extra voices are added to the classroom, the solo becomes a chorus and a bright opportunity for learning through involvement.

Debating in the educational training classroom can show future educators how to use the process effectively in their own classrooms. The

debate format is widely applicable to many educational subjects and opportunities. Some of our best mentors are those who taught us processes that we could use over and over again. We hope that integrating debate into the education classroom begins a lifelong appreciation of this form of learning.

Marshall Gregory, a professor of English at Butler University, suggests that when teaching, practice plays a fundamental role. Professor Gregory argues that too often education students become too attached to a particular method of teaching and fail to recognize the student-oriented nature of education. He explains that although practice is vital, it needs to be aided "first by criticism, the ability to see the imperfections in the performance so far, and second by imagination, the ability to visualize the performance or the skill not as it is actually being done now but as it might be done in the future, differently and better, after more practice" (4). Teaching future educators how to orchestrate debates and think critically suggest that debate might be invaluable for the education classroom.

Educators need to watch continually for opportunities to train students at all levels in critical-thinking skills. As explained in Chapter 1, the future will call for critical-thinking skills that go far beyond memory and data retention, and debating is a way to train teachers to do what they will be trying to teach students: how to solve problems and analyze complex situations. We have found that teachers who are concerned about critical-thinking skills and learn about debate as a method to teach them become ardent supporters of the process. We urge education-training professionals to consider debate as an important teaching tool.

Sample debate topics for education classes

The grading and evaluation system should be radically changed.

The educational system should not be divided into age groups.

Students should advance at their own pace.

Increased reliance on distance learning should be avoided.

School should be voluntary.

Teacher certification should be strengthened.

Colleges and universities have inappropriately altered educational practices to address issues of race or gender.

Higher education has sacrificed quality for institutional survival.

The government should guarantee an opportunity for higher education to all qualified high school graduates.

Lesson plan X needs to be revised in a major way.

Single-sex schools offer a superior secondary education.

The government should support religious schools.

Parents should be able to choose the schools their children attend.

Standardized testing is unfair and discriminatory.

Being a teacher is an unwise career choice.

Students should be required to pass a competency test before graduating from secondary school.

Schools place too much emphasis on sports.

Ability grouping should be used in schools.

Many students should not go to college.

Teachers have a higher responsibility to their students than to their government.

Teachers should refuse to teach material they strongly disagree with.

Academic freedom is more important than teacher accountability.

Every secondary school should have a debate team.

Vocational education is a thing of the past.

Students should not prepare for only one career.

The college experience is better after being in the military.

Offensive speech must be controlled in the classroom.

It is vital that teachers use the Internet to create educational opportunities for their students.

Use of the Internet has led to a deterioration of student research skills.

Elementary and secondary schools should require school uniforms.

In higher education the tenure system has outlived its usefulness.

Sample debate formats for education classes

A variety of formats and methods are suggested for the education classroom. We urge that specific topics are drafted and that students get to debate more than once in a term so that they have more chances to polish their skills.

Education students can debate about competing lesson plans and edu-

cational methods. A proposal can be made, disclosed to the other team, and circulated to the class, so that students in the audience can criticize as well as give suggestions for improvement. The teams should switch roles during the term, which allows students to learn the curriculum from two vantage points and provides very real and tangible suggestions from those debating them. Alternating roles is a good way for students to share curriculum projects during the term.

Debate about the big issues in the field of education are valuable and can be framed around such topics as educational design, implementation of education ideals, or the definition of an educated person. Students can research some of the critics of modern educational practice and then stage a debate in which they represent the views of one critic on the affirmative, with the negative team defending current educational practice. These kinds of exercises can reveal very important philosophical, pedagogical, and epistemological concepts.

Debates can be staged about educational reform. Education is at the top of many political agendas, and there is no shortage of suggested specific reforms that can be adopted. A heated debate about an issue like charter schools and school vouchers can bring out new and exciting ideas in a class. Debates about these reform issues can relate to the content of the course or to important current events. How education can be designed, delivered, implemented, evaluated, and reformed are all useful areas for debate.

CONCLUSION

Almost every part of this book attempts to prove the point of this small section: that debating is an exceptional educational technique. We trust that among educators, debate will find a receptive audience.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES AND EARTH SCIENCES

The study of environmental science is ripe with opportunities to debate. Controversies over environmental policy, the toxicity of pollutants, and scientific proof of events like global warming all present exciting plat-

forms for your students. There is very little tradition of public debate in these subject areas. Science is a fundamental part of our public discussions about issues as diverse as food safety and the protection of endangered species. Study of these issues can excite and stimulate students by integrating debates into the classroom.

Why debate is valuable to environmental studies and earth sciences

Debates can contribute to the educational climate of your earth science classroom by stimulating students to learn more about topics and driving them to see the importance and meaning of the things they are studying. Debates in the environmental studies classroom convey to students the complexity of scientific issues and the public policy implications of scientific discourse. Debates in science classes play a very important reflexive role where students explore the sometimes-dangerous implications and ethical responsibilities of scientific research.

Debates are exciting. When students have a framework for their debates and some sense of their topic, they begin to enjoy the process. Debates allow students to use the knowledge they have spent so much time and energy acquiring. Debates encourage students to look at issues from different angles, discover ideas they might have previously discarded, and see common knowledge as flawed. Because debates are active, participatory, meaningful events, they encourage students to see your classroom as a thriving place where learning is exciting.

The scope of scientific knowledge and the potential impact of scientific debates can sometimes elude students. Understanding the relationship between the moon and the tides is valuable, but many students will not grasp the powerful implications of this knowledge. Through debates students can realize and articulate the essence of this phenomena. For example, students debating the use of tidal forces to generate energy can draw a picture of the intense power associated with planetary pull, explaining (as much to themselves as to others) the significance of that relationship.

Debate can foster a complex view of environmental issues. Much of our knowledge about scientific issues is simplified for easy public consumption. The intricacies associated with causal chains of scientific meaning are flattened so they can be explained in a chart or a quick para-

graph. Global warming is a good example. Global warming is usually portrayed as a simple cause-and-effect event where the earth's temperature is increased because the build-up of carbon dioxide traps the sun's rays in the earth's atmosphere. There are actually dozens of other feedback loops that affect the global warming process, including the role of trees and plants that exchange carbon dioxide for oxygen, the importance of sea water temperature as a heat trap, and the role of nitrogen dioxide, another pollutant that emerges with carbon dioxide that actually seems to cool the earth during the night. All of these relationships increase and decrease the processes that is called global warming. Yet, they are usually not mentioned in the popular science literature. The debate process allows students to resolve such complicated relationships. In researching their topic, they need to understand the complexity of any scientific issue and be able to explain it to an audience, a vital training process for future scientists and a valuable part of a scientific education.

Debates encourage reflection about complicated issues. Despite the perception that science is neutral, it is in fact often used for political or social gain. Ethical reflection about the role of science in our society is important. Consider an intense study of the migration, eating habits, mating, and status of an endangered species of caribou that have been hunted to near extinction. The study is well funded and is intended to help scientists understand how they might help this species of caribou. After the study is done, poachers use the published data to position themselves along traditional migration routes and gain an advantage to hunt and kill the caribou. We believe that science has a responsibility to connect to the workings of the rest of the world. This connection means engaging in debates that many would urge science to avoid, such as the ethical debates about animal experimentation and the questions of epidemiology relating to AIDS and HIV. Scientists must recognize that because they are respected, they have power to influence the use of their findings. Debate is one of the few avenues that we have to discuss newly created knowledge. Debate is relentless, and critical – as a process, it pushes us to examine possible disadvantages that can emerge and recognize the costs and benefits associated with research results.

Sample debate topics for environmental studies and earth sciences

We should sacrifice economic growth for the good of the environment.

The value of natural resources is found in their exploitation.

Spaceship earth is crashing.

Protection of the national environment is a more important goal than the satisfaction of energy demands.

The world should significantly increase the development of the earth's ocean resources.

The power of science is dangerous.

The government should regulate genetically modified crops.

Planting a tree saves a life.

We should place culture above science.

Person X is the most importance scientist of her or his time.

Creationism should be taught in schools.

The nation should protect its estuaries from pollution.

We should accept the Kyoto Accord to combat global warming.

Immanuel Velikovsky's theory of catastrophism should be accepted.

An asteroid strike destroyed the dinosaurs.

Earthquake prevention is a waste of time and money.

Earthquakes can be predicted.

Toxic waste flows to the poor.

A shift in the earth's poles did take place and can happen again.

Sample debate format for environmental studies and earth sciences

Here are two examples of debates that might be successful in your earth science classroom. The first is a three-sided debate about genetically engineered crops. Using this format, students can see the myriad perspectives on public policy for science. The second debate is about the nature of environmental racism, the unequal distribution of toxic waste. This debate highlights the ethical ramifications of scientific inquiry and the complexity of making environmental policy.

Debate Number One: Three sides of genetically engineered crops:

The issue of genetically engineered crops is one that evokes a lot of scientific bluster and not a lot of public policy analysis. The science of genetic engineering is thousands of years old. For centuries farmers have

bred various strains of grain in order to make hardier, more successful, or higher-yielding crops. This natural science has evolved into a high tech science of gene-splicing, where scientists connect the genes of seemingly disparate entities (like fish and tomatoes). Genetically engineered crops have elicited a massive response from activists, consumers, multinational corporations, and national leaders. One of the exciting aspects of this debate is that it has many sides. Therefore, we have created a debate that explores this situation.

By setting up a three-sided debate, you benefit from a more complex exchange among your students. Side one argues that genetically engineered food is wonderful and should be completely unregulated. Side two argues that genetically engineered food should be carefully regulated to minimize any danger. Side three argues that genetically engineered food should be completely banned because of the danger that it already presents.

Through the interplay of these three perspectives, the debaters and the rest of your class begin to see that the politics of science often get in the way of the pure quest for knowledge, and that the quest for knowledge has dramatic political implications. This debate looks beyond "good vs. bad" and explores the scientific justifications and the social implications. Side one will argue that the risk of famine outweighs any ethical consideration. Side three will attack the safety of these crops and criticize the multinational corporations that have patented crop genes. Side two will attempt to create a middle ground arguing that regulation can solve both problems.

Debate number two: environmental racism.
Environmental racism is a catch phrase used to describe the unequal distribution of toxic waste based on race. Arguing that significantly more toxic waste sites occur in communities of color, many activists and scientists have documented the devastating impacts these sites have on neighboring populations. A debate about environmental racism gets at the ethical responsibilities of scientists and the difficulties in solving environmental problems.

In a public forum event where the topic is "what can be done about

environmental racism," students can explore a variety of scientific and political solutions to this problem. Students might argue that the government should be responsible for cleaning up existing hazardous waste sites. Others might argue that new regulations should prevent future unequal distribution of wastes. Other students might criticize these approaches, arguing that pressure on waste industries will only encourage them to ship toxic waste to other countries or that communities of color will lose their jobs. Students may also call for various scientific approaches: bioremediation or the use of microbes to eat toxic waste, new cleaning technologies or the use of brownfields, recycled industrial areas that are to be used again for new industrial areas. This debate can help students to see the complicated issues that environmental scientists must help to resolve. They can work through the potential ramifications of their own work and consider the meaning of their actions.

CONCLUSION

It is through these discussions that new ideas emerge and the potential power of science to help solve some of the devastating inequality comes out. More importantly, through these debates students recognize the power and importance of science and the responsibility of scientists to be self-critical about their own work and ideas. Science does not exist in a vacuum and it is this recognition that can emerge through the use of debates.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The reason to debate in a foreign language class is obvious: Students experience a new language by using it in a special and rigorous way. The debate process as outlined in Chapter 2 is the same one that students will need when they are trying to live and do business in a second language.

"Foreign" languages and debate

Debates can take place in any language that the participants understand. Much can be learned even from a debate in a language we cannot fully

understand. At the World Debate Institute, a considerable amount of international debating now takes place in English because it is the world's most popular second language, but we believe it is vital to promote debating in a broad range of languages.

Debate can be useful and educational in any language, as the main argument of this book indicates, but it can be especially useful for students who want to learn a second or third language in this spontaneous and logical format.

Why debate is valuable to foreign language classes

Debate has been shown to be an outstandingly productive exercise for language acquisition. In the USA it has been extremely successful in reaching out to non-English speaking students and enabling them to achieve considerable linguistic survival skills. In nations worldwide debating is a valued technique for learning English. Debaters in Japan pioneered this practice and met with great success, often with English-speaking clubs sponsoring debates as a tool for language acquisition. Today the practice has spread globally through the International Debate Education Association in cooperation with governments, schools, and private foundations. However, this technique is currently underutilized in classes designed to teach English speakers or anyone a new language.

Debates put students in situations where they will have to "think" in a different language. Memorization by beginning language students equips them with an array of words and phrases they can use to communicate. However, living and operating in a different cultural environment involves problem solving and critical processes that require the manipulation of logical concepts, just as debating requires students to critically analyze their own arguments and those of others. In this way debate training can be exceedingly valuable to the intermediate and advanced language student.

Debate is a mechanism for enhancing cultural and social learning related to the language being studied. Language operates within the context of a culture and a society and cannot be well understood when studied in isolation: Debate topics can be framed around these cultural and social features. These topics can also be framed in a way that gives stu-

dents lots of latitude in presenting their ideas, which reduces the anxiety of learning new vocabulary words. The topics do not have to be "serious" in order to facilitate a friendly and beneficial debate in a second language.

Sample debate topics for foreign language classes

Country X should have a national language.
Country X should debate in its own language.
Country X should debate only in English.
Switzerland has a better form of government than X.
No foreign language should be taught in our public schools.
Foreign language instruction should be increased in our schools.
The study of Latin and Greek is a needless waste of time.
The system of government in X is preferable to that of Y.
Vienna is a German city. [Variations are suggested]
Spain is more culturally sophisticated than Hispanic-America.
French/German/Italian food is superior to French/German/Italian food.
The French language should avoid the inclusion of non-French words.
The Spanish language should be globally standardized.
The English language should be globally standardized.
It is better to vacation in X than in Y.

Sample debate formats for foreign language classes

Students will most likely find simple, one-on-one short debates to be the most useful format. This format allows many students to participate in a short amount of time and with a minimum of preparation. The less "serious" topics are probably best for this sort of debate. The focus here is on basic language skill and not necessarily on elaborate new vocabulary. Because these debates are short and simple, strategies are advised for keeping the audience involved as much as possible within the format's time constraints.

Team debates are more useful at a higher level of language proficiency. These debates should feature more "serious" topics that involve more preparation. The focus here should be on formal language use in a public situation. These debates should have the audience involved either as

judges or speech givers. Pre-debate disclosure is very useful here to enhance the quality of the interaction. Make sure such disclosure takes place well in advance and in a sufficient level of detail.

A public assembly debate is useful at various levels of language proficiency. Topics should be distributed either in advance for beginning speakers or more spontaneously for more advanced students. Some simple or complex topic is proposed, and each student has to make a brief speech (one or two minutes) in support or opposition of the topic. If so desired, students can be allowed to speak more than once given time constraints. A vote of the "house" can take place at the end of the speaking period. This activity is spontaneous and interactive, and does not take up too much time.

Cross-examination can be a useful addition to any debate format being used for language instruction. It is interactive but at the same time far more formal than conversation training. It is highly spontaneous and reveals the language level achieved by the student. Students also find it to be very entertaining to watch.

CONCLUSION

Debating can add considerably to any foreign language classroom because it involves students in a level of critical thinking that transcends sheer translation or conversation as a way to learn a language. Considerable experience globally has established this fact, and it is one of the most important things debating can give back to society – the ability to speak and reason with each other in more languages.

