

Debating International Relations

Brandon Merrell
University of California, San Diego

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I. Preface

This handbook is designed to acquaint undergraduate students with the processes of preparing for and engaging in classroom debates about international relations. It is designed to accompany the textbook, “World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions” by Jeffrey Frieden, David Lake, and Kenneth Schultz. As such, this document assumes that readers have some familiarity with prevailing controversies and issues relating to the study of international relations; the handbook often references material and concepts that are presented in the textbook. However, no prior experience with academic, competitive, or classroom debate is assumed.

Importantly, this document should not be construed as representing wholly original thoughts but rather as an attempt to condense and distill information about debate into a single text that will be useful to students for whom the nuances of competitive debate hold little appeal. Many of the ideas included here have no doubt also appeared elsewhere. University students have engaged in debates for more than a century, and a robust academic literature has emerged to examine the theories and practices that are associated with the intercollegiate debate community. A variety of excellent textbooks also exist that discuss argument analysis and public speaking.¹ Unfortunately, to my knowledge all current debate textbooks are heavily geared - either intentionally or otherwise - toward *competitive* debate rather than *classroom* debate practices. For this reason, their breadth of examples and analysis are ill-suited for our purpose, which is to facilitate a series of debates about specific issues in international politics. Similarly, the format described herein is specifically designed for use in the classroom; we therefore omit an extended discussion of the rules, procedures, and theories that prevail in competitive environments.

The material is presented in an order that should allow students to develop a cumulative understanding of concepts, strategies, and argumentative forms as they proceed through the text. However, readers who are unwilling to read the text in its entirety will ideally also be able to profit from a cursory reading of individual sections. The first part of this volume introduces students to the vocabulary, format, and fundamental principles of classroom debating and argument analysis. The second section offers suggestions for students who are unfamiliar with the processes of preparing for a debate, researching a controversial topic, and identifying useful arguments. In the third, fourth, and fifth sections I focus on argument construction and analysis, including the use of evidence, logical reasoning, and refutation. Finally, section six describes a series of skills that students may find useful when engaging in or watching debates, from public speaking and cross-examination to effective note taking and debate evaluation.

¹ In particular, I recommend the following: “Argumentation and Debate” - Austin J. Freeley and David L. Steinberg; “Discovering the World Through Debate” - William Driscoll and Joseph Zompetti; and “Art, Argument, and Advocacy” - John Meany and Kate Shuster.

II. Introduction and First Principles

Why Debate?

One of the most common misconceptions regarding debate is that participants are primarily judged based on their delivery. Powerful oratory and compelling rhetoric are assumed to be critical tools for the successful debater. The reality, however, is more complex. Although students in this course will gain some experience with public speaking, the paramount goal is to train students in the construction, analysis, and organization of logical arguments. Students then apply these tools to the process of evaluating contemporary political and international issues. In doing so, they learn to think quickly and critically, to express ideas clearly, to identify and integrate disparate arguments into a coherent whole, and to develop a tolerance for different points of view. In particular, learning to debate promotes the following objectives:

- *Encourages students to critically evaluate the evidence and opinions they encounter.* With the growth of the internet, more information is available more readily than ever before. As a result, consumers must learn to evaluate the quality of the information to which they are exposed. Debaters learn to identify shallow, symbolic, and emotionally-driven communication and to assess the logical validity or internal consistency of arguments.
- *Improves students' organizational and presentation skills.* In debate, students are required not only to acquire information but also to synthesize it into cohesive arguments with which they engage their peers.
- *Promotes an open-minded approach to research.* For most undergraduate writing assignments, students compile information that reinforces either their preexisting opinions or supports a predetermined answer. In debate, students must be prepared to defend both sides of an issue and should carefully evaluate how the best arguments on each side compare and contrast.
- *Develops students' listening, note-taking, and public speaking abilities.* Debaters must actively listen to the arguments that are made by their opponents, process and catalogue information efficiently, and organize their presentation to convey their arguments clearly to an audience.

Important Terms and Common Questions

What is "the resolution"?

- The resolution is the topic for the debate.

What are "the affirmative" and "the negative"?

- These are the two teams in the debate. The affirmative team supports the resolution; the negative team opposes the resolution and attempts to refute the affirmative's arguments.

Do I need any supplies?

- You need to bring a pen and paper to the debate. You will also want a means of organizing the notes, speeches, and research that you prepare ahead of time (note cards, printed outlines, etc.).

Finally, your job will be easier if you bring a watch or cell phone that you can use to keep track of time during your speech.

Do I need to read bibliographical material in the debate?

- If you are recounting facts that can be considered general knowledge you don't need to include the references during your speech. For example, if a debater states that there are roughly 300,000,000 American citizens then an in-speech citation is unnecessary. You should, however, include the complete citation in the packet of research materials that you submit after the debate. If you are citing more specific information in your speech or quoting directly from another source, you should reference the name of the author and/or the outlet in which the material was published. You should also include the year of publication.

Where should I find evidence?

- Your first step should be to read the relevant chapters in the "World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions" textbook. After you have read those sections you should search for background information on the topic using the internet. Read newspaper articles, books, and academic publications that discuss the issues in question. Begin reading as broadly as possible, but gradually make your searches more specific as you identify major points of controversy on your topic. For a fuller explanation of how to gather evidence, you should review section III ("Analyzing the Resolution") in this handbook.

How do I assess the quality of my evidence?

- Ask yourself the following questions - ideally, you will be able to answer "yes" to each of them: (1) Is the material timely? (2) Is the author qualified to discuss the issue? (3) Is the source free from bias? (4) Does the author's conclusion apply to your question? (5) Is the argument based on valid research and sound reasoning? (6) Are you likely to use the information in the debate? For more information, see section IV ("Building a Case").

How should I organize my evidence?

- You should develop a system that works for you as well as your teammates. In general, it is a good idea to divide your research into three clusters - one for the affirmative side, one for the negative side, and one for background or general information. Within each cluster, divide each piece of evidence based on the "main argument" that it supports. Finally, organize the evidence within each "main argument" based on its strength. Clearly label each piece of evidence that you compile so that you will be able to identify and use it easily in the debate. For more suggestions, see section IV ("Building a Case").

Structure of the Debate Round

In this class, we use the following structure, in which a debate occurs between two teams (affirmative and negative) of two or three students each:

- Opening Affirmative Speech (5 minutes)
- Opening Negative Speech (5 minutes)
- Question and Answer Period (4 minutes)

- Second Affirmative Speech (6 minutes)
- Second Negative Speech (6 minutes)
- Question and Answer Period (4 minutes)
- Closing Affirmative Speech (4 minutes)
- Closing Negative Speech (4 minutes)

Expectations for Each Presenter

The Burden of Rejoinder

In debate, both teams have what is called “the burden of rejoinder.” This expectation is twofold. First, debaters are required to engage one another’s arguments rather than merely present their own material. Second, debaters are required to respond to opposing arguments as early as possible - if an opposing argument is conceded for an entire speech, that argument is subsequently assumed to be true.

According to the first principle of rejoinder, debaters are expected to clash with one another and to argue that their opponents have made weak, incomplete, flawed, unimportant, or simply incorrect arguments. This does not mean that teams cannot concede arguments or identify points of commonality. Indeed, admitting that your opponents are sometimes correct is an important means of establishing credibility. However, debaters should identify at least a few points of disagreement. If the two teams fail to engage with or criticize one another’s arguments, neither team has successfully fulfilled its responsibilities in the round.

The burden of rejoinder also requires debaters to refute opposing arguments at the first available opportunity. If an argument is presented in one speech, the opposing team must respond to that argument in the following speech. If a team fails to respond to an argument during a speech, they cannot subsequently attempt to answer it later in the debate. This rule is created in the interests of fairness; without it, both teams might attempt to sandbag their best arguments until the conclusion speeches, after which their opponents would not have an opportunity to respond.