HISTORY

History and debate

Debate has certainly made history, from the forums of ancient times to the international conferences of today. Debate is also a useful way to understand history, making the issues students confront "come alive" as the process calls on them to be personally responsible for critical communications about the subjects they are studying.

Why debate is valuable to history classes

Debate encourages students of history to find connections and useful lessons by engaging such students in the understanding of where we have come from and where we are going. Debates are valuable to history students in the following ways:

First, the very nature of history is debatable. There is no one perfect history of any event; instead, many competing interpretations of historical facts, causes, and consequences are available. Students can examine the work of historians and compare them in critical exercises, or argue issues of cause and effect in history, all within an organized critical communication format that can be adapted to a specific class. It is easy to come up with relevant topics for debate within almost any area of historical study.

Second, history is a process of storytelling at its most grand. Many students are enchanted by historical study of places and times that are exotic and different. Yet, there are competing stories at each level of historical exploration. The process of debating about history can, in some ways, be thought of as an exercise in competitive storytelling, where each side paints its own picture of events and possible futures, while reinterpreting the stories of the other side. Students can learn about the ways in which the broader flows of history can be interpreted and understood.

Third, as we debate about history we rebuild the past. Debating in specific time and place restrictions puts students into situations in a very active and immediate way. Through representing individuals and groups from history, debates offer a better understanding of the historical texts and perhaps even the historical realities. In their arguments and presentations students can attempt to rebuild the ideas and logical connections of the past. Certainly this process can never be fully accomplished, but the effort – the attempt to understand other peoples and other times – is an extremely important exercise for the students.

Fourth, debating allows students to take different perspectives on important issues. Many of the issues that come up in the study of history are related to how individuals construct other people – whether they denigrate or elevate them. We are rarely called on to consider who we are and assume, just for a moment, that we might be that other person.

Through debate activities students can develop an ability to operate "inside" the historical perspectives of other people and other groups. While a simple debate cannot fully train us to see things as others see them, it is a useful beginning to that process, and something students seem to enjoy and appreciate.

Sample debate topics for history classes

Note: Please feel free to locate any of these topics in a period of history that seems appropriate.

History is not to be trusted, because the winners write it.

Modern day America is an ahistorical society.

The only thing we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history.

History explains but cannot predict.

Hollywood has destroyed more history than it has enshrined.

History textbooks in public schools need major revisions.

Oral history is more accurate than written history.

Women should be admitted to the right of suffrage.

We should repudiate history.

Nationalism is a virtue.

History is not her story.

The advancement of civil liberty is more indebted to intellectual culture than to force of arms.

The cotton gin is a greater invention than the electric telegraph.

The USA should have entered WWI in 1914.

The USA should not have renamed Washington National Airport after Ronald Reagan.

The League of Nations should be adopted. [1919]

The Volstead Act should be modified to permit the manufacture and sale of light wines and beer.

The USA should agree to the cancellation of the interallied debts.

The Allies should agree to the cancellation of the Axis debts.

The USA should follow a policy of strict economic and military isolation toward all nations outside the Western Hemisphere engaged in armed international or civil conflict.

A federal world government should be established.

The further development of nuclear weapons should be prohibited by international agreement.

The USA should substantially reduce its military commitments to South Vietnam.

There should be an educational test as a qualification for voting.

It is just as ladylike to wear bloomers as any other dress.

Daniel Webster was superior in intelligence to Stephen A. Douglas.

The existence of the Roman Empire was bad for the rest of history.

Oliver Cromwell was a greater man than Napoleon Bonaparte.

Toussaint L'Ouverture was the equal of George Washington as a soldier and statesman.

Richard the Third was a worse monarch than Charles the Second.

Athens was superior to Sparta as a political entity.

Egypt was the cradle of European civilizations.

The Chinese civilization was more advanced than the European.

The Aztec and Inca civilizations were more sophisticated than the European civilization that conquered them.

We use history less to guide our actions now than previously.

Politicians use history to justify the courses of action they prefer; they do not choose courses of action that are justified by history.

Sample debate formats for history classes

Class subject matter will dictate topics, but most debate formats are appropriate for almost any history class. One on one, two on two, or public assembly formats can be very useful for debating these issues. Almost any format can provide insight when used in the following ways.

Debates can be held about the uses of history. The objectivity, or need for objectivity, can be a subject for debate. The way in which history is used or ignored to help frame decisions can be fruitful grounds for a debate. These sorts of debates can help students in an introductory class or even in a class for new majors in history. A high school class might have a debate about the need to study history and whether to reduce or expand history requirements.

Debates about whether to rewrite portions of history are illuminating.

Substantial criticisms exist of accepted historical accounts that some claim need substantial revision. A debate might also be held about the need to revise history textbooks in school systems. This subject helps students understand the nature of historical accounts and requires them to investigate particular historical periods and accounts.

Students can engage in "what if?" debates also called historical recreation debates. In these debates, students imagine what would happen if something in history were different. Students might debate about what life would be like if the Axis powers had won World War II. Or they might explore what life would be like if JFK had not been assassinated. These debates emphasize imagination and exploration – looking to new ideas and stretching the students' sense of reality.

Debates can be held in specific eras or with specific historical figures or groups. Great debates have occurred at various points in history, over such issues as prohibition of alcohol, abolition of slavery, the granting of independence to colonies, the right of women to vote, and the creation of the League of Nations. One caution is that students might not feel confident being Napoleon or Ramses II. One technique is to require them to act as an agent for that person in the debate.

These kinds of debates can be useful ways to study history at many different levels. Debates, in a very real way, make history "come alive" for students as they act out the issues and the key players themselves.

CONCLUSION

Debaters often use historical examples and lessons as proof for their arguments. Policy debates use history as a basis for future decisions. Value topics allow the exploration of changing ethical and moral standards. Through the integration of debating into the history classroom a deeper level of learning can be achieved.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Debate and international relations

The study of international relations is a vital method of understanding the

world. International relations theorists help to outline ways to map and chart the ebb and flow of international politics. Issues as diverse as the independence of nongovernmental organizations and the value of economic sanctions as a tactic are the provinces of international relations. Teaching international relations is more than simply providing information about the treaties that govern the oceans; teaching is so often about the methods and philosophies of study, about learning other peoples' and nations' worldviews, and often times, exploring the darkest parts of our civilizations, wars. The educational goals of international relations can be showcased through the introduction and use of classroom debates. For these reasons and others, we suggest that debating techniques become an important part of international relations education.

Why debate is valuable to international relations classes

Students are attracted to international relations because of the allure of foreign places, the suggestion of power and importance, the notion that history is made through international relations, and other reasons. However, students attracted to the field might be surprised at the amount of difficult work and preparation necessary to master it. Knowledge of history, geography, economics, cultures, and negotiations are important components of international relations training, but communication is the skill that transcends them all. Debate is invaluable to this training for the following reasons:

First, those involved with international relations need to be familiar with oral advocacy. Communication skills in any social situation can be difficult to develop, but those working with individuals from other societies face even more difficulties, especially when the interests of the parties may diverge. Open and publicly accountable debate is excellent training for such situations. The use of debating in the classroom can enhance an already exciting subject.

Second, both international affairs and debate are speculative. The scholar of international relations asks question of "what if…" about the past, present, and future. Like a debater speculating about what impacts a particular policy proposal would have on other areas, the international relations discipline invites participants to speculate about what could be.

Debate forces students to "think ahead" about the impact of any given proposal, a valuable training exercise for future diplomats.

Third, both debate and international relations involve decisions about verbal formulae that allow us to process issues cognitively and come to a conclusion. The international relations field offers various perspectives, including realism, balance of power, feminist international relations, nonviolent action, and others, that are used to make decisions. The debater is also concerned not just with the issues but how the issues will be balanced and decided.

Fourth, debate and international relations demand the use of perspective, or seeing an issue through the eyes of another. Critical and important communication must proceed with some level of mutual understanding. Value hierarchies may be quite different among different international actors, thus making it essential to understand the other parties involved. Debate can put students in situations where they will have to take the perspective of another and make decisions based on that perspective. By engaging in this process while representing themselves in a personal way, students can begin to develop this critical skill.

Sample debate topics for international relations classes

The USA should withdraw all its ground combat forces from bases located outside the Western Hemisphere.

A unilateral freeze by the USA on the production and development of nuclear weapons would be desirable.

The European Community ought/ought not to expand now.

The poverty of the third world is the fault of the first world.

A global marketplace is good for us.

The USA should be less involved in world affairs.

The western nations should reduce their commitment to Israel.

Foreign policy significantly directed toward the furtherance of human rights is desirable.

We should open the gates to immigrants.

Realism is an inadequate framework for international relations.

We should increase the international importance of nongovernmental organizations.

We should actively pursue a world government.
Major treaty X from the Cold War era should be abandoned.
The United Nations should do less, not more.
Nation X has a valid territorial claim against Nation Y.
Nation X should pay reparations to Nation Y.
Leader X's policy toward Nation Y was a failure.
The Western Hemisphere should develop a free trade area.
International organization X should be abolished.
Stage a debate between the sides in a selected treaty negotiation.
Stage a "what if" debate changing who won a major war.

Sample debate formats for international relations classes

The specific area of international relations study usually dictates the formats and uses of debating. However, the teacher should feel free to design formats and topics that fit with the subject matter and his or her personal style. Debates are very flexible and retain most of their beneficial characteristics no matter how they are organized.

First, introductory classes should consider holding a debate to establish the importance of this area of study. Topics can be gathered from current events or from history, but should attempt to show that international relations is a vital field. A public assembly format can be used or the class can be divided into different factions.

Second, debates about the "meta-issues" of international relations can be staged. In such events teams of several students each can either challenge prevailing wisdom or introduce on alternative perspective, such as feminist international relations or postmodern approaches. These sorts of debates get at the deeper issues and provide insight into "why" certain decisions are made in international relations. They also force students to question their own approaches to the field and reevaluate the way they make decisions.

Third, debates can be held about specific case studies. Two sides in a case study can be assigned that no student is actually identified with. The teams would then represent those sides in a debate. For example, issues about the future of Jerusalem, with students assigned as Israeli or Palestinian delegates, could be interesting for the entire class and educa-

tional for the students involved. Case studies can be drawn from the past, the present, or an imaginary future. The instructor should make sure that there is sufficient information in the case study given to the students or point to places to research the information.

Fourth, debates can be held about specific policies. These debates can be about specific proposals and between two teams of two or three students. A fifty-minute debate on a specific policy proposal can be very illuminating, and students especially enjoy the lively cross-examination periods. Any major policy proposal in the area of foreign affairs can be used here, assuming that it has both supporters and detractors so that students can research both sides. Students in the audience can either vote for the better debater or for the policy they most agree with. If the latter is chosen, it is useful to have a pre-debate vote to compare to the post-debate vote.

Fifth, historical settings can be used. Students can stage a debate about a conference or negotiation they are studying, taking on the roles of the players in the event. This format requires some historical study, which may already be part of the curriculum. Those class members not represented as delegates can act as members of the press or other interested parties, offering their interpretation of the proceedings after the sides have made their presentations.

Sixth, "what if?" debates can be staged. In these short debates the topics can speculate on historical events, such as "What if the Axis Powers had won World War II?" The first team would then present their interpretation of what the world would be like. A second team would then present their criticisms of the ideas of the first team, and then present their alternatives. It is advisable to have the first team disclose their points to the second team so that the debate will go quickly. The event can be concluded with a question period or comments from the rest of the class. The class might then vote for the team that had the best answers to the "what if?" question.

CONCLUSION

In competitive academic debate, international relations issues offer the

opportunity for some of the most lively and enjoyable contests because of their importance and because citizens need to be broadly informed. There is every reason to bring the excitement of debating these issues into the classroom.

LAW

Law and debate

In no field is there a closer established relationship with debating than in law. Many students take up debating because they anticipate careers in law, many debates arise out of legal situations. Law schools highly suggest debating as an activity and value it in making admissions decisions. The lawyer needs to have the skills of a debater.

This section is not aimed at those in law school, but to general secondary school and university students who are investigating legal subjects. This approach does not assume a high degree of legal knowledge, but does presuppose some basic interest in the law and a desire to learn more.

Why debate is valuable to law classes

There are numerous obvious connections between classes in law-related themes and the practice of debating:

First, debating and critical decision is the method of law. The roles of the legal practitioner and debater are reasonably co-terminus. Each one gathers the facts and engages in research, each formulates arguments for his or her side of the case, each presents those arguments orally to those making the decision, each looks for critical holes in the presentation of the other side and then each waits expectantly for the decision to be made. The preparation one receives from being involved in debate is directly relevant to the skills needed in the legal arena.

Second, both debating and law emphasize the use of oral argument. While legal briefs are filed and are important, the oral argument component of both law and debate is essential. The judge and jury must be persuaded and the presentation must be of a quality that will aid in the transmission of vital arguments and evidence. Many lawyers and many stu-

dents lack sufficient training in oral communication skills, and making debate a part of a law-related class limits this problem. Even the seemingly disconnected formats like SPAR debates and public forums encourage the use of these skills.

Third, research is an essential part of both practices. It is obvious that when debating there is no substitute for knowing your subject. The good lawyer faces the same need to learn about the facts of the case and the existing relevant law in order to perform adequately. Debaters and lawyers need to learn to research in a targeted and efficient way in order to quickly gain the information they will need. A good working knowledge of bibliographic, electronic, and field research skills are very important. Research to prepare for a debate on a legal issue is direct training for the kinds of research needed in the legal field.

Fourth, both activities emphasize the need for properly briefing arguments. Arguments need to be developed, then presented in a logical, organized, and appropriate format. The transition between the research phase to the briefing stage is key, as data become arguments and eventually a case. Both debaters and lawyers learn to anticipate the arguments of the other side, taking account of them in their original arguments by preempting them. A judge once told us that she could tell which of the lawyers had debate experience because the debaters tended to preempt and answer the other side's arguments in their initial presentation or brief, putting themselves one step ahead of the opposition.

Fifth, the topics that law classrooms cover are exciting topics for anyone to debate. Almost all crises that face our world today can be explored in a productive way through a legal lens to consider the issue of genocide; a debate about the legal processes that are responding to the atrocities in Rwanda can get at the issues in a meaningful way. Almost every current topic of debate has a legal angle, and debates that focus on the ways that the law can respond and contribute to the solution of a problem are valuable.

Sample debate topics for law classes

The decision in Case X should be reversed.

The state should/should not seek the death penalty in capital cases involving persons under the age of eighteen.

The legal system favors the rich.

Judges should be elected, not appointed.

Determining facts is more important than following legal procedure.

People have lost faith in the legal system.

Statutes of limitation in criminal/civil cases should be increased.

The tort liability system damages our economy.

We use legal means to resolve our differences more than we should.

Punishment should be deemphasized in the interests of rehabilitation.

Released sex offenders should be identified for the community in which they live.

The rights of the accused have been expanded to the detriment of the rights of the victim.

The public's low opinion of lawyers is unjustified.

There are too many lawyers.

Military personnel should have all the legal rights of civilians.

Gay marriages should be allowed.

Prisons should be abolished for all except for the most dangerous offenders.

Professional legal groups should be prohibited from political lobbying or from making campaign contributions.

Restitution of damages is more important than punishment.

We should exterminate capital punishment.

"Victimless crimes" should be legalized.

It is a citizen's duty to follow the law.

Anarchy is a viable alternative to the rule of law.

Legal protection of accused persons in country X unnecessarily hinders law enforcement agencies.