Opening Affirmative Speech

In some ways, this is the easiest speech in the debate because it is the only speech that can be fully scripted. However, the opening speaker also has a tall burden. He or she must introduce the topic, place the primary points of controversy in appropriate context, introduce all of the major arguments that his or her side will defend, and (if possible) preview arguments that they expect to hear from the negative team. Remember that the opening speaker must introduce all of his or her team’s major points - in other words, a subsequent presenter cannot say, “The first speaker ran out of time, but we also want to include _____ as a major argument.” Because of this, the opening speaker must place a premium on efficiency.

Opening Negative Speech

The opening negative speech should begin with a brief introduction to the topic that previews the negative team's strategy in the debate. The speaker should then (1) introduce arguments that directly clash with the major points that the affirmative team introduced, and/or (2) introduce a series of additional arguments that independently refute the resolution.

For example, imagine that the resolution is "The United States should deploy troops to Syria." If the affirmative claims that deploying American troops would help to reduce violence in Syria, the negative might respond by arguing that such an action would actually result in additional violence and instability. In this way, the negative directly clashes with an argument that was already introduced by the affirmative side. However, the negative might also choose to argue that deploying troops to Syria would be a costly process that would be harmful to the American economy. This constitutes a new and independent reason to oppose the resolution. A successful negative team normally combines both approaches: directly challenging the affirmative's main points and also introducing their own new arguments.

In general, the negative's arguments will take the following forms: (1) there is not a need for the action called for in the resolution, (2) the action of the resolution will not be effective in accomplishing the goals that the affirmative identified, and (3) the action of the resolution will lead to unintended negative consequences or costs that outweigh any potential benefits.

Finally, as explained above in the "Burden of Rejoinder" section, the negative team is expected to fully respond to the affirmative case and to introduce each of its major arguments in this speech. The negative side is not allowed to introduce completely new objections at a later point in the debate.

Second Affirmative Speech

The duties of the second affirmative speaker are twofold: the affirmative should refute the negative team's arguments and also repair damage to its own case.

This speech can be viewed as an attempt to refocus the debate on the affirmative's preferred issues. From this perspective, the negative team tried to distract the audience by introducing a variety of opposing arguments. The affirmative now wants to show why those issues are either irrelevant or incorrect so that attention can be refocused on the affirmative team's best arguments.

As a presenter, you should attempt to dispense with the negative's arguments as efficiently as possible. Go point-by-point through their arguments and explain why those claims are flawed or unimportant when placed in comparison with your own team's major points. In the process, you can attempt to expand support for the arguments that your partner introduced in the opening

speech. A successful presenter will not merely repeat the original arguments; instead, the skilled debater will build on and extend previous material so that the audience has additional justification for believing your side.

Second Negative Speech

The goals of the second negative speaker are similar to those of the second affirmative. You want to refocus the debate on the issues of controversy that your team believes are important. However, at this point you should also begin to focus the debate toward a smaller number of points. Your opponents are probably correct about some of the arguments in the debate. If possible, you should concede those points and focus your attention elsewhere. Explain why your side should still win the debate despite those concessions.

For example, assume that the first negative made the two arguments from the example above (that a military incursion in Syria would increase violence and would also be prohibitively expensive for the United States). The second affirmative speaker might do an excellent job of explaining why military incursion would actually decrease violence, but he or she may fail to address the question of cost. In this case, the negative can largely (or entirely) concede the issue of violence in Syria and focus the speech on the issue of economic consequences. After all, the negative can win the debate if they demonstrate that even a successful military intervention would create such tremendous economic consequences that the costs outweigh the benefits of reducing violence.

Alternatively, if the second affirmative speaker showed that a military incursion could be conducted cheaply, the negative might dedicate the majority of this speech toward showing why military engagement would lead to an increase in violence. The fact that a military deployment may be relatively inexpensive is irrelevant if the action is counterproductive. In other words, your goal in this speech is to select the path of least resistance - concede arguments that are no longer relevant or that you cannot win; focus your attention on the most viable points that will still allow you to win the debate as a whole.

Closing Speeches

In the final two speeches of the debate, each speaker summarizes the round and attempts to demonstrate why his or her team should win.

As the debate moves towards its conclusion, the focus should become narrower. Each debater will attempt to identify the “central conflicts” in the round. By this point, it should be clear that some points of contention are much more significant than others, and participants should be able to identify what the controversy in the debate is really about. The debaters who make the final speeches for each team should not be trying to think of new ways to rephrase old arguments. Instead, they should try to reduce the major points of conflict in the debate to the simplest form and to explain why their team is ahead on each critical issue. Having done this, the presenters should then explain the relevance of each issue in the round.

When preparing for this speech, ask yourself, “If we win ____ argument, why does that mean we should win the debate?” Explain your answer to audience. Also ask yourself, “If the audience decides that our opponents should win the debate, what will their rationale be?” Use the answer to shape your closing speech. Attempt to cast doubt upon the line of reasoning that would lead the audience to favor your opponent.

Finally, remember that entirely new arguments are not permitted in the rebuttal speeches. That means that neither team can present a new major line of analysis. This can be a tricky concept for new debaters. You are permitted to read additional evidence, to extend preexisting arguments, to offer new comparisons of existing arguments, and to place arguments in context with one another. But entirely new lines of argument entirely cannot be introduced in the closing speeches because there is not sufficient time left in the debate for those points to be fairly evaluated by both sides.

The “AREA” Method

A complete argument includes four components: an Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, and Application. As you conduct research and begin to assemble arguments, remember that a complete argument should cover all four AREAs.

Assertion

An assertion is the claim or statement that an argument centers around. It expresses a relationship between two ideas. For example, “Economic sanctions are a useful means of coercing other governments to change their behavior.” Put another way, an assertion is the label for the argument. It is what the debater wants the audience to write down or remember. The remaining components of the argument serve to support the assertion in terms of logic, evidence, and importance. Assertions should be relatively short and should emphasize clarity.

Reasoning

The reasoning is the logical explanation for why a statement is true. It is the warrant, or rationale, for an argument. This is where a debater explains that an argument is logically valid. For example, “Domestic conditions worsen in sanctioned countries. As domestic conditions worsen, the political leaders within the country face pressure to change their policies so that the sanctions will be lifted.” In the assertion, the debater claimed that a relationship existed between sanctions and successful coercion. However, the assertion alone did not offer an explanation for why that relationship existed. To complete the argument, the debater must also present the reasoning for their assertion. This distinguishes claims from arguments: a claim is merely an assertion, whereas an argument uses a logical principle to compel belief on behalf of the audience.

Evidence

The evidence is the empirical support for the assertion and reasoning. This is where the debater uses some fact, testimony, example, or expert opinion to bolster the point being made. Evidence comes in the form of fact that has been researched prior to the debate. For example, the debater might cite a study that examines public approval ratings for governments in sanctioned countries. Alternatively, the team might introduce a quotation from an expert who explains how a specific government changed its policies as a result of economic sanctions.

Application

The application is an explanation of how the current argument relates to other claims being made in the debate. Debaters should ask themselves, “Why is the argument important?” They should explain how the argument should affect the audience’s interpretation of other issues in the debate. Why should this argument influence the audience’s opinion of who should win the debate or whether the resolution is true? For example, a team might introduce economic sanctions as a plausible alternative to military intervention. In this case, the application of their argument might be, “If economic sanctions are a successful means of coercing other governments, that suggests that military intervention is unnecessary. Because military intervention is unnecessary, you should not vote for our opponents - especially if we can prove that intervention is also costly.”

A Note of Caution about AREA

Adhering to the AREA format will not guarantee that your arguments are strong. It will merely help you form *complete* arguments.

Checking for whether your arguments include claims, reasoning, evidence, and application will help you avoid the mistake of presenting an argument without supporting data, without a valid logical explanation, or without a demonstration of why it is relevant. However, your argument may still be weak.

The example above about economic sanctions is a complete argument that include all of the AREA components. Despite this, the overall value of economic sanctions is a contested issue. Skilled opponents would point out that there are numerous examples sanctions that were largely ineffective or even counterproductive. They might also argue that sanctions are extremely costly both for the sanctioning country or countries as well as for the country being sanctioned. For an extended discussion of economic sanctions, see “Should Economic Sanctions Be Imposed on Governments that Violate Human Rights” in Chapter 12 of the textbook.

General Suggestions

Know Your Case

In order to be viewed as a credible, intelligent, and persuasive advocate for a position, a debater must thoroughly understand the topic. Each presenter, regardless of his or her eventual role in the debate, should engage in a detailed and organized program of research that explores all aspects of the resolution. At a minimum, debaters must be familiar with all of the evidence and arguments that make up their own team's opening speech. They should understand the function and purpose of each component so that the points can be referenced in later speeches. Finally, they should attempt to anticipate opposing arguments and create short answers that can be read in response.

Learn to Prioritize

New debaters often want to win every single argument and tend to believe that each point is equally important. This is exactly the wrong mindset. By the end of each debate, your side will be winning some arguments but also losing some arguments. Your goal should be to convince the audience that the arguments you are winning are more important than the arguments you are losing. You should therefore resist the urge to extend and discuss as many points as possible. Your partner might have made six very good points in response to your opponents, but in the concluding speech you don't have sufficient time to repeat each and every one of them. Instead, discuss only the ones that you believe are strongest. Choose where your time can most valuably be spent. Be willing to concede minor points or even ignore entire issues. A successful debater need not win the most arguments but rather the most important arguments.

Once you've selected an argument, clearly identify how it compares to the arguments of your opponent. Attempt to explain why your argument is better-evidenced, why the example is more applicable, why it takes into account recent changes that your opponent's reasoning ignores, why your argument accounts for factors that your opponent has overlooked, why your example is empirically supported while your opponent's is theoretical, etc. Distinguish for the audience the quality, importance, and credibility of your evidence or argument from those of your opponent and explain why those distinctions should lead the audience to side with you on issues of tension.

Focus on Reasoning and Evidence

The side that wins the debate is usually the one that convinces the audience that their analysis is correct. You can convince the audience that your arguments are strong by providing robust reasoning and evidence for each of your claims.

Remember that your audience is first and foremost skeptical. They do not automatically believe what you say. Do not preach to them as if what you offer is gospel while what the other team claims is nonsense. You need to work hard to overcome their skepticism, and you do so by building relationships between assertion and reasoning, claim and evidence. Do not merely settle for a tenable case; attempt to develop a wall of analysis and support that imbues your arguments with credibility. You must decisively, clearly, and conclusively demonstrate the strength of your reasoning and your support.

Make Every Argument Count

Argument selection occurs from the beginning of the round to the end. If you cannot visualize how an argument in your opening speech could be employed in the conclusion speech as part of a winning strategy, then you should not invest time in that argument in the first place.

The opening speech in the debate should not be a random collection of items. It should be a series of cohesive arguments each of which can independently be used to win the round. Remember that your time is valuable - everything you say should be something you can envision using in the final speech in order to win.

Control the Topics of Discussion

Dominance in football, basketball, and soccer games is often measured based on time of possession. The longer that a team retains possession of the ball, the stronger they have performed relative to their opponents. Debate is similar. There isn't a ball that is passed back and forth, and both teams speak for the same amount of time, so the struggle is about what the teams spend their time doing.

The more time your opponents can spend talking about their own preferred arguments the more successful they are likely to be. Your goal is to control the topics that are being discussed and steer the other team toward issues on which your side has an advantage.

Define the Controversy

Framing the round is critical to the outcome. The goal of a skilled debater is not so much to answer the question of the resolution but rather to define that question. For example, imagine that the resolution is "The United States should do more to promote women's rights in areas in which such rights are not currently respected." In this case, the affirmative might argue that the central controversy is whether the international community has a moral obligations to offer assistance to the victims of human rights abuses, rather than turn a blind eye to the suffering of others. This framing of the argument generally favors the affirmative side because it depicts the intervention as welcome and desirable. By contrast, the negative team might argue that the central controversy is whether we should allow western powers to ignore the norms of sovereignty and dictate policy in former colonies. Reframed in this manner, the resolution may favor the negative side.

Be careful, though, to always frame the resolution in a reasonable way. Your overall goal is to convince the audience that your framing is correct so that they will use it as a starting point when they evaluate the debate. If your interpretation is too extreme, the audience will likely refuse to consider it.

Use Teamwork

Remember that you and your partner(s) are on the same team. Each of you will make mistakes, but divisiveness over the errors will not help. Nothing is more destructive than the perception that members of a team disagree about the strategy that they have chosen or do not understand one another's arguments. The audience will notice if there is internal disagreement between team members.

Do your best to trust one another. If they ask you to make a certain argument during the debate, attempt to accommodate the request - perhaps they know more about the issue than you or have a good reason for asking you to make the argument but lack the time to explain it. On the other hand, do not demand too much of your partners. You can offer them suggestion and advice, but when the time come the person who is about to speak has the authority to decide what he or she will say.

Be Honest

You must be honest about your appraisal of the round. Don't exaggerate, don't lie, and don't take evidence out of context.

III. Analyzing the Resolution

Beginning Your Search

Brainstorm

Although brainstorming for ideas and arguments at the beginning of the process is valuable, you should set a firm limit on the amount of time your group plans to spend brainstorming. Consider discussing the topic together for a maximum of 10-15 minutes prior to beginning background reading. Once everyone has developed a baseline of familiarity with the issue, reconvene and brainstorm again if necessary.

Conduct Background Reading

After you assemble into a team and brainstorm, your next task is to analyze the resolution and the overall issue from which it stems. You must define the terms of the resolution, familiarize with all significant literature, and identify the major controversies that are related to the topic.

At first, this seems like a hopeless endeavor - the sheer quantity of available information is tremendous. There is probably more literature on most controversial international issues than the average student could possibly read in the timespan of a single class. Your reading, then, must be planned for both breadth and efficiency.

For this class, you should begin by reading the relevant sections of the textbook. Each of the debate topics have been carefully written so that they tie in to one or more chapters from the book. These should give you a good baseline understanding of the major issues and concepts that are at play in your topic. Once you have read that material, consider reading other topic overviews. The New York Times' "Times Topics" webpage is sometimes a good place to look - you can search for all of the articles that the newspaper has published that relate to a given topic. For major topics, the results will also contain a summarized version of the most important articles. This can be a good place to begin your background reading. You should also consider checking the Wikipedia entries that relate to your resolution, although you will need to independently verify all of the facts contained on those pages.

Once you feel comfortable with the background material you should begin to consult sources that represent contrasting perspectives on the issue. However, be mindful of the potential bias among the authors and sources whose materials you read. Furthermore, much of the writing on controversial issues is either superficial or secondhand - you should prioritize sources with established reputations for accuracy. Finally, most measured analyses contain carefully phrased qualifying statements, caveats, and conditions - be wary of summaries that may gloss over the nuances of a given issue.

Consider the Course Themes

While researching, remember to focus on the themes from the course. Continually ask yourself, "What are the interests of the major actors involved in this controversy? What evidence do I have

that I have correctly identified those interests? In what ways do the various players interact? What types of institutions shape their interactions? What do those institutions tell us about the overall prospects for cooperation or conflict?”

For example, if the resolution said, “The United States should negotiate with terrorists,” you should attempt to identify the interests of the United States as well as the terrorists. You should then consider whether the list of interests you have stipulated, deduced, or inferred are reasonable.

Ask yourself what negotiation between terrorists and governments might entail, whether there are examples of successful negotiations that have occurred in the past, whether there is a specific list of conditions under which it might make more or less sense to negotiate. Also consider whether or not negotiation constitutes the status quo. If a change in policy is theoretically desirable, what political factors inhibit governments from enacting such changes?

Next, attempt to assess the structure of the interaction. In this case, negotiations between terrorists and governments constitute a conflict or bargaining process. What are the common barriers to cooperation or efficient outcomes in that type of strategic environment? After you read chapter 3 (“Why are There Wars?”) and chapter 6 (“Violence by Nonstate Actors: Civil War and Terrorism”) from the textbook, you may ask yourself how the explanations for bargaining failure apply to terrorist groups. Are terrorists, for example, capable of making credible commitments?

Finally, determine what types of institutions govern the interaction between terrorists and governments. How might those institutions be changed in order to remedy the problem? How would a change in institutions be perceived either domestically or internationally?