Regulations requiring employees to be tested for controlled substances are an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

The adversarial legal system should be replaced by a system devoted to making the correct decisions.

Increased restrictions on the civilian possession of handguns in the USA would be justified.

The separation of church and state is no longer necessary.

The right to privacy is more important than the freedom of the press.

Significant government restrictions on coverage by the media of terrorist activity are justified.

One or more presently existing restrictions on the freedoms of press and/or speech should be curtailed or prohibited.

Sample debate formats for law classes

The nature of the precise legal subject matter will suggest appropriate formats for any given class. Here are a few basic suggestions:

First, begin an introductory class with a debate about the nature of law. Very basic issues often set the stage for later explorations and early debates can get students acquainted with each other and comfortable with the class setting. Issues such as our obligation to follow laws, our need for laws, the type of process for establishing laws that commands our respect, and other basic questions from the topic list all make excellent open debates. Public assemblies format or the division of the class into two teams is appropriate for this kind of general and introductory exercise.

Second, organize very simple single-issue debates. They might deal with narrow topics so that students can have a quick one-on-one debate about the issue. These quick debates can be scheduled on a few class days or one short debate can be scheduled in each class period or in each week.

Third, engage students in written brief debates. Assign some legal question on which students can present their arguments in writing. Keep the length of the briefs short. Encourage them to make a number of clear arguments and not spend too much time on too few issues. One option is to assign them one of the other side's briefs to answer in writing. This exercise will encourage good composition and issue discovery.

Fourth, assign issue discovery exercises, which can be very useful. Provide students with a legal question and have them draw up a list of issues in writing. Then have a public assembly-style meeting where students present their issues. Keep a record of these issues. You should have a list of the issues themselves already prepared so you can see what the students have missed.

Fifth, develop cross-examination techniques. Students can be positioned on opposite sides of an issue and then cross-examine each other

for three or four minutes. This exercise can be useful in training students to take depositions from witnesses. Many students can participate in a single class session.

Sixth, stage a mock trial, one of the most popular debate methods used in law classrooms. While the mock trial format is useful in many fields, it is most relevant in the legal field. Such events need adequate preparation by the students and a considerable amount of class time, but are well worth the effort. It is helpful to assign students not arguing the case to the jury box or as members of the press (who can question the major players at the end of each session,) or as witnesses and family members. The instructor can serve as the presiding judge or appoint a skilled student to fill this role.

Seventh, use legal debates to teach the application of legal knowledge to pending controversies. Rather than having a contest of advocacy based on the criteria of cost-benefit analysis, or of morality, students can debate controversies and use the laws of the land as their framework. Students then become familiar with the basic laws surrounding a controversy (the question of an illegal search of an automobile during a drug arrest) and then have a debate about how a particular case will be resolved. This exercise teaches the students the basics of the law, and encourages them to use their knowledge and envision its value.

It is worthwhile to review the formats we suggest in Chapter 4 and apply them to each class and subject matter area.

CONCLUSION

Debate is an excellent method for any class dealing with legal issues. Because debate and law share so many characteristics, the subject matter is the method. The future of legal regimes will depend on the open public argument they use.

LITERATURE

Literature and debate

The stories we have told each other since the beginning of time have

educated, enlightened, and elevated us. Those great stories of our past and present stand as bodies of literature that we now study and teach. Each story is heard differently by each individual, who interprets it using his or her own unique perspective. Part of the great educational potential of literature comes when we share with each other our interpretations of these works. Debate can be extremely valuable in the literature classroom to extend these interpretations.

Why debate is valuable to literature classes

There are many ways to share and learn from great works of literature. Debate is one useful way that teachers should consider. There are four reasons to recommend this integration of debate and literature:

First, debate can add an active element to an often-passive activity. While the mind is active when it is reading, the action is mostly cognitive, not behavioral. When students debate issues of literature, they take what they have cognitively processed and then present it and defend it before an audience. Literature becomes more personally relevant when students engage the work in this way.

Second, there are substantial narrative and meta-narrative elements in both literature and debate. Literature is narrative, but debate can be narrative as well. The debater tells a story about how things are and how they might be. The debater also retells the story of the opponent's narrative, and then rephrases it in ways that are less than flattering. The debate process heightens the level of narrative exchange and reinterpretation.

Third, debates encourage people to share their literary experiences and learn from that process. While many people find "book groups" (where members read the same book and then meet once a month to discuss it) useful, the debate process, when focused on literature, can provide a similar experience. We are constantly struck by how others can read the same piece of literature and have a unique and valuable perspective to share. The illuminating and edifying results of literature can be heightened through such sharing, and debate is no exception.

Fourth, integrating debates into the literature classroom can make stories more personally relevant to the students. Often we read great works from long ago that seem a bit colorless to some students because of their

language or unfamiliar period detail. By taking works of literature and staging a debate about them, debate students assume behaviors that heighten their personal involvement. Literature has much to teach all of us, and debate opens the door of personal relevance to students who are then able to incorporate its lessons.

Sample debate topics for literature classes

Drama is a more powerful art form than the novel.
Science fiction is an immature literature form.
Fiction is inferior to nonfiction.
Western literature has been overemphasized.
The genre of X is inferior to the genre of Y.
Author X is a better writer than Author Y.
Novel X is a better work of literature than Novel Y.
Play X is a better work of drama than Play Y.
Character X is really the hero in work Y.
Character X is really the villain in work Y.
Work X is an attempt to explain the social situation of Y.
Character X in work Y is guilty of crime Z. [trial]

Sample debate formats for literature classes

There are a number of debate formats that work well in the literature class. A look at our topic list reveals some of them. Debates are fairly easy to organize if the students have read the work closely. Unlike debates that occur in a specific time in history that need extensive background information, a work of literature can often stand alone as a resource for students to create a productive debate. Below are suggestions for debates in literature classes.

First, put specific characters or institutions in a work of literature on trial. Is Hamlet guilty of murder? Is the coyote really the cause of the problem? Was Moll Flanders guilty of immorality? Students can be assigned as prosecutors, defense counsels, judge, jury, characters witnesses, the accused, and other roles. With a bit of cooperation a trial spanning several class periods can be staged. Teachers have reported to us that this is an extremely useful format.

Second, debate the nature of a work's characters. The better the work the harder it is to determine who is wearing the hero's white hat or the villain's black hat. In many works there can be good arguments made either way for many different characters. This ambiguity allows students to dig deep to analyze characters and not take appearances at face value.

Third, use debates to compare two different works, either two works by the same author or two different authors writing about similar themes. There is no right answer, but such a debate forces students to develop standards for evaluating literature and then apply them to specific examples.

Fourth, use debates to compare two different writers. Granted that no two writers are really the same, a debate can be generated that makes the case for and against each author. This exercise forces students to develop standards for what a literary artist is trying to accomplish in his or her career and whether the artist succeeds or not.

Fifth, use debates to compare or evaluate different genres. Some literature is thought of as "high brow," some considered "mass market." Some critics view science fiction and mystery stories as immature genres because the forms are too restricted to be truly revealing, while others strongly disagree. Individual genres can be critiqued, or two genres compared, as appropriate for the class's discussion and lesson material.

Sixth, stage a debate that pits author against critic. Here, one debater plays the critic, providing criticism of the work of the author, and another debater represents the author defending her work. This format can lead to a lively and entertaining debate that is both instructive and interesting. Encourage students to represent authors they enjoy and challenge authors they do not, adding a personal element to the proceedings. This kind of debate explores the fertile territory of literary theory and criticism. It also teaches literature students the essential skill of enacting criticism – to be able to judge and evaluate literary artifacts using a particular lens.

CONCLUSION

While debate is not often used to study literature, it is a powerful tool to consider. Interesting discussions can turn into dynamic and revealing

exercises as students personally confront great literature in a public forum.

MATHEMATICS

Despite the perception that mathematics is a field whose intricacies are best worked out on a blackboard, debate can be used to explore many aspects of the field. Issues ranging from the philosophy of mathematics to the ethical responsibility of mathematicians pose questions that have importance to all people. Debate contributes to the workings of mathematics classes and helps us analyze the subject's intricacies. While not a dominant teaching method for mathematics, debate can be an exciting supplement to your normal teaching methods.

Why debate is valuable to mathematics

Debate can add to the mathematics classroom in three ways. First, it can encourage your students to become involved in the discipline's seemingly abstract elements. Second, debates can enable you to bring the historical contexts of mathematical theory to life in your classrooms. Third, debates can explore the ethical responsibilities that mathematicians have to the world regarding their work.

It can be very difficult to get students involved in the study of mathematics. The astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson lamented the inability of the general public to give astrophysicists their due in museums.

> "The public hardly ever hears about the role of spectra in cosmic discovery because the concepts are just too far removed from the objects themselves to be explained efficiently. When creating exhibits of natural history museums or for any museum where real things matter, what designers typically seek are objects and artifacts suitable for display – rocks, bones, tools, fossils, memorabilia, and so forth" (34).

Similarly, the study of mathematics lacks obvious artifacts with which to spark a controversy for a debate. However, this lack is the very reason

debate is so valuable to teachers, for it provides the contexts and the background to overcome these difficulties in teaching seemingly insignificant ideas. Imagine having a role-playing debate about the Copernican revolution. With students carefully having researched the roles of Ptolemy and Copernicus, the heated dialogue can help students to understand the stakes involved in this debate. Debates about other mathematical discoveries can also help students understand that old paradigms of thought were successful because the theories worked in the context of the old world, not because people were ignorant in that day. It is through debates that students can envision how these mathematical changes affect the rest of the world. Debate can help raise the level of meaning in the study of a subject and can excite your students.

Largely because the perception that mathematics involves the analysis and re-analysis of numbers, debate might not seem like a valuable format for mathematical pedagogy. Perhaps in fields of geometry or algebra students might take time to rework an historical theorem, but in general, the study of mathematics is perceived to be deeply reliant on numbers. Nevertheless, many of the changes in mathematics occur through heated dialogue between outspoken mathematicians. The philosophic changes in mathematics can point your classroom to several heated debates. Consider debates about relativity, quark theory, dimensional mathematics, numbers theory, ideas about sound waves, set theory, string theory, and any number of radical theories such as Xeno's infamous debate about halving the distance traveled to means you never reach your goal. It is debates on issues like these that make the seemingly positivist mathematical studies seem almost postmodern. Debate can help make theories and ideas connect to implications, one of the core values of debate in the mathematics classroom.

Consider the areas of controversial study whose foundation is mathematics – biology, genetic engineering, code breaking, physics, computer science, and chemistry (to name a few). It is important that rising mathematicians be familiar with the ethical and power-related implications that their work can engender. Debates can help to bring out the ramifications of mathematical exploration, pointing to the impact that mathematical advances can have on the world.

Sample debate topics for mathematics

Does mathematics have metaphysical meaning?

Does formalism represent all mathematical theory?

Mathematics is an art form.

Ptolemy was framed.

Mathematics represents absolute truth.

More advanced mathematics courses should be required in our schools.

Calculators should not be allowed in the mathematics classroom.

Mathematicians should be held responsible for the evil that is done because of their advances.

Sample debate format for mathematics

Consider a debate on the topic "Should mathematicians be held responsible for evil that is done because of their advances?" Consider the role of advanced mathematicians at IBM, the American computer giant. Their successful creation of the computer was fundamental to the ability of the Nazi regime to round up and exterminate innocent people during the Holocaust. Or the example of the American scientists who created atomic bombs whose horrific implications still hangs over our heads. This debate centers on the question of responsibility – and the examples abound. The other side of this debate might be presented as whether or not mathematicians should be given credit for the positive work that they do. Should Einstein get credit for his discoveries? Another approach might be to argue that the use of mathematics should be carefully distinguished from the theoretical exploration of mathematical ideas. That no mathematician should be held responsible for the ideas that flow from his or her brain – that this freedom to create ideas unfettered is at the root of new mathematical discovery.

The kind of debate that works most effectively is a parliamentary debate with lots of audience involvement, perhaps with three people on each side and a long period of audience questions. It might also be possible to have a three-sided debate on this topic, with one side arguing that mathematicians should have no responsibility for what happens because of their discoveries, a second side arguing that mathematicians should be

held responsible for evil that they perceive might happen, and a third side holding that mathematicians should be held responsible for any evil that emerges from their work.

CONCLUSION

As with every other discipline, mathematics teachers can use the flexible nature of debates as an important part of their curriculum. Using spontaneous debates (SPAR) to encourage participation and to pique interest on the first days of class, or some form of debate as final projects to involve students in research about famous mathematical theorems, they must be fitted to your classroom needs. This section is only a brief introduction to the possibilities of debate in the mathematics classroom, but we urge you to consider and explore the many possibilities of debate.

MEDIA STUDIES

Media studies and debate

Media studies are an increasingly popular area in both secondary schools and universities. The social reality of the 21st century and the importance of media in it are the driving forces behind this increase in popularity. The media barrage from print, radio, television, Internet, cable, satellite connections, and wireless devices bathe us in a constant pulse of information. These messages have purposeful and directed agendas that require every citizen to be a more critical listener. With the expansion of new media it is becoming easier for every citizen not to participate in online meetings and to become a broadcaster on a global stage. Every citizen needs to learn how to become an advocate. These challenges enhance the importance of media studies in the curriculum, but they are also the forces that most call for debate instruction to sharpen critical listening and advocacy skills.

Why debate is valuable to media studies classes

Media studies and debating have important methods and goals in common, which suggest that integrating the two in the classroom could be

quite productive. The value of debate in the classroom will be described below.

First, debate and media studies promote active criticism by individuals. Citizens need to be able to decode media messages to find flaws and weaknesses. In a debate students must decode the messages of the opposing team and do just that – locate weaknesses and areas of counterargument. Debate is as much about listening as it is anything else. Debaters must be able to listen not just to determine what the message is, but be able to state what's wrong about that message. This sort of listening can be used when we are exposed to media messages.

Robert McChesney, a professor in the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, in his book Rich Media, Poor Democracy, outlined the stakes of a society that allows media to remain an unquestioned variable.

> At present, however, and for generations, the control and structure of the media industries has been decidedly off-limits as a subject in U.S. political debate. So long as that holds true, it is difficult to imagine any permanent qualitative change for the better in the U.S. media system. And without media reform, the prospects for making the United States a more egalitarian, self-governing, and humane society seem to dim to the point of nonexistence (281).

Second, debate is an excellent forum for discussing media issues. There are very few policy or value absolutes in media studies issues, and quite often, there are strong positions on several sides of an issue. Enduring issues such as freedom of expression, responsibility for mass communication, access to communications opportunities, institutional control of communications, and the standards of content evaluation are as old as communication itself, yet are still vibrant today, with importance enhanced by the pervasive nature of media content delivery. These issues can be framed as topics for students to debate. The issues related to the specific subject matter can be used to frame the topics. We urge teachers to draft their own topics, using the ones we provide as guidelines.

Third, debating is often an exercise in the evaluation of sources. The speakers in the debate act as sources, but they often use material and testimony from other sources. The debater quickly learns to analyze the source of critical evidence in any debate, and evaluate its credibility based on the argument being made and the issues being discussed. Just as students learn to evaluate the credibility of power company executives in testimony about the environmental effects of their activities, so the student also learns to apply this process to media use, whether he or she is evaluating a product testimonial or questioning why a given "talking head" on television is given credibility. Debate helps students resolve conflicts of experts, which is often what they see in the media.

Sample debate topics for media studies classes

Modern television has sacrificed quality for entertainment.

Television is more significant than the computer.