Define Important Terms

The resolution may include imprecise terms. Even minor changes in the interpretation of these words or phrases could vastly alter the meaning of the resolution. For example, consider a resolution that states, “The United States should adopt a policy of Constructive Engagement with Cuba.” In this case, the term “Constructive Engagement” may be defined in various, mutually exclusive ways. For example, some advocates within the literature argue that “constructive engagement” refers to a quid-pro-quo type arrangement in which the United States promises to adopt policy changes only after Cuba accedes to a series of requests. By contrast, other authors define “constructive engagement” as an unconditional policy change made by one country as an attempt to appease the other. These two definitions are entirely inconsistent.

If the two debate teams prepared using conflicting definitions, the resulting debate could be very confusing. Because this is a classroom debate and two of the criteria for evaluation are the clarity of presentation and the educational value of the debate for members of the audience, teams should consult with the TA and with one another to ensure that they are on the same page regarding the definition of important words and phrases. This is one area in which conversing with the other side is not only tolerable but is actually encouraged. Teams should not use “trick

definitions” in an effort to gain a competitive advantage or shift the terms of the debate in their favor.

Debaters should also be able to define terms that do not themselves appear in the resolution but are likely to be referenced in the course of the debate. For example, the term “Cuban Embargo” does not itself appear in our example, but a discussion of the embargo is likely to occur in a debate about increasing American engagement with Cuba. Thus, well-prepared debaters will be able to confidently discuss and describe the Cuban Embargo.

In addition to facilitating a high quality debate, defining terms allows teams to rule out issues that are not intended to be the subject of debate. For example, the resolution might be, “The United States should increase support for the use of renewable energy.” In this case, debaters might initially be inclined to argue that nuclear energy is a clean and efficient source of power. However, upon researching relevant definitions they might realize that “renewable energy” refers to sources of energy that are either naturally-replenishing or non-diminishing such as geothermal power, wind and hydro turbine power, and solar power. It would not be appropriate for the affirmative team to advocate in favor of nuclear energy, which is dependent upon the use of fissile materials that are not naturally restored. Thus, if debaters begin the process of preparation by identifying appropriate definitions for the terms in the topic they can improve the efficiency with which they conduct the remainder of their research.

Identify Major Issues

While reading about the topic, begin to identify the major areas of controversy. Look for arguments on which there is substantial disagreement in the literature. For example, if the resolution relates to international efforts to reduce carbon emissions, there may be significant debate on the likely effectiveness, practicality, and political support for regulatory treaties. In this case, it might be important to prepare evidence and reasoning that would allow your team to competently defend either side of each controversy.

The number of major issues varies from one resolution to another and can be determined only by careful analysis of the problem. In general, the number of issues is rather small - perhaps four to six. If you believe that there are more issues, try to determine whether they can be clustered into categories. It is likely that the “main issues” that you have identified are actually subcomponents of broader controversies.

Continue to reevaluate your main arguments throughout the research process. As you discover new issues and encounter new evidence, you should consider the arguments that you had previously identified. Ask yourself whether any should be rephrased, revised, or removed entirely.

One means of identifying critical arguments is to consider the “stock issues.” These are commonplace questions that facilitate the analysis of most resolutions. They can be phrased as follows:

“Is there a need for change in the status quo?”

Are there certain problems, harms, or shortcomings in current policy or in the existing state of affairs? Are those problems inherent to the current policy or are they merely coincidental artifacts? Can those concerns be remedied within the framework of existing policy, or is wholesale change along the lines of the resolution necessary to address them?

“Will the policy change suggested by the resolution be sufficient to solve existing problems?”

Will the proposed policy change actually remedy the harms that you identify in the status quo, or will the change be insufficient? Is there an alternative option that would resolve the problem more efficiently or reliably?

“On balance, will the policy change produce additional advantages?”

Beyond remedying whatever problems are inherent to the status quo, the policy change may yield independent gains; if so, what are those benefits? Is the advocated policy practical? Even if it produces benefits, will the change also cause undesirable side-effects? If so, are those negative consequences worse than the status quo problems that the policy will resolve or the advantages that the policy will provide? Are these alternative means of realizing the benefits?

“How will the policy change affect different groups of individuals or factors of value?”

What are the comprehensive consequences of the policy in question? How will the change affect individuals, interest groups, businesses, the domestic state and federal governments, or other countries? How will the change impact the domestic and international economies, the environment, or political relationships between countries?

Evaluate Issue Importance

Once you have identified the major areas of controversy you should also determine whether any of them are absolutely essential for either side to win. In a debate about the merits of military intervention, for example, the affirmative team may be able to win the debate even if their opponents prove that a military intervention would be incredibly costly (the benefits may nevertheless exceed the costs). On the other hand, if the negative team successfully demonstrates that the United States lacks the capability to engage in military interventions, the affirmative may be unable to win the debate - if military intervention is not a viable option for the United States, the audience has no choice but to vote for the negative. As a result, in order to win the debate a well-prepared affirmative team absolutely must be able to show that implementing a military intervention is well within the capabilities of the United States. Understanding the list of arguments that are essential to either side is a vital requirement for the debaters.

Presumption and the Status Quo

Your final goal when assessing the resolution is to determine which side has the burden of proof and which side will defend the “status quo.” The status quo means the existing state of the world. For example, consider the resolution “The United States should ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).” In

this case, the negative team is responsible for defending the status quo: that the United States should not ratify CEDAW. By contrast, the affirmative team is asked to advocate a change: American participation in CEDAW. Debaters should attempt to identify benefits and costs associated with this change. In the process, it is essential to consider the relative desirability of the status quo. Is the current state of affairs desirable? Will continuing on our current trajectory create problems? Understanding the current state of the world is every bit as important or even more important than understanding the policy change that is being considered.

One concept that is strongly associated with the status quo is that of presumption. Presumption means that, when evaluating policies, we should assume that the existing state of affairs will continue unless one team provides sufficiently strong evidence in favor of changing it. This concept attempts to encapsulate the fact that existing policies are, to varying extents, locked in. For example, the United States is not currently party to CEDAW. That policy will remain in place until advocates within the federal government who desire change are able to convince enough of their colleagues that the current policy is undesirable. In other words, it is easier to maintain an existing policy than to advocate for a change. The concept of presumption also exists in the American criminal justice system, where a defendant is presumed innocent until he or she is proven guilty. In this case, the prosecution has the burden of proof - they are tasked with demonstrating beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant is guilty of the alleged crime.

In debate, we mirror this phenomena by placing the burden of proof at the feet of the team who advocates for a change from the status quo. In the example above, it is the affirmative's burden to prove that the United States should change its current policies by signing and ratifying CEDAW. If the affirmative team fails to provide sufficient evidence and reasoning that this change is desirable, then the negative team should win the debate because we can presume that the status quo is acceptable. This decision calculus suggests that a perfect "tie" is impossible in debate. If the audience concludes that voting for either side of the resolution is equally desirable, then the team tasked with changing the status quo has not fulfilled their burden, and the issue of presumption suggests we should vote for the other side.

Thus, the team responsible for defending the status quo should attempt to find reasons why it is as desirable as possible, and why changes away from the status quo will be harmful, costly, or risky. On the other hand, the team that is tasked with advocating a change away from the status quo (usually the affirmative) should attempt to list reasons why the status quo is undesirable and why a policy change is necessary, worthwhile, or beneficial. Throughout the debate, attempt to explain the benefits and costs of the policy change relative to the status quo.

Finally, note that there is a difference between the overall burden of proof and the burden of proof on each individual issue in the debate. The affirmative team has the overall burden of proof to show that the resolution should be adopted. However, an individual burden of proof rests of each team whenever they introduce an argument into the debate. Teams must always provide evidentiary support and logical reasoning for the claims that they make.

IV. Evidence and Case Design

Cataloging and Organizing Information

Begin to build and organize a database of information as soon as you acquire a general familiarity with the issue. You should assemble all of the information that may help you in supporting either side of the resolution. At this stage, try to be as comprehensive as possible - if you limit your initial recording, you may find it necessary to return to the source material time and again as you realize that evidence you once thought was irrelevant now holds value. Although the comprehensive approach means you will probably accumulate information that eventually holds little value or that is made redundant by other data, it is better to record everything up front. After all, recording an interesting quotation and citation is much more efficient than attempting to remember and relocate what you previously read.

While collecting evidence, you should record all of the following information:

- A subject heading that describes the major points being addressed.
- The information itself (copy and paste the paragraph, table, or graph).
- A summary of the source information (author, date, publication venue, page number, web address, etc.).
- Relevant supplemental information (author qualifications, potential biases that you should consider, etc.).

As you gather information, begin to divide it into an outline in which individual pieces of evidence that support similar arguments are grouped together. The following is an outline of how a debater might approach a resolution. For example, if you are debating the merits of economic sanctions and have collected several example cases in which sanctions were associated with a change in behavior on behalf of the targeted country, you should group all of those examples in a single category. Whenever you encounter a distinct argument on either side of the topic you should create a new section in your outline in which you can place similar material.

Share these outlines with your teammates. Consider creating a document on Google Drive or Dropbox so that people can contribute simultaneously to the same source. Not only will this ensure that everyone has a good idea of the breadth of the topic, but it will also prevent you from needing to merge everyone's independent research later in the process.

You may choose to divide up the research on specific issues. For example, one person may search for an analysis of the domestic consequences of a given policy change while another searches for the international political effects. However, each of you should have a working knowledge of the debate as a whole.

Types of Evidence

Evidence serves as the support material for your arguments. It consists of facts you use to establish the strength and veracity of your claims. Your goal is to gather evidence, apply reasoning, and then form conclusions on the basis of what you observe.

At a conceptual level, evidence can be classified as either direct or presumptive. Direct evidence is self-evident. This is when a condition or fact can be demonstrated to be true without reliance upon any other evidence. For example, in a debate about whether the United States should join the International Criminal Court (ICC), the number of current members could be verified by referencing the court's website. Presumptive evidence is either indirect or circumstantial. This type of evidence demonstrates a fact on the basis of other subsidiary facts from which the major claim may be inferred. For example, teams might argue that American accession to the ICC would lead to sovereignty violations against the United States. Because the United States is not yet a member of the ICC, there is no direct evidence that can demonstrate the veracity of this claim. As such, negative teams must provide subsidiary evidence that will support their argument, such as (1) other countries have suffered invasions of sovereignty after ratifying the ICC, (2) it would be to other states' advantage to prosecute American officials through the ICC, (3) other countries have suggested the prosecution of Americans through the ICC, etc. From these related pieces of evidence we may then *presume* that the United States may suffer sovereignty violations if it became an ICC participant.

Debaters make use of both direct and presumptive evidence. Direct evidence is frequently used to establish supporting contentions, but the resolution itself cannot be proven true or false by direct evidence alone. If irrefutable evidence existed that could easily resolve the question of the resolution then there would be no point in debating the issue. For example, at one point it might have been worthwhile to debate the resolution, "Humankind now possesses sufficient resources to split the atom," but the answer is now obvious - we have direct proof that atomic weapons and energy have been developed.

Testing Evidence

Debaters should apply a variety of tests to their own evidence to test its strength and credibility. Before including evidence in their case, it is important to determine which components of their research are weak and which stand a better chance of holding up against opposing criticism. At the same time, resolving these questions may help debaters predict and prepare for the types of refutation their opponent will offer.

During the debate, you should also apply these tests to your opponent's evidence. If you believe that your opponent's evidence suffers from one of these flaws, you should attempt to demonstrate this to the audience. If you fail to respond to your opponent's evidence, the audience may accept that evidence at face value even if it is objectively weak. Indeed, the absence of refutation may enhance the value that the audience attaches to the evidence - they may assume that the argument went unchallenged because it is difficult to refute.

Is the evidence internally consistent?

Study each piece of evidence carefully and determine whether the argument being made is consistent with the remainder of the evidence. For example, the opening paragraphs of articles are often most strongly phrased than other sections that contain contradictions, caveats, qualifying claims, and restriction conditions. Evidence may lose much of its force when placed within its proper context.

Is the evidence verifiable?

Can you authenticate, confirm, and substantiate the fact through other sources? When you encounter statements that appear to be “too good to be true,” you should attempt to check them against other sources that you believe are credible.

Is the source of evidence competent?

Consider whether the source of the evidence is qualified to testify on this particular issue. Did he or she personally observe the fact or behavior in question? Does the author have credentials, qualifications, or a background that suggests he or she is believable? Is the author personally tied to the policy? In many cases the predominant authors on a particular issue are directly invested - either financially or emotionally - in the outcome. If so, their complicity may threaten their objectivity.

Is the evidence representative? Was the process of gathering evidence methodologically sound?

Attempt to evaluate the process through which the evidence was gathered. For example, you may find polling data attesting to the popularity of a given policy. However, that data may not be representative of overall public opinion if only a small number of people were sampled, if the respondents did not answer questions honestly, if responses were classified incorrectly, etc. Similarly, consider whether the interpretation of the results is statistically valid. Is the data accurately reported (secondary sources often round to “memorable” figures, such as reporting an 86% increase as “nearly 90%”)? Are the reported differences statistically significant? Is the point of comparison reasonable?

Is the evidence sufficiently recent?

In many cases the age of the evidence is an important factor. Old evidence may no longer be relevant, particularly if conditions have changed since the evidence was collected. On the other hand, there are some circumstances in which newer evidence is less valuable - for example, when assessing historical events primary source documents may be more illuminating than contemporary publications.

Is the evidence consistent with other evidence?

Finally, draw upon your knowledge of other events and information related to the question at hand. Does this piece of evidence fit well with the other facts? If so, you may be able to convince the audience to interpret it more charitably by presenting it alongside other corroborative evidence. By contrast, if the evidence runs counter to traditional assumptions you may need to work harder to overcome the audience's own suspicions.

Consider the Audience

In addition to the logical tests regarding your evidence, debaters should also consider whether the audience will accept the evidence. Despite our best wishes, audiences do not render decisions on the basis of logic alone. As a result, you should attempt to determine whether the evidence is consistent with the existing beliefs of your audience. If so, you may either encounter resistance or the audience may be overly eager to accept any refutation that your opponent levies against your evidence.

Also consider whether the source is acceptable to the audience. People tend to believe some sources more readily than others. If the author or publisher of a piece of evidence has high prestige, then the audience is likely to accept the evidence with little to no hesitation. On the other hand, if the audience harbors private doubts about the credibility of a given outlet then evidence from that source may be discredited regardless of its intrinsic quality. In this case, you may find it necessary to establish the credibility of the author before presenting the evidence itself. Finally, attempt to evaluate whether your description of the evidence is appropriate for the audience. When possible, try not to use evidence that is too technical or sophisticated for the audience to understand. If forced to use this type of evidence, you may need to devote significant time during your speech to the process of interpreting the evidence for your audience.

Selecting Evidence for Your Case

Your case is an outline of the arguments you intend to present during the debate. In principle, the case fulfills the following functions for each side of the debate:

- Introduces and frames the major points of controversy (Both sides).
- Demonstrates that a need for change either does (Aff) or does not (Neg) exist.
- Shows that the action of the resolution would (Aff) or would not (Neg) resolve that need.
- Shows that the action of the resolution would yield additional advantages (Aff).
- Show that any benefits produced by the resolution would be offset by disadvantages (Neg).

Drafting the case is the responsibility of all team members - if they fail to coordinate and agree upon a case then their approach will be inconsistent and they will be vulnerable to attack from the opposition. As you construct your case, consider the following goals:

Balance Breadth and Depth

Attempt to strike an appropriate balance between breadth and depth. Remember that each presenter has only a limited amount of time to make arguments and that all of the major points need to be introduced in each side's opening speech. Thus, you must balance between the conflicting goals of increasing the number and variety of arguments to include (argumentative breadth) and increasing the amount of evidence and reasoning you present in support of each individual point (depth).