Censorship of the news media can be justified.

Art censorship should never be allowed.

Censorship is unacceptable.

Media domination by large corporations is undesirable.

Lack of Internet access threatens to create a "digital divide" between rich and poor.

Lack of Internet access threatens to create a "digital divide" between North and South.

Privacy protection for media celebrities should be increased.

Media violence contributes to violence in society.

Television is dead.

The media should provide equal time for opposing ideas.

Public access television is a failed experiment.

Reading is more productive than television viewing.

Modern media is what brought down communism.

Too much time on the Internet creates passivity.

Television is guilty of creating a commodity culture.

The merger of children's products and television programs is unfortunate.

Media portrayal of minority groups has been harmful.

Televised religious programming has caused a decline in personal religious event attendance.

All electronic media should be nationalized and noncommercial.

Sample debate formats for media studies classes

There are a variety of ways in which debate can be used in the media studies classroom. Because this is a new and vibrant field, many teachers are now developing an approach of their own to present this material, and we encourage you to consider integrating debates into your pedagogy. Here are some ways to accomplish this:

First, have the class create formal debates on enduring media issues. Free expression, aesthetics, content controls, and other issues can be brought to life in a team format for a forty- to fifty-minute debate to illustrate these issues. Various topics that illustrate the course work can be staged throughout the term, with each student participating at least once.

Second, hold debates about the proposals of various media critics. It is easy to find fault with media institutions and affairs, but far more difficult to suggest specific proposals. Major media critics are often making proposals, such as abolishing television, nationalizing the electronic media, or ending media advertising. These proposals are ripe areas for a fruitful discussion about media issues present and future. Because there is usually a problem but the solution is less than perfect, the process is likely to reveal to students that policy goals are often difficult to achieve.

Third, debate about competing media. Each media brings a different set of strengths and weaknesses, and a debate comparing them can be very useful, especially at an introductory level. For example, much is made of the benefits of reading as opposed to watching television, yet they have different strengths and weaknesses. These debates can be spontaneous and do not require considerable preparation, although some warning and ground rules might be useful. Contrast news sources from newspapers, radio, television, and the Internet. Contrast entertainment sources from reading, radio, television, videotape, and the Internet.

Fourth, stage programs to better understand how media news programming works. Choose a format found in the media that seems appropriate for analysis, and have students reenact that program format using

a different issue. Then, have the participants and the audience talk about what the "rules" were that they learned by modeling that format. This exercise allows students to better understand how programming concepts directly influence content.

CONCLUSION

A media study is a rewarding area to work with, because of its relevance and vibrancy, and also because we are often familiar with how the media works. Debating is a way to add excitement to the field. Through personal and critical engagement, debates help students better learn about the concepts in this field.

MULTICULTURALISM

Debate and multiculturalism

While 'multicultural' is an inexact category, it represents a useful grouping of a number of different courses that might be addressed in this section. These courses would include secondary school classes in comparative and world cultures, and related titles, as well as college level courses in race and culture, cultural diversity, and introduction to multicultural studies. Many universities now require for all students courses or seminars about the basic issues of multiculturalism. In many instances these courses are an attempt to diversify curricula and move away from the older and less global concepts. In this sense debate as an exciting classroom tool can be extremely useful.

Why debate is valuable to multiculturalism classes

Debate is useful both as a learning method and as a channel for discussion of multicultural issues. There are specific things about the multicultural classroom that make debating easy, relevant, and enjoyable.

First, multicultural ideas are a vital part of many of the major issues that are debated in almost any forum. Multicultural issues such as self-determination, civil rights, ethnic conflicts, immigration, refugee movements, discrimination, and economic justice form the core of issues that

are today's major topics of discussion. In a vast number of debates multicultural training will be essential to a strong performance.

Second, debating allows students to take different perspectives. Many of the issues that come up in the study of multiculturalism are related to how individuals construct the "other," a position we are rarely called on to assume. Through debate activities students can develop an ability to operate "inside" the perspectives of other peoples and other groups. Many of the ethnic conflicts students read about or hear about do not make sense until they are understood, from the perspectives of those involved. While a simple debate cannot fully train us in how things are seen by others, it is a useful beginning to that process that students seem to enjoy and appreciate.

Third, debating trains students to be advocates. Multicultural issues are extremely important, and there too often seems to be a shortage of responsible advocates. We have found debate to be extremely empowering for people who have previously felt they lacked a "voice" to express their hopes, feelings, and ideas. Met on an empathic common ground of argument, people find it is possible to build bridges to one another through communication. Debaters are better able to become advocates, opinion leaders, and consciousness raisers. Perhaps more importantly, many students who are in positions of privilege find themselves engaging in ideas of multiculturalism on a much deeper level when they are debating, because the responsibility of making arguments that previously seemed irrelevant.

Fourth, debate allows students to make a balanced judgment about multicultural issues. In many instances discussions of multicultural issues are too one-way, either in presenting material to those who already agree, or mocking the prospect of productive multiculturalism to those who already are opposed to it. Debate forces at least two sides of the issues to be dealt with in an open, public, and logical forum. Students must find the best issues to raise for each side of the topics developed, and then compare them. Debate brings a more balanced discussion of issues than one finds in many forums for multicultural issues.

Sample debate topics for multiculturalism classes

Students who do not speak the dominant language should be offered

bilingual education.

Immigration regulations in our country need to be tightened.

Our nation should have one official national language.

The concept of race is an outdated social construction.

America should offer reparations to Native Americans.

Western nations should offer reparations to Africans for slavery.

Class is more important than race.

Some moral values transcend culture.

In 1850 USA: Slavery should be abolished.

Palestinians vs. Israelis: Jerusalem should be the capital of a new Palestinian nation.

The emerging "clash of civilizations" will be a dark moment for human beings.

We should oppose the practice of female circumcision in Africa.

We should increase protections against racial discrimination in the workplace.

We should avoid the use of racial categories whenever possible.

Recent ethnic violence in Africa is a legacy of colonialism.

University curricula need to be significantly changed to reflect a multicultural global reality.

ALSO: See many of the topics listed in the "Religion" section below.

Sample debate formats for multiculturalism classes

There are a number of debate formats that can be used to fit multicultural classroom goals and subject matter.

First, ask students to debate why it is necessary to study multiculturalism. In many instances this is a required class, and issues may need to be confronted early in the term. We suggest a public assembly format or dividing the class into two different groups and then staging a lively discussion about whether the class should be taken.

Second, engage students in a debate between two ethnic groups in conflict. Assign teams to represent sides that they normally would not speak for (such as ethnic groups they do not belong to) and then hold a debate about one of the central issues in their conflict. The group that seems to have the upper hand in the conflict could be given the negative side, so

that the less dominant group can frame the debate through the presentation of their affirmative case. Students will need an opportunity to research the background for this conflict and learn about those they will represent. It is important to remember that they are not "play acting" as members of that ethnic group, but should work to represent the group's interests.

Third, ask students to debate the "clash of civilizations." Following along the theme of Samuel Huntington's article "The Clash of Civilizations," the debate would be about whether we should take an optimistic or pessimistic view of the global interactions of major cultures. The affirmative could argue that things would go very poorly, with increased ethnic tensions, oppression, and intolerance. The negative could argue the opposite, that we will overcome difficulties and learn to create a more tolerant and peaceful world. Other important authors who might point toward exciting debate topics are the postcolonialist theorists like Edward Said and Guyatri Spivak. Both argue that the nature of our current conceptions of culture is defined in order to commit violence and to justify oppression in other nations. There is, of course, no one certain right answer in this debate, but it is an excellent vehicle for exploring multicultural issues and our perspectives on the subject.

Fourth, stage a debate about a current multicultural issue. Students would not play roles but would be themselves. Such debates could be one-on-one or team events of any length. Students should be assigned their topic and side well in advance so they can prepare. There could be different topics or one fairly broad topic that would be debated repeatedly, with each debate exploring a somewhat different issue.

Fifth, stage a debate set in a specific place and time. Provide students with historical background materials and biographies of the major figures to take part in the debate and then act out the disagreement in their own way. A debate set in 1850 USA about the abolition of slavery, a debate set in the early 20th century UK about voting rights for women, a debate set in post-World War II Saudi Arabia about driving or voting rights for women, or a debate set in 1950s Africa about independence for European colonies would be interesting and revealing. Students can use such debates as a way to understand how multicultural issues were considered in history.

CONCLUSION

We believe that the problems and misunderstandings of society need to be subjected to a respectful, logical, and open discussion through debating. The method and the subject matter seem well matched to provide deeper understanding of the issues.

PHILOSOPHY

The historical connections between debate and philosophy are long-standing. Ancient Greek and Roman philosophers are the historical antecedents for the methods of debate. Confucius and Chinese philosophers wrote famous treatises that point to debate as a valuable method of learning. The very clash of ideas has its roots in philosophy. Thinkers ask the tough questions of who we are, why we are here, and the nature of our existence that are all vital areas for debate. There is a natural connection between this method and this discipline.

Why debate is valuable for the philosophy class

One essential reason for including debate in the philosophy class is a pedagogical one. Philosophy is difficult to teach! Like many of the most important areas of study, it is hard to get students excited about philosophy. Marshall Gregory, a professor of education and pedagogy at Marshall University, reminds us of the difficulty in conveying excitement about difficult texts.

> It is important for teachers to remember that great texts, fine art, and liberating topics are not automatically or transparently great, fine, and liberating to most students. (In all honesty, this goes for most teachers as well.) Just like our students now, merely coming into the presence of great art or great books or lofty topics did not fire most of our own interests when we were students. More likely than not, our interests were fired by the example of a teacher who seemed filled, somehow, with a special kind of life because of his or her love of a particular subject or discipline. As I look back, I real-

> ize that one commonality shared by all my favorite teachers is the way they seemed filled and animated by presences; by Jane Austen's power of language, by Kant's depth of thought, by Wollstonecraft's powerful arguments about the education of women, by the spirit of Bach's music, by whatever. In addition, I found that the larger life these presences gave my teachers was in itself compelling to me. I was drawn to this larger life the way iron filings are drawn to a magnet. Once there, I found myself delightfully attracted, pleasurably bonded.

As Marshall points out, it is difficult to get students excited about topics that seem extraneous to their lives. Yet through debate, we can excite them to see the value in studying seemingly insignificant topics. The pursuit of knowledge can be thrilling, the spark that Marshall points to can flow through your classroom because the students will be engaged with the subject matter. Rather than a lecture that seems irrelevant, student participation in actualizing of the knowledge will create new expectations, as students will be driven to listen, to be engaged with the subject matter.

Another important reason debate is valuable to the philosophy class is that the activities mesh well with the topics of the class. The study of being, of time, of how we know, and how we understand, the explorations of consciousness, metaphysics, and the nature of ethics and nature are all topics that lend themselves to a dialogue between informed advocates. It is through debate between philosophers that major changes in the perceptions of the world are created. Debates about philosophy can teach students about the subjects of the class, show the students knowledge, and introduce these topics.

Debate topics for philosophy classes

Knowledge must come before action.
Nature is more important than nurture.
Nietzsche was the last metaphysician.
Postmodernism is bankrupt.
The state of being is in flux

God is dead.
Religion is real philosophy.
"I think, therefore I am" (Descartes).
We should abandon logical positivism.
We should embrace the philosophy of X.
Power is fluid.
Morality is in the eye of the beholder.
Ethics are first philosophy (Levinas).

Sample debate formats for philosophy classes

Because there are so many varieties of philosophy instruction, it is difficult to point to a single debate format that benefits students. Instead, we believe that the format and teaching method must be flexible to fit into your curriculum. The example given in this section is specific to a particular class and topic.

Imagine that you are teaching a western philosophy class, tracing the roots of traditional philosophy from the Egyptians to John Dewey. During a section about the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, the students are having a difficult time understanding his core arguments because they cannot imagine a situation where commonsense morality might be questionable. Therefore, you decide to have a public forum debate about this question and assign one half of the class to think of justifiable moral stances and the other side to consider examples of moral stances whose utility is crippled by inflexibility.

The students begin the debate with simple issues of stealing and being hungry, quickly moving to examples of abortion and euthanasia. While the examples being raised are excellent, and the class is getting excited about the topic, the skills of the debater show through when your students begin not only to provide their own examples to support their side, but also to attack their opponents examples. One student might take issue with the supposedly 'rock solid' moral stance "thou shalt not kill," arguing that in certain situations killing might be justified (euthanasia, during war, to save the greater good, etc).

Through this format, students can begin to see the flexible nature of morality, one of the roots of Nietzsche's criticism. Some pieces of moral-

ity might be seen as examples of judgment that are applied unequally (moral opposition to nudity in pornography and in high art). Students might explore Nietzsche's ideas that morality is self-serving, used to justify particular preferences rather than the absolutes they seem to be.

You might need to make these connections in a post-debate dialogue, but using debates, students will begin to envision how arguments and ideas work and are created. It is in this process that new knowledge emerges.

CONCLUSION

Whether it is a heated spontaneous debate about the meaning of postmodernism or a well-researched role-playing debate about the Copernican revolution, debates provide a method of teaching philosophy that encourages students to become involved in the subject matter and better convey information about the discipline.

RELIGION

Religion and debate

At first religion and debate may seem to be an odd pairing. Usually it is not productive to debate with people about their religious beliefs, even though evangelism of various sorts has been going on as long as human civilization has. Religious opinions are firmly rooted in the cognitive processes of individuals, framing the way in which they see their lives. Religion deals with spiritual matters, often seen as incompatible with logic. Issues of "faith" can transcend issues of "logic" for religious persons. However, religion and spirituality are of extreme importance to many, many people. We do not intend to provide guidelines for how debate can be used to change the religious beliefs of individuals; rather, how debate can be used to help individuals learn about religion and religious issues.

Why debate is valuable to religion classes

Debate can play a meaningful and productive role in religion classes, because religion is often a topic of argument and debate. Debate can also help individuals understand various religious beliefs, especially those they

do not hold, for the following reasons:

First, religion is a common topic of informal debate, and a common topic of discussion among students as they leave a home environment. At school they come into contact with students from different religious backgrounds. Many a late night dormitory discussion has centered on religious issues and disagreements about them. Students are curious about how other people can have different religious beliefs when their own seem too obvious for them. Debate in the religion classroom can use this already established reality to improve instruction about religion.

Second, there are many traditions of debate within various religions. The Jewish faith promotes scholarly study of sacred texts and debate about their interpretation as a rich part of its intellectual tradition. Tibetan Buddhism also stresses the practice of debate as essential for devotees.

Consider the introduction to the book *Torah Studies* by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher rabbi. Famous for his extensive and intense talks, the author produced a text filled with complicated debates about interpretation and meaning of the Torah. The translator, Jonathan Sacks, identifies the relation to debate in his introduction:

> To hear or read a talk of the Lubavitcher rebbe is to undertake a journey. We are challenged and forced to move: where we stand at the end is not where we were at the beginning. Time and again a sicha will be set in motion by a seemingly microscopic tension—a question on a comment by Rashi, perhaps, or a problem in understanding a halakhah, a practical provision of Jewish law. Once in motion, however, the argument leads us into fresh perspectives, provisional answers and new questions, until we climb rung by rung to the most elevated of vantage points. From here, as we survey the ground beneath us in its widest of contexts, the initial question is not only resolved but also revealed as the starting point of a major spiritual search (iv).