At one extreme you can imagine a team that presents twenty or even thirty arguments that are each only a few words in length. Because the arguments are poorly explained and supported, the audience will likely give them little credence in the debate. Moreover, if their opponents seek to engage each and every one of the arguments that were presented, the debate will become exceedingly shallow, with poor analysis of any individual issue. On the other hand, you can imagine a team that dedicates its entire speech to a single point, belaboring the issue over and over again. In this case, the team is vulnerable if the opponents offer a well-executed rebuttal against that argument. Likewise, the debate itself may be overly narrow if the presenters focus discussion exclusively on this specific point of controversy at the expense of other issues that are relevant to the topic. In order to avoid a shallow or narrow debate, teams should strike a balance between argumentative depth and breadth.

In the context of this class, it is generally wise to focus on between two and four main points. The affirmative will normally introduce three or four major arguments; the negative will normally introduce one or two while also refuting those introduced by the affirmative.

Keep Redundant Evidence in Reserve

In debate, time is at a premium. Well-prepared debaters always have more evidence at their disposal than they can possibly use in the time available. Much of the evidence that you gather will be duplicative - you will have several items of evidence in support of each of your major points. You may feel compelled to include all of these in your opening speech, but it is normally better to introduce only those pieces of evidence that are most clear, most compelling, most interesting, and most relevant.

If you retain additional evidence in reserve you will be able to cover more ground in your opening speech and will also have more material at your disposal that you can reference or introduce either during the question and answer period or in subsequent speeches. In debate, the clash over a certain line of argument rarely ends after a single explanation by each side. For example, assume that you advance a particular argument but your opponent offers a compelling response. If you prepared thoroughly, you should already have anticipated that response and prepared for it with a counter-response. It is for these cases that you may find it valuable to retain evidence in reserve - even if you are continually pressed on a given issue you will be able to provide additional support for your position.

Remain Flexible

Although you will attempt to predict the arguments that your opponents will present, your guesses may or may not be accurate. If you have created a particularly rigid case, you may find yourself with inappropriate material that does not directly clash with your opponent's arguments. Attempt to draft a case that can be quickly altered depending on what arguments you encounter. For example, you may draft it in such a way that certain paragraphs or examples can be switched in and out at ease. Discuss with your partners which version of the case you should present and how your decision making should change contingent on your opponent's behavior.

V. Logical Reasoning

Logical reasoning is the process of inferring conclusions from premises. In debate, your goal is to combine evidence and logical reasoning to arrive at valid conclusions. In this section, we analyze degrees of likelihood, identify types of reasoning as well as tests that can be used to evaluate each type, and then consider several common obstacles to clear thinking.

Degrees of Likelihood

When a group of premises are combined with logical reasoning different degrees of likelihood may be established: certainty, probability, plausibility, and possibility. These terms can be used to describe how compelling different logical proofs are in comparison to one another.

Certainty is associated with absolute truth. In other words, all competent and impartial observers would be forced to concur. Very little of the major issues of controversy in a debate will reflect this level of proof. After all, questions that are already answered with certainty are not suitable subjects for debate.

Probability is associated with a high degree of likelihood that the conclusion is true. Most arguments forwarded by debaters fall within the realm of probability; you seek to demonstrate that your conclusions are sufficiently likely that they warrant acceptance or consideration. One of your goals is to show that your conclusions are probable or certain while your opponent's conclusions are merely plausible, possible, or incorrect entirely.

Plausibility is associated with a lower degree of likelihood than probability. As a debater you should use arguments that are merely plausible only when no better arguments are available. Arguments that are merely plausible will likely have little capacity to compel the audience.

Finally, possibility is associated with a very low degree of likelihood that a proposition is true. For example, it is *possible* that the university will be closed tomorrow due to inclement weather, but in San Diego this is highly unlikely in the absence of suggestive evidence. Debaters have minimal use for claims that are merely possibilities.

Types of Reasoning and Tests for Each Type

Debaters should test their reasoning to determine the degree of likelihood associated with their conclusions. These tests take the form of questions that can be applied against each type of reasoning. In general, an affirmative answer to one of these questions implies that the reasoning is sound, while a negative answer suggests that the reasoning may suffer from a fallacy.

Types of Reasoning

You may be familiar with the classification of reasoning as either “inductive” or “deductive.” Inductive reasoning can be defined as the process of reasoning from specific cases to a generalization. For example, a person might notice that UCSD is located alongside the ocean and reason that all universities are located near beaches. Deductive reasoning, by comparison, is the process of reasoning from a generalization to a specific case. An observer, for example, may believe that all universities maintain football programs and therefore assume that UCSD also maintains a football program.

As should be obvious from the examples, merely engaging in the reasoning process does not ensure that the conclusions are valid. There are, of course, many universities that do not maintain football programs or that are not located along the ocean. Tests for reasoning are therefore valuable and are covered throughout this section.

While the distinction between inductive and deductive reasoning is sometimes convenient, in practice debaters continually move from induction to deduction and vice versa as they develop and analyze arguments. As such, we catalogue types of reasoning according to a different schematic based on the type of evidence being offered to reach the conclusion.

Reasoning by Example

The process of reasoning by example consists of inferring general conclusions from specific cases. Sometimes a single case may be used to establish a conclusion or generalization. More commonly, however, a number of cases will be offered in support of the conclusion. Debaters make frequent use of reasoning by example. For instance, a debater might argue that terrorist attacks commonly result in military retaliation on behalf of the affected state. As such, the debater might introduce a list of examples of instances in which states engaged in aggressive military activity in the wake of a terror event.

The following questions serve as tests for reasoning by example:

- Are the examples sufficiently similar? For instance, some people argue that the international environment has changed significantly over time. Are the examples in question from a contemporary period? If not, why might or might not they still be useful when determining what is likely in the case of the resolution?
- Are the points of similarity critical to the comparison, while the points of distinction are unimportant? It is not sufficient that the cases are parallel along certain attributes. In order for a strong comparison to be drawn the examples must be similar along all critical variables. In many ways the human heart closely resembles a water pump, but most observers would not conclude that a plumber is equally qualified to repair either of them.
- Are there a reasonable number of examples? A single case may be used to support a conclusion, but the degree of confidence associated with the generalization usually increases as additional supporting examples are introduced. Even carefully controlled experiments may be evaluated skeptically until they are replicated by several teams of scientists.

- Are the examples typical or at least parallel to the case of the resolution? Attempt to gauge whether the cases in question are representative of the range of variation on the issue. If either the example cases or the case proposed in the resolution fall too far from the norm they may not overlap sufficiently to yield strong evidence for one another. For example, if the resolution asks whether the United States should sanction China, examples of successful American sanctions applied against peripheral countries may not be applicable given the relative power of China.
- Are opposing examples non-critical? When considering issues as complex as international relations it is unlikely that every conceivable example will clearly support your argument. Some historical cases will either be difficult to interpret or will even support the opposite conclusion. This is why matters of international relations are more often evaluated in terms of probability than certainty. However, you should evaluate the relative strength of your examples when compared to counterexamples. In other words, what is the most likely outcome associated with a given type of action? Why do the counterexamples not invalidate your conclusion?

Causal Reasoning

Causal reasoning is the process of inferring that a certain factor produces or leads to a given effect.² For example, a debater might theorize that transnational actors have been critical to the transformation of international norms. The debater would therefore attempt to identify the specific mechanism through which the influence occurs.

The following tests may be applied to evaluate causal reasoning:

- Is the alleged cause relevant to the effect described or are the two merely coincidental?
- Is the alleged cause the sole causal factor or is it one of many contributing influences? In the case of the latter, how might one determine the relative influence of each factor? Is the cause sufficient to produce the effect independent of additional stimuli? Is it necessary?
- If applied to the case of the resolution, is there a counteracting cause? In the context of the resolution is there an action that would offset the theorized effect or is the full impact of the relationship likely to be observed?
- Are there other consequences that are associated with the cause? If so, are they likely to prove beneficial or harmful? (This is not strictly a means of evaluating the logical strength of the argument. However, the question may prove useful to debaters who seek to refute an opponent's argument.)

General Tests for Reasoning

² In some cases, a particular effect can occur only as a result of a certain cause. Thus, if the effect is observed one can therefore infer that the cause must also have occurred in order to produce it.