In Tibetan Buddhism there is a practice of offering arguments and debating about them as both an educational and meditative practice. In

America many college debating societies in the 18th and 19th centuries grew out of the need to more fully prepare students for careers in the Christian ministries of the time. In ancient China and India there are mysteries of the Buddha that are regularly used as topics for debate. In modern America many devoutly Christian universities emphasize debating because they believe such skills are an important part of their ultimate evangelistic mission. These are rich traditions that can be explored within the religion classroom.

Third, debate gives insight into religion by comparing different modes of decision making. Kenneth Burke's concept of gaining perspective on something through the examination of incongruities is relevant here. We understand more about the concept of life by better understanding death, for example. In the case of religion a logical discussion of issues regularly assigned to the realm of nonlogical faith can be highly illuminating. Students can learn about faith by applying logic to it, just as they can learn about logic by understanding the role of faith in human thinking.

Fourth, students can learn about religion through debate by assuming a certain set of religious beliefs. As with many debate experiences, we learn about our own convictions by examining contrasting and disagreeing convictions. When we "walk a mile" in the shoes of another, we better understand the other's situation and perspective. By asking a Christian and a Buddhist to reverse roles and engage in a debate of Christianity vs. Buddhism, we create real learning opportunities. William E. Paden, a professor of religion at the University of Vermont, argued that the recognition of a relative view of another person's idea of faith is a fundamental move of acknowledgment of that person's humanity (132-3). Debate can help bring out that kind of respectful criticism and exploration, as well as a new understanding to the study of religion.

Debate has an illuminative power that is flexible and broadly applicable in many fields. Religion is no exception to this maxim.

Sample debate topics for religion classes

Ecumenical movements that attempt to bring religions together are ill advised.

God does not exist and never has.

The institution of religion has, throughout history, done more harm than good.

The similarity in many religions suggests a common religious reality.

X person is guilty of violating the tenets of Y religion (Galileo vs. Catholicism, Salman Rushdi vs. Iranian Islam, Darwin vs. Fundamentalist Christianity, etc.).

Human beings create religions to meet their own needs.

The right to religious practice is more important than other rights (Santeria animal sacrifice vs. animal rights, Rastafarian ganja smoking vs. antidrug laws, Catholic communion vs. anti-alcohol laws, polygamy vs. bigamy laws, religions that violate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Native American Church use of peyote vs. antidrug laws, Native American beliefs in not disturbing burial grounds vs. archeological scientific exercises, etc.).

Science is more important now than religion.

Science and technology have become our new religion.

Religion is the opiate of the people.

Emile Durkheim was right.

Rudolph Otto was right.

Religion should be individual, not institutional.

God can prevent evil, but doesn't.

The right to die is the ultimate personal freedom.

Activism in politics by religious groups harms the political process.

Divorce is compatible with Christianity.

Morality is separable from religion.

The inebriate is not accountable to God for the crimes he commits while intoxicated.

There is no confusion between the teachings of geology and the Holy Bible.

We would all be better off if we were atheists.

Sample debate formats for religion classes

There are many ways debate can be used in the religion classroom. The topics listed refer to themes that can be adapted to a specific subject being studied. Formats can be modified so that debating fits well within

the time constraints of the class, the subject matter, and the students' interests.

As with all debates, take special care to assure that students are not offended by the debates or asked to do anything objectionable. All religious beliefs must be treated with respect, even when they are being rigorously criticized. The teacher may encourage students to meet with them if they feel uncomfortable about the subject they are debating. In fact, some students may hold religious beliefs that do not allow them to take part in some of the proposed debate formats. While not the first time most teachers of religion have encountered these concerns, mention them to advise caution and care.

First, encourage students to debate about the advisability of studying religion, a useful exercise for an introductory class. Stage the debate using a public assembly format or between the class divided into two different sides. This format can help students understand the role and importance that religion plays in human existence. It can also help them understand the issues of individual and social responsibility, which are often a part of many different religions.

Second, engage students in debates about the meta-issues that surround religion, such as the existence of God, the need to bring religions together into a common spiritual belief, and the institutional vs. personal orientation of religions. These topics can be used to explore broad issues that transcend many major religions, and can be staged as on-going debates, or through a number of different debates on related topics. This process will involve students as well as offer them a broader perspective on religion than they would usually get in a classroom.

Third, recreate important historical religious trials by providing students with the facts of a given case, a biography of the accused, and background on the religious tradition raising the charge. This event might be staged over several class periods so that the subject is covered in proper detail. Students also need time for preparation and research. Ask class members to serve as jury, judge, defense, prosecution, and witnesses. Witnesses and other actors would be asked to play the role assigned to them. Students will learn about the historical era and religion's role by getting inside of that particular faith and understanding the arguments

and ideas used to support the charges and those used in defense.

Fourth, stage debates between different religions, particularly relevant to comparative religion classes. Ask the debaters to make arguments to support their assigned religious belief and indict the opposing religious belief. Related religious belief can be contrasted this way as well, such as Catholic vs. Orthodox, Sunni vs. Shi'a, Indian vs. Japanese Buddhism, and others. Students can use these debates as a way to demonstrate their mastery of the material or as a term project. It is important to emphasize that these debates are not designed to arrive at a verdict of which religion is better; rather, they are vehicles to explore these religions. It may be advisable not to have judges or the audience vote for a winner, but simply assign quality ratings to the debaters based on their performance.

CONCLUSION

Although religion can be a matter of strong personal conviction, debate can offer a method for understanding the subject and issues that create controversy. The religion classroom is a good setting for the open exploration of issues relating to specific religions or religious experience in general. When it is used with sensitivity and an open mind, debating in the religion classroom can illuminate similarities and differences of religious faith.

SCIENCE

Science and debate

Science would not develop or mature without debate. New information jostles old theories, new theories are developed and critiqued, accepted and agreed on, and then the process begins again. Each experiment is a logical attempt to demonstrate or disprove a given hypothesis. That proof may not always obtain, but the learning process continues throughout.

At first glance, one might think that debate and science have so little in common that this section would be fairly brief. We believe the opposite to be the case. Science as method and study merges well with debate and open critical discourse, inviting us to make a decision.

Why debate is valuable to science classes

There are many of reasons why debate is compatible with the study of science. This brief list below describes the successful use of debating in the science classroom.

First, both science and debate are conducted in public. The scientific process calls for public exchange of information and open scholarly communication. When new scientific ideas challenge old ones, the process rarely takes place in private or confidential circles, but in journals, symposia, and even scholarly staged debates. Although the public may not have a high level of specific scientific knowledge, they are nevertheless extremely interested in the issues and applications of science, thus empowering the media to bring scientific issues to their attention. This publicity empowers the public to ask questions of the scientific community.

Second, science and debate are investigative. The process of debate invites people to investigate a field to discover the issues and develop proofs not unlike science. The process of investigation, discovery, and proof is similar. Students who wish to become either scientists or debaters need to learn the skills of data acquisition, issue discovery, and decision making based on the data and the issues.

Third, science and debate are critical exercises. Just as the debater asks critical questions of opposing advocates in order to develop arguments against them, the scientist is constantly asking critical questions in an attempt to make new discoveries. Theories, explanations, and findings are acceptable only if they survive strict critical scrutiny. Social and personal associations have, again and again, been irrelevant to a critical search for what might be accepted as scientific truth. Debaters are anxious to be critical because it is how they gain distinction, just as scientists are anxious to be critical because it allows them to gain both new insights and distinction. Debate is also an important tool for questioning scientists about their own power and position in society. Debate can help to foster the self-criticism that provides increased ethical dialogue about the power and nature of science.

Fourth, science and debate are exercises of repetition. Experiments are replicated in order to verify results as well as to clarify issues. Some experiments support existing findings, and some do not. The reason that

experiments are replicated is because the results might be different, which makes a big difference to the scientist. In debate this repetition and replication is an equally important way in which students learn and develop. A debate is a sort of argument laboratory in which ideas and logic are tested and re-tested. Often the results are different, but learning still takes place, just as a study that fails to replicate a hypothesis always tells us something important about either the study or the hypothesis.

Debate and science have so much in common that there are many reasons that a cross-fertilization of these two in the classroom is productive.

Sample debate topics for science classes

Scientists have moral responsibility for their discoveries.

The theory "X" should be rejected.

This proposed experiment should be approved.

There has been too much reliance on the scientific method.

Our character will be insufficient for managing our scientific discoveries.

This field of scientific study should not be required in secondary schools.

The viewpoints of "X-critic of the field" should be taken seriously.

Science has triumphed over religion.

A free market best promotes scientific advances.

Scientific advances create as many losers as winners.

The scientific discovery of X was regrettable.

Animal experimentation is scientifically unreliable.

Animal experimentation is ethically bankrupt.

Human cloning is ethically unacceptable.

Genetically engineered crops should be unregulated.

We should label genetically engineered food.

Country X has the greatest scientific legacy.

Science should not be held responsible for Nazi scientific discoveries.

The process of institutional review should be abandoned,

Gaining consent from test subjects is unnecessary.

Sample debate formats for science classes

The use of debates within the science classroom will, of course, depend on the specific area and level of study as well as the class's goals. Teachers should use debates to assist students in reaching those goals. Within these constraints debate can be used in a science classroom in a number of different ways.

First, ask students to debate about whether any field of science is worthy of their study. Many students are first introduced to scientific study in a "required" class. Too often students view science study as an unnecessarily challenging exercise in mastering discrete data that they do not perceive as directly relevant to them. In this example, introductory students would be encouraged to debate with the instructor or each other to come up with reasons why this class should not be required as well as justifications for the requirement. A public assembly format or dividing the class into two teams might be advisable for this exercise. This simple introductory technique involves students actively in saying what many of them are thinking, and frames the reasons to study this particular subject. This exercise sets the stage for the students' active involvement in science, not the passive memorization that many areas of scientific instruction require.

Second, ask to debate specific scientific theories. Have the affirmative present and defend a theory against a negative team, or an affirmative team might present a case against a popular theory. Whether it is the theory of evolution or the theory of continental drift, the theory behind the extinction of the dinosaurs, or any other scientific theory that can be challenged, a theory can be usefully examined within a debate format.

Third, hold debates to frame the "big issues" found in any field of scientific discovery. These "big issues" can be thought of as enduring or current areas of controversy in a field. Usually the affirmative provides the minority viewpoint on any of these "big issues," and sets the stage for the debate by making a case against the majority viewpoint.

Fourth, hold debates to evaluate specific experimental designs. Quite often students are asked to design their own experiments. They can present their proposal for an experiment in some detail, and then allow other students or the instructor to criticize their proposal. Proponents of

that design would have to respond to this criticism, either with a defense or an adjustment of their methods. This kind of debate requires prior disclosure by proponents of the experiment so that the criticism offered is substantive and useful. Prior disclosure need not be a lengthy process. All can participate either as proponents or critics or both. The result will be a much better sense of how to construct experiments and prepare for future criticisms.

Fifth, use debates to follow newsworthy scientific issues. Most newsworthy areas of scientific concern are controversial and have different perspectives and viewpoints. The areas selected for debate are relevant to the subject and then assigned to students as debate topics, which can include human bioengineering, climate manipulation, the fight against illness and disease, recent scientific discoveries about the past, or DNA markers as criminal evidence. This practice not only familiarizes students with these controversial areas, but also indicates to them the relevance and immediacy of science as part of our evolving world.

Sixth, ask students to debate about the minority voices found in science. Each field has qualified and published scientists who tend to see things a bit differently from the majority in the field. These views can be very useful to explore, not because they are correct, but because we need to understand the arguments against what we believe in order to fully understand what and why we hold the beliefs we do. Students can read one of these minority theorists, and then develop a debate based on this perspective. This practice demonstrates to students that even in the sciences, knowledge is a dynamic and evolving thing, not something set in stone.

Seventh, engage students in debates about issues of science set in a specific historical period, or involve historical figures. For example, hold a debate about Darwin's theory of evolution as staged in the late 19th century. The affirmative team forwards Darwin's approach, while the negative team uses the arguments offered by Darwin's critics at the time. Likewise, hold a debate between Copernicus and Ptolemy about the basic design of the solar system. Such a solar system debate might also be staged in the time of Galileo and involve Galileo on one side and the Catholic Church on the other. Enact these debates not as if they were taking place

now, but as if they were taking place in a given historical period. You'll need to provide appropriate background materials as well as biographies of any historical persons represented in these debates. Such debates help people understand the historical context of science and give them a better understanding of how scientific disputes are carried on today.

Eighth, scrutinize the scientific method itself. The scientific method has contributed much to our current world, but it is not unassailable. As the basis for social and personal action it has been strongly criticized by postmodern theorists as well as by feminist and majority world critics. In this debate the affirmative, in the role of these theorists, could present a critique of the scientific method that states it is overemphasized. This exercise helps bring to the surface the most basic assumptions of the scientific method and allows students to explore them. As we noted, debate is a method for students to explore and develop new issues and ideas; this exercise is certainly an example of this.

Ninth, ask students to debate the ethical status of science in our society. The very power that scientific announcements have in formulating the public consciousness suggests that perhaps we take a careful look at the making of science. By examining the language, ideas, and meaning of science in society, students can become more ethical and reflexive scientists, aware of the meaning of their pronouncements and arguments to the populace. More importantly, ethical issues of research, and experimentation ranging from that done on the animal to issues of human consent, can be debated. These debates provide the reasons why an ethical lens always needs to be cast upon scientific exploration.

CONCLUSION

Too often the science classroom is seen as boring, passive, and irrelevant. Through one or more of these debate techniques science instruction better achieves the goal of imparting information and dispels these stereotypes by showing students that scientific activity is vibrant, alive, accessible, and personally relevant. Just as students often love the experiments and lab work associated with science study, so they will come to love debates as a part of science study as well.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Social services and debate

The social services encompass a huge and growing field, the focus of which is to improve the quality of life for specific individuals, often individuals in need of assistance. This field's critical processes for success include communication, problem solving, and the resolution of disagreements. Debating these areas provides students with useful experience.

Why debate is valuable to social services classes

Social services students can build many skills through their involvement in debate. While debate's general critical-thinking skills are useful to all students, including those in the social services, there are several areas where the social services merge productively with debating.

First, communication skills are an important part of work in the social services. Social services providers need to engage in critical and problem solving communication sessions with a variety of clients who have varying communication styles. These events often involve information gathering, analysis of situations and information, problem solving, and planning for future action. Social services providers also engage in active communication with their peers about the appropriate course of action for clients and programs. Social services providers are also required at times to engage in formal presentations for administrative or public relations reasons. Debating can sharpen skills that are necessary in all these communication settings.

Second, social services work can involve the resolution of disagreements. Social services providers may disagree with clients about policies, practices, or behaviors. Disagreement may also take place among social services providers acting together on a team. These providers also need to interact with administrators, funding organizations, or government officials to justify and analyze policies and behaviors. In all of these instances the judgment, evaluation, and presentation skills promoted by debating can be extremely useful.

Third, it is often useful for social services providers to understand the differing perspectives of those involved. Clients have distinct and often

unique perspectives on the social services transaction. Members of the public, social services organization administration, and related government bodies also have unique perspectives that the social services provider needs to understand. Debating allows social services providers to assume these roles in critical communication events, and begin to understand more of what it is like to be a client, an administrator, a government official, or a concerned member of the public. Debating allows the student to assume these roles in critical communication incidents to better empathize with those with whom they will be working.

Fourth, social services providers engage in many examples of case building. Individual cases need to be researched, documented, and understood in a logical way to deliver better services. The information and history of these cases needs to be organized in a logical way so that they can be analyzed. Quite often such cases provide examples of problems that need to be addressed. Likewise, social services providers are often called on to "make a case" for the course of action and procedures followed. Social services providers may also be asked to "make a case" for their programs as they exist or as planned for change and reform. In all of these instances the skills students learn from debating building their own logical "cases" will assist them later in performing their function as social services providers.