- Is the evidence on which the reasoning is based accurate? Returning to one of our original examples, the claim that “all universities maintain football programs” was not an accurate statement. As such, it fostered a flawed conclusion. Debaters should consider whether the evidence used to support reasoning is reliable.
- Is the conclusion of the argument relevant? Is it possible to achieve a logically valid and highly probable conclusion that is not useful in the context of the debate. Consider the application of the conclusion or argument in question and determine how and why it relates in an important way to the other arguments in the round.

Common Fallacies

Throughout the process of preparing for and engaging in debate you should be on guard against obstacles to clear thinking. One such obstacle is the logical fallacy. Fallacies contain errors in logic that may not be readily apparent but which can be detected with practice. In debate you should attempt to guard against such fallacies in your own case and also strive to point out fallacies you observe in your opponent’s arguments.

For convenience, we introduce several common fallacies according to their popular titles. In practice, multiple fallacies often occur simultaneously. Your goal as a presenter should not be to memorize the name or classification of each fallacy, nor should you necessarily label such fallacies for the audience. Pointing to an opponent’s argument and asserting, “That statement constitutes an ‘appeal to ignorance’!” may not be an effective tactic. Rather, you should attempt to clearly demonstrate for the audience the reason why the statement is fallacious.

Fallacies of Evidence or Reasoning

- Unsupported assertion - the speaker introduces no evidence in support of a statement and assumes the audience will accept his reasoning regardless.
- Taking evidence out of context - the presenter quotes material while omitting important caveats or qualifying statement.
- Inappropriate examples - the evidence that is offered is not representative or typical.
- Hasty generalization - the debater reaches an unsound conclusion on the basis of insufficient evidence.
- Confusing order and cause - the analyst assumes that because two events occur in a sequence the first one causes the second.
- Exaggerating the importance - the analyst assumes that one of many contributing factors associated with an event was the solitary causal factor.

Fallacies of Language or Presentation

- Intentional ambiguity- the speaker deliberately uses a word or phrase that can be interpreted in multiple ways, with the intent of clarifying only when it is strategically desirable.
- Loaded terms - the speaker uses emotionally-charged words in order to support a contention without proof. For example, when health care reform was being actively debated in the United States, congressional opponents used the term “death panels” to paint an uncharitable portrait of part of the legislation.
- Relying on bombast - the speaker lacks evidence or reasoning and instead attempts to support his or her argument by engaging in loud or impassioned behavior.
- Pseudo-questions - when a debater asks an unanswerable or loaded question. For example, “When do you plan to stop lying to the audience?”

Fallacies of Argument

- Excessive extension - when an argument is carried beyond its reasonable limits.
- Arguing in a circle - when two unsupported assertions are used to support one another.
- Repeated assertion - when an argument is repeated several times and the repetitions are treated as a form of proof.
- Special pleading - when a speaker admits that a given type of reasoning or conclusion is typically true but urges that an unjustified exception be made in one particular case.
- Substituting a person for an argument - when a speaker argues that an argument should be accepted or rejected not based on its logical merit but rather because of the character or qualifications of the person advancing the argument.
- Popular appeal - when a debater solicits support for a position by arguing that “everyone believes it” without providing the logical justification or evidence.
- Straw man - when a speaker mischaracterizes an opponent’s argument with the intent of knocking it down.
- Appeal to ignorance - when a person argues that a conclusion cannot be valid or evidence cannot be accurate because either the speaker or the audience is not familiar with it. “How could that possibly be true? Don’t you think we’d have heard about it before?”

VI. Refutation

Principles of Refutation

Refutation is a component of every speech in the debate. Even the opening affirmative speech may include a small amount of anticipatory refutation to account for arguments that the negative is highly likely to make. In principle, refutation consists of the following processes:

- Arguing that an opponent's evidence is at least partially incorrect, illogical, or irrelevant.
- Arguing that an opponent's point relies on faulty reasoning, is counterproductive for their team, is unimportant, or is incorrect.
- Rebuilding your own team's position by introducing additional evidence or reasoning.

In order to engage in effective refutation, you should gather evidence that your side can use when responding to your opponent. A well-prepared team will draft short arguments that they can make against every argument they believe their opponents could offer. Developing refutation against a variety of likely arguments will increase the likelihood that some of your prepared materials will be applicable in the actual debate regardless of which arguments the opposing team selects.

Once the debate begins you should carefully consider the opposing case and select the specific issues that you wish to refute. As you make that decision, prioritize arguments that are critical to your opponent's case, that your opponent claims are major issues, and that you believe you can answer most effectively.

Stages of Refutation

When you engage in refutation, you should do so in the following four steps:

Clearly identify the argument you are attempting to refute.

- Example: "Our opponents argued that global climate change is not anthropogenic (human caused)."

Succinctly state your objections to that argument.

- Example: "However, a preponderance of evidence and scientific consensus suggest that human activity has contributed to climate change."

Introduce the evidence and reasoning that supports your objection.

- Example: "Global average temperatures have increased over the past century in a manner inconsistent with natural processes. However, the magnitude of the change is consistent with models of human activity. For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a global body charged with assessing the scientific record on global warming, has concluded that most of the observed warming over the past fifty years is a result of

increased greenhouse gas emissions. The National Academy of Sciences concurred, saying that carbon dioxide, methane, and other pollution from human activities is largely to blame.”

Demonstrate the importance of the refutation - why does it strengthen your case or weaken the other side's?

- Example: “There is a high probability that human behavior will continue to influence global temperatures. In our other contentions we showed that rising temperatures will likely result in harmful environmental and economic consequences. As a result, it is essential that the international community take action to restrict greenhouse gas emissions.”

The final stage is the most crucial and yet also the one that debaters most frequently overlook. Do not assume that the audience automatically understands the importance of your refutation; you should attempt to clearly explain why the argument should influence the audience to support your side.

Additional Suggestions for Refutation

Do not focus too much attention on a single argument

Consider how much refutation is necessary against each of your opponent's major points. Sometimes you will be very well-prepared against a particular argument and will have several lines of refutation at your disposal. However, you should not necessarily present every response that you can imagine; be sure to distribute your time effectively throughout all of the important arguments that you intend to refute.

Specify elements that are lacking in your opponent's argument

Use the AREA method (described in section II) to identify components that are missing from your opponent's analysis. Explain precisely which elements are imperfect or incomplete, then demonstrate why your objection is relevant. Audiences may not immediately reject flawed arguments; instead, they may merely interpret them with a higher degree of skepticism. If you believe that your opponent's argument should be ignored entirely then you need to explain why the problems are sufficiently large that they merit this response.

VII. During the Debate

Much of this handbook is dedicated to the steps debaters should take prior to the debate. There is no substitute for thorough preparation. However, preparation alone is not sufficient. Presenters must also be able to communicate their knowledge to the audience. In this section, we offer a variety of suggestions for how students can improve their performance during the debate itself.

Written vs. Presented Material

As university students, you likely have substantial experience writing papers and essays. However, persuasive writing differs significantly from persuasive presenting. Most importantly, readers enjoy the opportunity to proceed at their preferred pace - they may stop to consider an argument, reread a passage, consult another source, or even relax temporarily before continuing. The audience of a speech, however, is subject to the desires of the presenter, who is often restricted to a narrow time period. If the listener fails to comprehend an argument, the speaker may not have an opportunity to repeat it. As such, you should consider the following goals as you develop your case and prepare material for the debate.

Clarity

A case that is logically sound and well-supported by evidence may nevertheless be easily defeated in the mind of the audience if it is difficult to understand. Your objective as a speaker is to present your ideas in a sufficiently clear and organized manner that they are easy to understand. This should be your paramount objective. Remember that your ideas may seem straightforward to you because you are familiar with them; try to picture how clear the speech would seem to an audience member who is encountering the concepts for the first time.

Similarly, repetition in written material is often evaluated critically. In speeches, however, a small amount of repetition can improve clarity and highlight issues of emphasis. As a presenter, you may need to compensate for audience inattention by reiterating important information.