Sample debate topics for social services classes

Basic medical care is a privilege, not a right.

Would-be parents should be licensed before having children.

We should listen to the leading critics of our field.

"Helping" relationships often end up being relationships of social control.

All social service interventions in our field must be preceded by the permission of the client.

Social services should be broadly deinstitutionalized.

The use of behavior modifying drugs should be severely limited.

Radical reforms should be implemented in our field.

All social services interventions should be guided by a team approach.

Social services bureaucracy should be streamlined to improve client services.

Reforms should be adopted to improve the job satisfaction of social services providers.

Certification standards for social services providers should be strengthened.

The professionalization of social services has gone too far.

Clients have a right to eccentric individuality unless it threatens their physical safety.

Mental health professionals do more harm than good.

The current service regimen for client X should be changed.

The social services provider in case X has acted negligently.

Sample debate formats for social services classes

A wide variety of formats can be used for debates in social services classes. You may wish to consider a number of thematic approaches within these topics and formats.

First, introduce role-playing into the debate formats. Place students into any number of debate situations but in roles they would normally not occupy. Students can represent clients, a specific client, administrators, public service agencies, or citizens investigating the provision of social services. Making arguments and critically analyzing positions from the perspective of another person assists students in understanding and empathizing with those they will be working with. Such roles might include a client who opposes receiving certain kinds of services or treatments, a social services provider peer who disagrees with the decisions of other social services providers, an administrator who seeks to improve or economize on service delivery, or citizens demanding more and better services for less money. Provide students with descriptions of the roles they will be playing, including a short biography of the person they are impersonating.

Second, model debates after real adversarial situations likely to arise in the social services context. Design debates to allow students to explore these situations long before they ever arise in real casework. Several different adversarial situations might arise in providing social services, such as conflicts about what is to be done between the state and the client or the client and the social services provider, among social services providers who favor different approaches, between social services

providers and administrators or peer review organizations who challenge decisions, between competing advocates of different models of social services provision, or between social services providers and bureaucratic systems. All of these situations can be modeled in a debate so those students prepare for adversarial situations that will arise. The debates can be one-on-one and rather short for client vs. provider debates, a bit longer for debates between services providers, and fairly substantial when defending provider decisions and evaluating programs.

Third, focus debates on the nature and pitfalls of "helping" relationships. At the foundation of social services is the notion that professionals in the field can give substantial "help" to those who are in "need." This role can often create a sense of hierarchy and superiority, where the provider knows far more than the person who needs services and enacts a top model of communication and decisions that can be detrimental. In some situations the needs of the provider can overshadow the needs of the client, creating working services bureaucracies but not optimizing the assistance given to clients. "Helping" can also be seen as a form of "control" in some situations. Questions of individual autonomy vs. individual well-being and social productivity are often at issue here. Debates can help students explore when "help" becomes "control" and when the services provide "help" to the service program itself and to society, but not necessarily to the individual client. Consider a debate about the implications of labeling various individuals who need help with disabilities. Students might argue that this kind of labeling can cause negative outcomes. The role of social services providers as "professionals" can also complicate this situation. Debates about the nature of helping, as well as client control, autonomy, and responsibility to the community, can help clarify these issues and better prepare students for a more productive professional life.

Fourth, focus debates on the ideas and proposals of leading critics of a particular social services area. Understanding the arguments of critics of a given field can help students better understand that field and the issues at stake there. For example, some critics (Thomas Szaz) question the role of modern mental health services, arguing that they create dependency and violate personal autonomy. Other critics (Michel Foucault) identify

increasing levels of "social service" with increasing levels of "social control." Still other critics (Ivan Illich) believe that providing social services through professional and state-run networks has undermined individual, family, and community support for those in need of services and has been, on balance, detrimental. If these perspectives are appropriate for a given class, they can be assigned as debates. These debates then highlight many important aspects of social services that the student may not have yet explored. Debates thus provide students with a deeper insight and understanding of their efforts to become professionals in this field.

Many other approaches can be used in the social services classroom. Your own issues and concerns can easily be translated into a debate topic and a debate format.

CONCLUSION

Social services require cooperation and compromise within a framework of decision making and disagreement. Often the way in which social services succeed or fail is based on how these factors mesh as well as the use of skilled communication. Debating the many important issues surrounding social services can assist students in both their preparation and their performance in the field.

SPORT AND RECREATION

Sport, recreation, and debate

Debating has much in common with sport. It is a game in which individuals cooperate in order to compete against other individuals. There are "sides," as well as teams, matches, judges, rules, tournaments, leagues, and all the rest. Because there is so much of sport in debate, it is an ideal method for use in classes that deal with sports and recreation issues and training. Important issues, practices, and skills can be developed through the use of debating in the classroom.

Why debate is valuable to sport and recreation classes

Because debate is a process of learning and evaluating, it is a broadly

applicable tool for pedagogy. The specifics of the study of sports and recreation lend themselves well to the use of debating for several different reasons.

First, debating allows students to directly experience and experiment with competition in a new and different way. While most competition in sports is based on physical action and skill (although there is certainly a significant mental element in almost all sports), debate is more about the individual's intellect and communication skills. It is very different to lose at pool or other recreational game than it is to lose at debate. The debate loss and win call into question basic values of self worth, such as ability to express oneself and the ability to think critically about ideas. Those heavily involved with sports have discovered that debating brings them a much better understanding of competition. In addition to competition, debating allows much the same experience of the cooperation and teamwork called for in sports. With proper guidance students can learn not just about the topic being debated, but also about competition and cooperation, issues that will be important to them as they apply their knowledge about sports and recreation.

Second, debating allows for exploration of the social implications of sport and recreation. Sport and recreation exist in society because they fulfill basic human needs, social and individual, physical and mental. Because these needs are very important to the enjoyment of life by individuals and the smooth functioning of society, the way sport and recreation enacts itself is extremely important. Often these important foundation issues relating to sports and recreation do not get sufficient attention. Debating is an ideal way to explore these issues, as the topics below suggest.

Third, debating mixes logic with fun. Some games simulate, some games educate, some games demonstrate skill, some games involve logical problem solving, and some games provide thrills. The game of debate adds the logical problem-solving element to the experience of those who normally use games for demonstration skills. While many games have an intellectual aspect to them, the game of debate features the intellect as a primary component. Students who are familiar with the use and practice of games in sports and recreation (skill and thrill) can now experience these familiar features within an intellectual learning context. The stu-

dents are able to bring the "fun" of games into the classroom, giving learning a familiar and welcome context. Debates can inject familiar enjoyment into the classroom.

Sample debate topics for sport and recreation classes

The role of leisure in modern society has been overemphasized.

Recreation should be designed to improve and educate the individual.

Professional sports in modern society have been overemphasized.

Team sports have been overemphasized.

Competition is often a destructive force in sports and recreation.

Recreation and leisure activities should be environmentally benign.

There is too much work and not enough play.

Protective equipment should be mandatory in all sports that require it at the professional level.

Athletes with disabilities should be given compensatory advantages when in competition.

The professionalization of officiating should be increased at all levels of sport.

Physical education should be required study in college and university.

Physical education in high school should be an elective.

All sports should be coeducational.

More unconventional sports should be a part of the Olympic games.

The Olympic games should be discontinued.

College athletes should be paid for their services.

For the benefit of the national park system, human use should be decreased.

Most amusement parks are a waste of time and money.

Rock climbers should not climb on Native American sacred spaces.

Sample debate formats for sport and recreation classes

Debate can be productively used in the sports and recreation classroom in a variety of ways. The formats chosen should mirror the content of the class and allow students to explore class content in fruitful and interesting ways such as those indicated below.

First, organize debates to explore the basic social issues that underlie

sports and recreation. Organize team debates to explore many different issues or one major abstract issue. The use of sports and recreation to fill leisure time, the importance or lack of importance of leisure time, supposedly "productive" recreation (such as reading, acting, crafts, painting, activism, etc.) vs. supposedly "nonproductive" recreation (such as watching sporting events, viewing television, doing nothing), the role of recreation and sports in mental health, the role of recreation and sports in physical fitness, and other such issues are good debate subjects. While many classes teach the "what" and the "how" of sports and recreation, debate can help students understand the "why."

Second, use debates to explore competition and team-building issues. Debates can be "about" competition as a topic, but they can also help illustrate cooperation and competition as manipulated variables within the debate. For example, hold one debate as a cooperative discussion, where there are no assigned sides and winners are based on how they analyzed the issues. Students who produce the best cooperative discussion are rewarded in this exercise. Another example involves students speaking as individuals to state their position on an issue, after which students with similar positions form "teams" or "parties," and the debate proceeds from there, although students are allowed to defect from one group and join another during the arguments if their team's position begins to stray from their own personal position, or as they admire the arguments made by other groups and decide to join them. Rather than just two groups, often three or four groups will emerge. Such exercises help students understand how groups form, mature, and change.

Third, use debates in contrasting sport and recreation to another major activity in all of our lives: work. We spend huge amounts of time at work, and often we justify the need for sports and recreation as a contrast to it. Students debate topics that allow them to explore what it is about work that necessitates sports and recreation, as well as how work itself can be made more like recreation to reduce this bifurcation. Some critics (Black, The Case Against Work) say there need be no firm distinctions between "play" and "work," and that tasks and roles can be redesigned so that we do not have to choose between them.

Fourth, use debates to emphasize their "play" elements. For example,

pick an idea, and then have a person give one reason to support it, followed by another who gives a reason to oppose it. No student is allowed to repeat an argument and must give a new argument. A panel of student judges determines if an argument is a repeat or is so weak that it does not qualify, in which case they remove that person from the debate. This simple exercise is easy and fun, and as it quickly advances, students are amazed at the ideas people express. This activity is enjoyable and rewards creative thinking. Students can learn that "sport" involves only the body but also features the mind.

CONCLUSION

Sports and recreation are growing fields as individuals have more time away from work and the means to enjoy themselves in active and organized ways. While not the primary teaching method in this subject area, debates can add significantly to classes as they explore themes relevant to the field. Students of sports and recreation usually prefer a classroom that is more active and less passive, thus debating could be a useful addition.

TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Technology, society, and debate

Technology has traditionally had a substantial impact on society. The adoption of stable agriculture, the discovery of gunpowder, the application of steam power, and the discovery of the transistor had major impacts on social structure and the way people live their lives. All of these changes suggest areas that are ripe with debate possibilities.

Technological advances are currently one of the most powerful forces shaping global human society in the 21st century. In the past major technological changes might have an important impact every few generations. Now they impact every generation.

The great controversies we face today are related to technology, such as its impact on military affairs, the economy, and education. Students familiar with these controversies can better understand them, as well as the overall role of technology in society, by debating these issues.

Why debate is valuable to technology and society classes

Debating can be a very valuable and productive way to engage students in a wide variety of issues. Technology is increasingly impacting the individual through issues such as privacy invasion, government surveillance and database construction, the application of biotechnology and cybernetics to health care and genetic engineering, personal communication through enhanced wireless communication, and the use of the Internet for recreation. Technology is increasingly impacting the environment through issues such as global warming, the use of genetically modified crops and animals, the production of industrial pollutants, the threat of ozone depletion, mechanized agriculture, and deforestation and the depletion of water resources through irrigation and pumping from ground water reserves. Technology is increasingly impacting military affairs and operations though issues such as the development of new generations of nuclear weapons, the use of long-distance precision guided munitions, the development of "nonlethal" weapons to make military force easier to use, the militarization of space, the development of antimissile defense programs, the spread of weapons of mass destruction to national and subnational groups, and the ability of some nations to project military force on a global level to influence the events of nations not able to defend against such actions. Technology is increasingly impacting economic relations through issues such as automation of the workplace, the creation of information workers, the decline of manufacturing industries, the creation of an online workplace and marketplace, the emergence of a cashless economy, the need to change careers during a lifetime, and the decentralization and fragmentation of entertainment networks through the Internet and home viewing and recording. Technology is increasingly impacting education as well, through the use of the Internet for resources and distance learning, the creation of a "digital divide" between those receiving high-technology education and those who are not, the application of behavior modifying drugs to the management of students, the use of home schooling using technological resources, the impact on the knowledge base through the use of World Wide Web sites not editorially reviewed, the decline of the use of books, the creation of information appliances to substitute for memory, and the creation of a global

educational culture and the impact that will have on marginalizing other educational traditions. All of these areas are ripe for debate.

There are other reasons that technology is well suited for debating in the classroom. First, these discussions tend to be very future oriented, focused on differences new technology make to lives and careers. As new technological advances emerge there is a constant need for debate about what they mean and how they should be implemented and controlled. Second, since there is wide disagreement about these issues, many of the arguments that would be used in a debate are readily available to students. Students can find arguments and sources spanning a broad spectrum of enthusiasm for technological change and application. Third, issues relating to technology come up repeatedly during the life of any given student, thus debating about these issues prepares all students for decisions about technology he or she will have to make in the future. Thus, debating about technology issues is both relevant and easy to accomplish.

Sample debate topics for technology and society classes

The Internet poses a significant threat to individual privacy.

The government should have restrictions on its abilities to engage in surveillance of its citizens.

Cloning of humans should not be allowed.

Parents should be able to use bioengineering to select the attributes of their children.

The Internet has decreased the quality of life.

The internal combustion engine must be de-emphasized to prevent global warming.

Genetically modified foods and animals should be excluded from commercial markets.

The world would have been better off if the discovery of [X] had been delayed by 100 years.

A sustainable agriculture model should broadly replace the current model of mechanized agriculture.

Nation-states should emphasize the use of nonlethal weapons on military affairs.

Space should never be militarized.

No nation should deploy a national missile defense.

Nuclear power should be de-emphasized as an energy source.

A unilateral freeze by the USA on the production and development of nuclear weapons is desirable.

Let the information superhighway run free.

Space exploration and development should be an international priority.

Computers are the answer.

The Internet is the new opiate of the masses.

Television is more significant than the computer

Scientists have moral responsibility for their discoveries.

Sample debate formats for technology and society classes

There are an infinite number of approaches to debating technology issues in the classroom. Instructors should adapt debate formats and topics to match the precise subject matter of the class. Here are a few ideas for implementing debates in such a classroom.

Students can engage in very short, one-on-one debates about the merits and problems of specific technological innovations. These debates can take place in 20 minutes or less and staged through the term. Each student can engage in one or more such debates. These debates can have a fairly narrow focus, perhaps exploring the nature of specific technological innovations such as mobile telephones, the Internet, or cloning of farm animals.

Teams of two students could engage in longer debates about the social implications of various areas of technology. Here the focus is on an area of technology and whether it is beneficial for society. Often the contest will be between the substantive benefits of a specific area of technology vs. the social harms stemming from the application of technology to this area. For example, automation increases productivity but decreases employment. These topics can be changed for each debate or, if broad enough, could be repeated a number of times. Encourage discussion after the debates to involve students in these issues, and urge them to develop new issues and new lines of arguments in situations where the same topic will be debated several times.

Larger teams can engage in debates that focus on the value and ethi-

cal dimensions of technology implementation. Here the focus is on the deeper issues of equity, freedom, democracy, and individual autonomy. These topics do not include the practical benefits of technology, but may focus on a comparison on these practical benefits with the abstract values listed above. Issues of individual autonomy, the ability of people to adjust to change, and the identification of the winners and losers from technological applications should be pursued in these debates.

A major project could be to stage a trial, either of a technology or a particular scientist. Gunpowder could be put on trial in a classroom proceeding, as could nuclear power, biotechnology, or animal experimentation. A particular scientist or group of scientists could also be put on trial for not considering the implications of their discoveries, such as those working on the Manhattan Project to develop the first nuclear weapon, Christiaan Barnard for developing organ transplantation, or the USA Agency for International Development for promoting high technology chemical-dependent agriculture in the majority world during the 1960s and 1970s.

CONCLUSION

Technology and its impact on society is a rich area for debates in the classroom. By personalizing the experience of evaluating technologies and how they affect us all, students become more familiar with the basic issues involved. These issues emerge repeatedly during the life of students as citizens and can be recalled and reviewed when they make decisions both as individuals choosing lifestyles and as citizens choosing policy directions for societies.

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APPENDICES

TOOLS FOR DEBATES

- **Debate ballot, checklist format**
- **Sample debate formats**
- **What format is for you?**

INSPIRATION FOR DEBATERS

- **Aristotle on The Value of Debate**
- **John Stuart Mill on debate in *On Liberty***
- **Suggestions for A Successful Debater**
- **The Value of Debating ? A Letter to A Student**
- **The Ten Principles of Debate**

TOOLS FOR DEBATES

DEBATE BALLOT, CHECKLIST FORMAT

Student Name: **Topic:**

❖ **Evaluation of the subject matter**

How effectively did the student use information from the class and the shared knowledge base of the students?

❑ Poor ❑ Fair ❑ Acceptable ❑ Excellent ❑ Fantastic

How recent is the research?

❑ Poor ❑ Fair ❑ Acceptable ❑ Excellent ❑ Fantastic

Is the research complete?

❑ Poor ❑ Fair ❑ Acceptable ❑ Excellent ❑ Fantastic

How biased is the evidence?

❑ Poor ❑ Fair ❑ Acceptable ❑ Excellent ❑ Fantastic

❖ **Evaluation of debate skills and preparation**

How persuasive is the student?

❑ Poor ❑ Fair ❑ Acceptable ❑ Excellent ❑ Fantastic

How well organized is the student?

❑ Poor ❑ Fair ❑ Acceptable ❑ Excellent ❑ Fantastic

How effectively does your student focus on the central ideas of the debate?

❑ Poor ❑ Fair ❑ Acceptable ❑ Excellent ❑ Fantastic

❖ **Evaluation of arguments**

Do the arguments presented relate to the rest of the arguments in the debate?

❑ Poor ❑ Fair ❑ Acceptable ❑ Excellent ❑ Fantastic

Do the argument have assertions, reasons, and evidence?

❑ Poor ❑ Fair ❑ Acceptable ❑ Excellent ❑ Fantastic

Has the student explained the implications of the arguments?

❑ Poor ❑ Fair ❑ Acceptable ❑ Excellent ❑ Fantastic

SAMPLE DEBATE FORMATS

20-Minute Debate	**1 on 1**	
First Affirmative Speech	4 minutes	Prove your case for the topic
First Negative Speech	4 minutes	Refute, introduce new issues
Second Affirmative Speech	3 minutes	Refute and summarize
Second Negative Speech	3 minutes	Refute and summarize

Each team has 3 minutes preparation time.

30-Minute Debate	**1 on 1**	**with cross examination**
First Affirmative Speech	5 minutes	Prove your case for the topic
Cross examination	3 minutes	
First Negative Speech	5 minutes	Refute, introduce new issues
Cross examination	3 minutes	
Second Affirmative Speech	4 minutes	Refute and summarize
Second Negative Speech	4 minutes	Refute and summarize

Each team has 3 minutes preparation time.

30-Minute Debate	**2 on 2**	
First Affirmative Speech	4 minutes	Prove your case for the topic
First Negative Speech	4 minutes	Refute, introduce new issues
Second Affirmative Speech	4 minutes	Refute
Second Negative Speech	4 minutes	Refute
Affirmative Rebuttal	2 minutes	Summarize
Negative Rebuttal	2 minutes	Summarize

Each team has 5 minutes preparation time.

40-Minute Debate	**2 on 2 with cross examination**	
First Affirmative Speech	5 minutes	Prove your case for the topic
Cross examination	3 minutes	
First Negative Speech	5 minutes	Refute, introduce new issues
Cross examination	3 minutes	
Second Affirmative Speech	5 minutes	Refute and summarize
Cross examination	3 minutes	

Second Negative Speech	5 minutes	Refute and summarize
Cross examination	3 minutes	
Affirmative Rebuttal	2 minutes	Summarize
Negative Rebuttal	2 minutes	Summarize

Each team has 3 minutes preparation time.

60-Minute Debate	**2 on 2 with cross examination**	
First Affirmative Speech	5 minutes	Prove your case for the topic
Cross examination	3 minutes	
First Negative Speech	5 minutes	Refute, introduce new issues
Cross examination	3 minutes	
Second Affirmative Speech	6 minutes	Refute
Cross examination	3 minutes	
Second Negative Speech	6 minutes	Refute
Cross examination	3 minutes	
First Negative Rebuttal	3 minutes	Refute
First Affirmative Rebuttal	3 minutes	Refute
Second Negative Rebuttal	3 minutes	Summarize
Second Affirmative Rebuttal	3 minutes	Summarize

Each team has 7 minutes preparation time.

55-Minute Debate	**3 on 3 with questions**	
First Affirmative	4 minutes	Prove your case for the topic
Cross examination	3 minutes	
First Negative	4 minutes	Refute, introduce new issues
Cross examination	3 minutes	
Second Affirmative	5 minutes	Refute
Second Negative	5 minutes	Refute
Questions from Audience	15 minutes	
Third Affirmative	4 minutes	Summarize
Third Negative	4 minutes	Summarize

Each team has 4 minutes preparation time

60-Minute Trial	**(may be held over two days)**
Introduction of players	2 minutes
Read the charges	2 minutes
Case for the Prosecution	5 minutes
Prosecution witness #1	5 minutes
Defense questions	3 minutes
Prosecution witness #2	5 minutes
Case for the Defense	5 minutes
Defense witness #1	5 minutes
Prosecution questions	3 minutes
Defense witness #2	5 minutes
Prosecution questions	3 minutes
Prosecution summary	5 minutes
Defense summary	5 minutes
[Break to adjudicate]	
Read verdict	1 minute

Three minutes preparation time for each side

WHAT FORMAT IS FOR YOU?

	Positive Elements	Negative Elements
The public forum debate	❖ Involves many students ❖ Good for introducing subject matter ❖ Encourages creativity ❖ Low preparation ❖ Mixes well with other formats	❖ No research required ❖ Can reinforce student ideologies ❖ Can be dominated by a few vocal students
The spontaneous debate	❖ Very fun and engaging ❖ Excellent way to work on delivery, organization, and language choices ❖ Reduces stress about future debates	❖ No research required ❖ Topics can fizzle
The policy debate	❖ Excellent for students to show mastery of a subject ❖ In-depth analysis of a topic ❖ Encourages research and preparation	❖ Jargon can create an entry barrier ❖ Requires preparation and setup time
The parliamentary debate	❖ Encourages teamwork and creativity ❖ Excellent for enhancing oratory skills	❖ Creative interpretation of topics can move debates in new directions ❖ Research is optional
The role-playing debate	❖ Fits easily into many courses ❖ Decreases speaker anxiety because students aren't representing themselves	❖ Requires familiarity of all students involved
The mock trial debate	❖ Structured environment ❖ Good for legal-oriented topics	❖ Can have a high entry barrier because of jargon
The model congress debate	❖ Available for many students ❖ Topics are student driven	❖ Requires preparation

INSPIRATION FOR DEBATERS

ARISTOTLE ON THE VALUE OF DEBATE

Lionel Crocker, *Argumentation and Debate*. New York: American Institute of Banking, 1962, pp. 11-12

The Value of Debate

Debate is fascinating in its own right; intelligent people find it a demanding and stimulating sport. But what value besides pleasure will the debater find in this activity? How will it aid [her or] his personal development and further [her or] his career? Will debate help [her or] him contribute to the public good?

For an answer to these questions, it might be interesting to turn first to the most famous of all authorities on the subject, Aristotle.

Aristotle on the Value of Debate

Writing in the fourth century B.C., Aristotle listed four values of the knowledge of rhetoric. These values are as valid in the modern world as they were in ancient Greece.

1. To prevent the triumph of fraud and injustice. The techniques which the debater learns in academic debate are invaluable later when [she or] he is called upon to speak out for what [she or] he believes, and to condemn what [she or] he considers wrong. Democracy depends on free criticism of those in power, and the more clearly reasoned and forcibly expressed the criticism is, the more valuable it can be in defending what is right.

2. To instruct when scientific instruction is of no avail. It often happens that, when one tries to induce other people to adopt a plan of action, it is not enough to be in a sound position; one must also be convincing. Simple fact does not always recommend itself. The trained debater will be able to combine clear reasoning with persuasive techniques in order to make [her or] his plan acceptable.

3. To make us argue out both sides of a case. Debating gives a person perspective, and frees [her or] him from prejudice. [She or] He learns to understand what can be said on the other side of a case, and that insight helps [her or] him to meet objections to [her or] his position. [She or] He becomes more effective in [her or] his daily life because [she or] he is not caught unaware in making [her or] his decisions.

4. To help one defend oneself. In our daily life, we are all confronted with situations in which we must be able to ward off attack. We live in a competitive society in which someone else often wants what we have. In order to maintain our own position, we need the skills of debate to answer attacks, just and unjust, upon ourselves.

JOHN STUART MILL ON DEBATE IN *ON LIBERTY*

Robert James Branham, *Debate and Critical Analysis: The Harmony of Conflict*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991, p. 4.

The process of debate raises certain fundamental questions about our opinions: How did we arrive at them? Why do we hold them? What alternative opinions exist and how do they compare with our own? The ability to pose and answer these questions has long been considered the hallmark of a truly educated person. In his essay On Liberty, political philosopher John Stuart Mill (1859/1947) identified the ability and willingness to subject opinions to debate as a prerequisite for the attainment of wisdom and, ultimately, of liberty itself.

> In the case of any person whose judgment is really deserving of confidence, how has it become so? Because [she or] he has kept his mind open to criticism of [her or] his opinions and conduct. Because it has been [her or] his practice to listen to all that could be said against [her or] him; to profit by as much of it as was just, and expound to [her or] himself, and upon occasion to others, the fallacy of what was fallacious. Because [she or] he has felt, that the only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind. No wise [woman or] man ever acquired [her or] his wisdom in any mode but this; nor is it in the nature of human intellect to become wise in any other manner. (p. 20)

Mill distinguished between "received opinion," uncritically accepted by an audience from some figure of authority, and an opinion formed through controversy and critical deliberation. It is only through the latter process, Mill argued, that the individual should be able to hold and express an opinion with genuine conviction. An untested opinion, he insisted, even if it happens to be true, "is but one superstition the more accidentally clinging to the words that enunciate a truth" (p. 35).

There is the greatest difference between presuming an opinion to be true, because, with every opportunity for contesting it, it has not been refuted, and assuming its truth for the purpose of not permitting its refutation. Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion, is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purposes of action; and on no other terms can a being with human faculties have any rational assurance of being right. (p. 19)

For Mill, debate is a process by which firm convictions on important issues are formed. These convictions may not be the opinions that one took into the dispute, for these may be proven partly or completely wrong through the process of debate. Yet one may expect to emerge from the process of debate with a far more detailed and accurate understanding of the issues involved and with far greater confidence in the conclusions one has drawn from the dispute. "The steady habit of correcting and completing [her or] his own opinion by collating it with those of others," Mill insisted, "so far from causing doubt and hesitation in carrying it into practice, is the only stable foundation for a just reliance on it" (p. 20).

Mill was himself a person of strong opinions tested through disputation. He debated many of the great issues of his day and some of the timeless issues of the human condition, such as the responsibilities of representative government, the nature of human freedom, and the dynamics of power and oppression in the subjugation of women. But Mill did not view the proper scope of debate as limited to political or legal questions or its proper forum as limited to the formal deliberations of organized bodies. He instead conceived of debate as a "habit of mind" that should be cultivated by individuals for application to all affairs, whether personal, religious, political, scientific, or those drawn from what he termed "the business of life." "On every subject on which difference of opinion is possible," Mill insisted, "the truth depends on a balance to be struck between two sets of conflicting reasons" (p. 36). We should withhold our confident endorsement of opinions until they have withstood the test of reasoned disputation. We should, he advised, issue "a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded" (p. 21) and not be satisfied until that invitation has been accepted.

Willingness to subject one's opinions to disputation is a necessary but

not sufficient condition for the achievement of true debate. For an opinion to be truly tested, it must first be given the strongest possible expression. The best available arguments for the opinion must be advanced, and supported by the most powerful evidence and reasoning that can be mustered. It is not enough to hold an opinion that turns out to be true; one must have come to that opinion for the best reasons. Furthermore, for an opinion to be truly tested, it must be confronted with the strongest possible counterarguments, also supported by the most persuasive evidence and reasoning that can be found.

The clash of varying opinions is best achieved through genuine debate, in which the conflicting positions are advocated by different parties who are committed to them. The presentation of different views by a single speaker is no substitute for real debate. Although it is possible for a single speaker to both support a given position and describe and refute contrary views, such a presentation is likely to produce a lesser challenge to the position being advocated than would an actual debate. In an ideal debate, Mill wrote, the opposing sides would be defended by knowledgeable persons who earnestly believe the positions they advocate in the dispute.

Mill recognized, however, that such disputants are often not available to discuss matters of immediate importance. In order to provide the best possible disputation of ideas in this common circumstance, Mill endorsed a form of academic debate familiar to modern students: a debate in which the participants skillfully defend positions that do not necessarily represent their own personal beliefs. "So essential is this discipline to a real understanding of moral and human subjects," he insisted, "that if opponents of all important truths do not exist, it is indispensable to imagine them, and supply them with the strongest arguments which the most skilful devil's advocate can conjure up" (p. 37).

The abilities to identify the strongest positions and counterpositions on a given issue and to support and defend them in the best ways possible are precisely the skills of debate that this text aims to enhance. It is designed to familiarize students with the range of argumentative resources and strategies that are available to the skillful disputant and to describe the processes of reasoning and critical analysis through which

these strategies may best be employed. This text is conceived as a practical guide to the persuasive and sound expression of one's own opinions and to the powerful refutation of the positions one may oppose.

Most of the skills, strategies, and purposes that guide today's debaters are ancient in origin. The importance Mill placed on the intellectual activity of debate was hardly novel. Indeed, it reflected a centuries-old understanding of debate in many cultures as a hallmark of civilization, social order, and knowledge.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL DEBATER

Roy V. Wood, *Strategic Debate*, 2nd ed. Skokie, Ill.: National Textbook Co., 1974, p. 185.

Analysis

1. The debater should seek the most thorough knowledge of the topic and the most complete evidence to support [her or] his arguments.

2. The debater should choose arguments that are important enough to have a great deal of readily available evidence behind them.

3. The debater should not be afraid to use the "standard" case that many other teams are using. Often it can be refined or intensely developed during the season to become the best case. Non-thinking teams frequently are lulled into a false sense of security by what they think is a standard case but which is really capable of important refinements.

Organization

1. Choose the pattern of organization that best fits the analysis.

2. Carefully check the feedback of judges to see how effective the organization is.

Presentation of Arguments

1. Affirmative

a. The affirmative should actively support its burden of proof.

b. The affirmative should remain on the offensive.

c. With few exceptions, the affirmative should narrow the range of arguments in the debate.

2. Negative

a. The negative should actively support the presumption that goes

with the present system.

b. The negative should try to become the offensive team and put the affirmative team on the defensive.

c. With a few exceptions, the negative should try to expand the range of arguments in the debate.

Refutation and Rebuttal

1. The debater should listen carefully to the opposition's arguments. It does little good to argue against an argument that has been misinterpreted.

2. The debater should state the argument [she or] he is attacking and indicate to the judge why [she or] he is attacking it.

3. The debater should state [her or] his counterargument.

4. The debater should present the evidence for [her or] his counterargument.

5. The debater should lend perspective to the development by showing how it affects the debate.

6. The debater should realize that it is possible for the opposition to tell the truth; [she or] he should not contest obviously valid arguments. Instead, [she or] he should analyze the relationship of the argument to the larger case or should move on to arguments that are contestable.

Delivery In Debate

1. The debater should realize that the debate takes place in the mind of the critic.

2. The debater should highlight important arguments by wording them in an interesting and memorable way.

3. The debater should forecast [her or] his attack.

4. The debater should erect signposts as [she or] he goes along to help the judge know where the speaker is in [her or] his case.

5. The debater should provide a brief summary and perspective at the end of the speech.

6. The debater should avoid all speaking mannerisms that detract from [her or] his delivery.

7. The debater should avoid debate cliches. [Her or] His language should be appropriate to the material and an expression of his own personality.

8. The debater should avoid sarcasm or other personal attacks on the opposition.

9. The debater should maintain poise throughout the debate. [She or] He should not talk or be rude during [her or] his opposition's turn at the speaker's stand.

THE VALUE OF DEBATING – A LETTER TO A STUDENT

Brooks Quimby, *So You Want to Discuss and Debate?* rev. ed. Portland, Maine: J. Weston Walch, 1962, pp. 1-8.

The Values of Discussion and Debate

Dear John,

So you are thinking of going out for debating and possibly taking part in discussion as well and want to know if this activity is worth the work involved? I wonder how you happened to think about it enough to write me. You may be one of the better students in your class, and appreciate the opportunity to add to your education. Possibly some teacher as suggested to you that the problem of the year is an excellent one to study to understand more about our world today. Perhaps you have thought only of the fun of trips, the thrill of public acclaim, the pleasure of winning, the pride in representing the school in a form of competition which depends on brains rather than brawn. Almost any motive may have given you the idea. I remember a high school debater who joined the squad to be near a red-haired girl, he did all right. But when you have debated a year or more I am sure you will find that debating has many solid values for you. When you have been out of school, you will look back and say, "I got more out of debating than I did out of any other course I took in school "

How do I know this? Debaters always demand proof, they want evidence, so I collected some facts. I sent out letters to the two hundred members of the Bates College Chapter of Delta Sigma Rho, one of the national honorary forensic societies, to inquire what success they had had in life, and whether they considered their training and experience in debating of any value to them in their careers. The response was so significant that the college published a bulletin containing excerpts from their replies. Most of them were students of mine and I could talk all night about them.

You don't have to wait till you start your career before you begin to get dividends from debating. A high school debate coach was one of the

Delta Sigma Rho members who replied to my inquiry: "Although I have had only a few on my debate squad each year, it is apparent that the speech experience has been an important part of their personality development. A typical example is a brilliant lad who dissolved in pools of mortification every time he had to make the simplest response in class. In his sophomore year he was hopeless as a speaker but contributed a great deal to the arguments and evidence of the team. By the end of his senior year he had become a polished speaker and ranked among the top high school debaters for New England in all the tournaments in which he participated. The four debaters on that team applied to Harvard, Dartmouth, Bates, and the University of New Hampshire and were promptly accepted All four institutions indicated that the high school experience in debating activity was a strong recommendation in their favor. "

The Headmaster of a well-known college preparatory school wrote, "In my forty years of coaching debating in both public and private schools, it has been a source of satisfaction to me that in the schools with which I have been connected. The boys and girls with debate experience have been outstanding in the group of successful graduates. These youngsters have been the ones with the keenest interest in public affairs and the greatest facility in public speaking through their college and post-college years."

These dividends continue through college and graduate school. A student in a big graduate school wrote, "Preparing for my classes in graduate courses is like preparing for a practice debate." One of my former students got interested in science in the Army and, after working at Los Alamos, he attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he finished second in his class. Then he went on to complete his original plan to be a lawyer. He finished first in his class at Harvard Law School and was editor of their Law Review. He was later law clerk to Justice Frankfurter of the Supreme Court He wrote, "Skill in organization obtained in debating is the most valuable asset to the student in law school. " He went on to say that the skills best developed by the newer discussion methods are those most needed by a law clerk. [Those] who stood high in their classes at Cornell, Chicago, Columbia and Yale Law Schools gave the same sort of testimony

The dividends from debating get larger as one enters [her or] his chosen career. A Lieutenant Commander in the Navy had been a New England champion before leaving college to enlist. After the war he returned to college and was again champion. He wrote, 'You may sometimes think that the Navy is a highly illogical outfit, but I found that my training in logic in debating stood me in good stead in the Navy." The Chancellor of the University of California at Santa Barbara wrote, "If I were to choose any single activity in school which contributed most to my career, I would certainly choose debating." A college president replied, "My debating experiences have greatly influenced my writing and my public utterances. "

A professor at Ohio Wesleyan University stated, "Any success I may have had as a classroom teacher comes from the fact that I constantly make use of what I learned from my debate experience." A prominent clergyman joined these other professional men with, "Debate training did more for me in the practical side of my ministry than any other preparation I received. It taught me to think more clearly, to speak more convincingly, and to ask myself many a time is it necessary? Is it expedient? Will it work?"

Of course, John, these [people] did not just sit back and let the debate coach make successes of them, they worked at it. And debate does take work. But this very work is one of the holdover values of the activity Since the debater is so busy, [she or] he has to learn to make the best use of [her or] his time. As you will find, this is a very necessary habit for a successful college student. A former director of the state YMCA camp testified, "Debate started me on a pace that I still keep. The necessity of organizing time and energy to get done all the things I was doing at college still continues in my present work. "

In fact, one of the most interesting replies from the field of business came from a [woman] who had been doing television research for one of the larger advertising companies and had been handling some of the better known programs. She said, "I got my job through my debate training. I was interviewed by the head of the department, a man with a steel-trap mind and disconcerting ability to put you on the defensive immediately. It was a harrowing hour, but something like one of our tougher debates

— Keep your head, let the other fellow do a lot of talking — and then demolish his arguments." A somewhat similar reaction came from a male, former president of our debate council, as follows, "I have a new job with General Electric which I owe to my debate training. Two years ago, the head of this division of General Electric spoke to a group of us at our plant, and I was the only one who gave him any resistance. I told him his logic was perfect if one agreed with his premises, but as tactfully as possible I told him I did not agree with his major premise, and why. Instead of getting rid of me, two years later he remembered it and brought me to New York as his assistant."

A former governor of Maine, later a bigwig in the motion picture industry, wrote how much his debate training helped him in his seven political campaigns and on a trip to England where he had to get the British Motion Picture Producers to accept the American Production Code. He succeeded in this latter difficult job because of his debate training

A later Governor of Maine, now Senator from that state, not only answered the questionnaire with favorable comments, but addressed the American Forensic Association on "The Influence of Debating on the Career of a Public Servant." You may read that address in "Vital Speeches" for October 15, 1957.

The head of the Department of Zoology at Columbia University wrote, "My experience in debating has been fully as valuable in my career as my scientific training." The public health consultant to the World Health Organization of the United Nations and professor emeritus at Massachusetts Institute of Technology told of the value of argumentation in presenting a health plan in Iran or Egypt. The editor of one of our greatest national newspapers wrote, "As deputy chief of the United States delegation to the United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information at Geneva in 1948, I had to debate day in and day out with delegates of many other countries. Particularly, I had to meet the arguments of the Soviet representatives and their satellites and help to convince our friends in the in between states of the validity of our defense of free speech."

Of course, these successful people who replied were college debaters, but most of them were high school debaters, too. I remember one of them when he was a senior in high school, and a member of the first State Championship high school debating team that I ever coached. A few years ago he was general counsel for the National Labor Relations Board and at one time had the responsibility of hiring more than five hundred lawyers for the federal government. He wrote, "I have for years given preference in employment and paid premium salaries to lawyers who, in addition to adequate professional background, have the advantage of debate training. They get all the facts. They analyze them accurately. They present them logically and clearly. " This former high school debater is now Vice -President and General Counsel of Vultee Aircraft Corporation and recognizes the value of debate training in his own career

Another state champion high school debater has been AP correspondent at Rome for many years, then at Buenos Aires, and now at Mexico City. I remember when he began debating in high school with my squad at the age of fifteen, and later when he made a trip around the world with the Bates Debating Team. He wrote, "Debate training has specific values as preparation for news reporting; it favors conciseness, the necessity of analyzing both sides of an issue, it encourages impartiality and objectivity, Its discipline in organizing material is invaluable preparation for marshalling facts in orderly news stories."

But it's not only the state champion debaters who praise their training, the alternate on the high school team to which the previous speaker belonged also reported. He did not make the team in high school but eventually did in college. He, too, made the debate trip around the world, and became a lawyer. He was solicitor for the Securities & Exchange Commission and is now special assistant to the Attorney General of the United States, assigned to the office of solicitor general and engaged in representing the government before the Supreme Court. He wrote, "The most important part of my work today - arguing a case in appellate court - is very much a form of debating. The chief element is the preparation and briefing; if the lawyer is dull and uninteresting [she or] he is likely to put the court to sleep and lose his case." (He confessed to me privately that a certain justice did fall asleep recently, and he was forced to get

more pep into his delivery lest he lose the attention entirely of the famous jurist!)

Those boys came from Maine high schools. I have a picture in my scrapbook of a red-haired lad receiving the trophy for the high school championship of New Hampshire. As editor of the Encyclopedia Americana Annual, he wrote, "Debate training plays a part in every issue of the Americana Annual and in every article I write or edit." (He added a personal note that it was through debating on the high school level that he met the girl who was to become his wife and claimed that they do not spend their time together arguing, either. They must have been colleagues; you have to learn to get along with your colleagues to be a good debater, John!)

Through their publication in 1948 (first edition) I can take a little credit for helping some professional men by these letters which I am writing you. A lawyer engaged in representing the airlines before the Civil Aeronautics Commission was most flattering in writing, "To all of us who participated in debate, the training has affected our approach to problems ever since. In my own case, I have consciously adverted to some of the processes and practices which we used in formulating the initial argument on a given debate subject. (Sounds like a lawyer, doesn't he?) When it has been difficult to start a legal brief which must tie together a two or three thousand page transcript of testimony and many thousand pages of exhibits, I have consciously reached back to the approaches we used in debating as a starting point for outlining and drafting such an adversary argument. I am not ashamed to say that I have a very vivid recollection, in beginning the drafting of a brief directed to a rather complicated and difficult question, of referring to your manual for high schools which you called 'So You Want to Debate', "

During the 1960 Presidential campaign, "Freedom and Union" made a survey of many [women and] men in the political limelight, both presidential candidates, governors, senators, and congress[persons]. More than half of them had had experience in school debating Of these, 89% recommended debating strongly to high school students with political ambitions This included both Mr. Nixon and Mr. Kennedy. The replies were consistent in urging debaters to do adequate research, listen to both

sides, be sincere, be logical, and be fair. These important people found that from their school debating they learned how to organize a speech, to gain self-assurance, and how to present a speech.

There you have it, John; in high school, college, graduate school and in business and professional careers, both men and women who have debated report on the experience as a valuable one. College presidents, teachers, sales[persons], clergy, business executives, lawyers, social workers , scientists, editors, and homemakers, all praise debate and discussion as paying big dividends for the time and effort expended.

These leaders in business and professions mention among the values of debate study of the problems of the day, training for collecting and judging information, distinguishing between fact and sound reasoning, analyzing problems, selecting and meeting arguments, influencing audiences and many more.

These testimonies have all come from former debaters of one small institution, but many distinguished Americans today were debaters in many other colleges and universities and began this training in high school, John, as you are thinking of doing.

Other studies besides this one of mine have shown the significance attached to debate training by former participants, and have furnished proof of the success of high school debaters. For example, the president of National Delta Sigma Rho, the debating fraternity, states that more than half of its members were also members of Phi Beta Kappa, the fraternity designed to honor high academic standing in college. Another study seems to indicate that more debaters than participants in any other extra-curricular school activity are found in Who's Who. Yes, John, I think you will always be glad you decided to go out for debating, It takes time and means work, but it pays off. It's fun, too. One of these who wrote regarding the values was William Metz, now a college professor. He says he will never forget when he was introduced as "Mr. Mess" and came near living up to his name! So, if you feel encouraged to try out, just let me know, and I'll write you more about the way debating and discussion are conducted

Yours for a valuable activity - - debating.

Brooks Quimby

THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF DEBATE

Douglas Ehninger and Wayne Brockriede. *Decision by Debate*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1963, p. vii-viii.

***Decision by Debate* reflects ten principles:**

1. Debate as a method of decision provides for the rigorous examination and testing of pertinent data and inferences through the give-and-take of informed controversy. Hence, properly employed, it is a means for arriving at judgments that are reflective and decisions that are critical.

2. A debater is not a propagator who seeks to win unqualified acceptance for a predetermined point of view while defeating an opposing view. Rather, when [she or] he places [her or] himself in the highest tradition of debate, [she or] he is an investigator who co-operates with fellow investigators in searching out the truth or in selecting that course of common action which seems best for all concerned, debaters and public alike.

3. Debate is not limited to a particular type of subject matter, a particular sort of audience, or a particular mode of discourse. It is a generic species of deliberation, the principles and procedures of which are applicable to informed, responsible controversy however and wherever it may take place.

4. One learns about debate and becomes skilled in its use in three different but related ways: by the thoughtful observation and analysis of debates, past and present; by guided practice; and by gaining an understanding of the theory of debate, as embodied in the discipline of argumentation. No one of these methods of learning is less important than the others; all deserve equal attention from the student and equal emphasis by the teacher.

5. Research is an indispensable part of reflective decision-making.

One does not become a debater at the moment [she or] he rises to speak or sits down to write. [She or] He becomes a debater long before-when [she or] he begins [her or] his study of the problem about which [she or] he will eventually propound judgments. Debate is a process that reaches from tentative explorations of subject matter to the final decision.

6. Traditional Aristotelian logic provides an imperfect description of how [women and] men actually reason today in argumentative controversies. A more accurate and useful logic for today may be inferred from the formulations of the contemporary English logician Stephen Toulmin.

7. Personal and emotional proofs, no less than logical proofs, are relevant to critical decisions. An extension of Toulmin's analysis of argument provides a formula whereby personal, emotional, and logical proofs may be reduced to a common structure and made subject to comparable tests. The debater is thus able to bring all three modes of artistic proof within the framework of critical controversy.

8. While the ultimate goal of the philosopher may be to exhibit relationships among ideas per se, the ultimate goal of the debater is to use ideas as proofs for influencing the beliefs of listeners or readers. A knowledge of how belief functions is, therefore, an essential part of the debater's study.

9. The effective communication of arguments to others depends on adeptness in style and delivery. Clarity and attractiveness are the common criteria, and these criteria urge that debaters express each argument so that it will be given exactly the weight it deserves-no more and no less.

10. Practice debates in the classroom and in college forensics tournaments are not ends in themselves, but means of developing the skills and attitudes necessary for responsible participation in the debating situations of later life where free citizens determine public policy.

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