Simplicity of Structure

The overall structure of your speech should be easy to follow. Begin your speech with a “roadmap” that defines your intended goals. For example, “In this speech, I will first explain why military intervention will not be as costly as my opponents claim; then I will show that military intervention is well within the capacity of the U.S. armed forces. Finally, I will build upon my partner’s previous analysis of why military intervention will help to reduce violence.

Effective Transitions

In addition to writing a well-structured speech, you should also deliver the speech in a manner that is easy to follow. Throughout your presentation, remind the audience of the progress you have made in relation to the roadmap you offered at the beginning. For example, “Now that I have addressed the costs of military intervention, I will explain why the United States also has the military capacity to engage in this type of behavior.” An effective transition includes a quick summary of the preceding issue, a brief introduction of the next issue, and (potentially) a short demonstration of the relationship between the two concepts.

Concise Language

Short, succinct phrases are more likely to be understood than ornate and sophisticated language. Complex or compound sentences are often difficult for audiences to follow, particularly if they contain vocabulary terms or concepts with which the audience is unfamiliar.

Types of Public Speaking

Three forms of public address are used in debate: impromptu, extemporaneous, and scripted.

Impromptu is a method of delivery in which the presenter has had little or no time to prepare or organize his or her thoughts. The most common example is when the speaker is answering questions that he or she did not predict. Impromptu statements are risky because they may result in misstatements or strategic errors. They are also often poorly organized or phrased because speakers struggle to compose ideal responses on the spot. As such, debaters attempt to minimize the necessity of impromptu speaking as much as possible by attempting to brainstorm all of the possible situations that might occur in a debate. The best means of preparing and practicing for impromptu situations is to take turns asking questions of your teammates. Gauge one another’s responses and write down any answers that you thought were particularly effective.

Extemporaneous speaking occurs when the speaker is unable to read from a prepared document or memorize a speech but may reference notes or an outline while speaking. This is the predominant means of public speaking used in debate. Students take notes on the arguments made by their opponents and refer to those notes while speaking. Presenters may also bring an outline of their evidence to the podium, but (with the exception of the introductory speech) rarely read long sections of material verbatim. Extemporaneous speaking is valuable because it is highly flexible. Students are able to modify their speeches, arguments, and major points to account for the statements of the preceding debaters.

Finally, scripted speaking occurs when a debater prepares a speech entirely in advance and then reads that speech to the audience. The opening affirmative speech is generally scripted. This method of speaking provides several advantages: words can be chosen precisely, the length of the speech can be timed exactly, and the organization can be perfected. However, there are also drawbacks. First, scripted speeches are inappropriate for the remainder of the debate because they impede flexibility and prevent debaters from responding to one another effectively. In

addition, audiences are often resistant to scripted speeches - being “read to” is very boring unless the speaker is talented at delivery.

Guidelines for Effective Delivery

Establish Credibility

Aristotle identified three elements of persuasion: pathos, logos, and ethos. Logos is the logical reasoning behind an argument; pathos is the emotional appeal. But all of three elements, Aristotle believed that ethos, or credibility, was the most important. Whenever you present you should attempt to convey credibility. Your speech is the lens through which the audience will interpret your arguments. Even if you have gathered information from a variety of qualified sources and engaged in sound reasoning, if the audience believes that you are unprepared, uncertain, or unqualified to comment on the issue at hand then they will not have confidence in the claims that you make.

Audience members are not automatic information processors. As much as they may try, they cannot always free themselves of bias or judgment. Similarly, audiences are not always skilled evaluators of argument. They use heuristics, or information short-cuts, to evaluate arguments. One such proxy for the quality of argument is the quality of presentation. In light of this, we offer the following suggestions:

- Treat the subject seriously. Audiences are more likely to believe a speaker who appears to sincerely care about the topic.
- Reference relevant material without using notes. Clear references to the background and history of the problem, source material, and illuminating examples will help the speaker demonstrate preparation and signal mastery of the subject.
- Do not panic. When asked an unexpected question or confronting an unpredicted argument, try to retain composure while formulating a response.
- Incorporate humor when appropriate.

Exercise Moderation in Delivery

Presenters should moderate their delivery along the following dimensions:

- Rate - you should speak at a conversational rate. Do not slow your delivery so much that the audience loses interest or feels as though they are being lectured. At the same time, do not speak so quickly that the audience cannot follow your reasoning.
- Intensity - you should speak with sufficient volume that everyone in the audience can hear you. However, inexperienced presenters often overestimate the volume that is necessary; as a result, they address relatively small audiences with the same intensity that would be necessary to fill an auditorium.

- Eye contact - you should attempt to maintain eye contact with audience members throughout your speech. Read from your notes as little as possible. However, shift your gaze from person to person - it is unnerving for the audience if you appear to stare at a single individual.

Taking Notes During the Debate

Note taking is an essential skill for debate. In order to effectively refute or reference preexisting arguments a debater must maintain a written record of the statements made by both teams. The note sheet serves as an organizational tool that debaters reference during their speeches.

The best way to take notes in debate is to divide your paper into columns that represent each of the major speeches. As arguments are made, write them in the appropriate column based on the speech that is being presented. If an argument references a point that was made by a previous speaker, write the two arguments next to one another, each in its appropriate column. In this manner, you can organize your speeches to directly clash with the arguments that your opponents have offered and to efficiently reference the points made by your teammates. This method of organization should also reduce the likelihood that you miss an important argument.

In the example below, two teams debate the effect of global climate change on agricultural productivity. The arguments are simplified for the purpose of clarity and the example is compressed to facilitate display on the page. You can follow each line of argument as it develops horizontally across the page.

In practice, debaters should leave room on the page between arguments. If items are packed together too closely it will be hard to refer to individual arguments and read from your note while you are speaking. In addition, arguments may expand or contract over the course of the debate. The first affirmative speaker may make a straightforward argument, but the negative may offer several responses. As such, you will want to save sufficient space that you can fit all of the responses alongside the original argument.

Finally, people typically speak more quickly than they can write. Thus, you may need to use symbols or abbreviations to refer to concepts or arguments. For example, you may write an up arrow for “increase” or a dollar sign whenever presenters refer to the economy. If you continue to miss arguments, ask your teammates whether they were able to write down the points that you missed.

1AFF	1NEG	2AFF	2NEG	3AFF	3NEG
<p>Assertion: Climate change will reduce global crop yields.</p> <p>Reasoning: Higher temperatures impair the ability of rice, wheat, and maize to flower and seed.</p> <p>Evidence: Crops in the tropics have already reached their thermal limits. Every 1-degree Celsius increase in temperature is predicted to cause a 10% decline in yields. Prolonged droughts have already begun to cause desertification in affected regions.</p> <p>Application: Because of the importance of global agriculture on human health and the international economy, countries should take action to limit greenhouse gas emissions.</p>	<p>Our opponents argue that crops will be affected but give no rationale for how this process will occur.</p> <p>Their evidence is overstated. Farmers would simply move production to new regions that become suitable for farming. In addition, high CO2 levels may increase international food production. Barley, sugar beets, soy, corn, and citrus yields are likely to improve by 15-20%.</p> <p>Food production is not a major concern - agricultural productivity is continuing to increase despite the effects of warming.</p>	<p>High temperatures increase the incidence of wildfires. Raised humidity levels will favor fungal diseases, and migrating pests will deplete crops</p> <p>A geographic shift would still mean switching to areas with less fertile soil, which would reduce yields. Water availability would also decrease, impairing irrigation even in new croplands.</p> <p>The developed world may have access to sufficient food, but developing countries do not. Bangladesh, for example, will need twice the available amount of rice by 2020 to meet caloric needs.</p>	<p>Our opponents explained that relocating production would not solve the problem, but they failed to answer our analysis of why high CO2 levels would improve agricultural yields. Winter wheat and potatoes have also benefited from higher CO2 levels.</p> <p>We concede that food security is a major concern. Our best hope of alleviating this problem is by growing crops that thrive when CO2 levels are high.</p>	<p>CO2 levels might improve crop yields, but not enough to offset the decrease in water availability and the increase in pestilence from insects and fungi. Only some crops will benefit from CO2; all will be affected by pests.</p> <p>All crops cannot be replaced or relocated. The world should act to reduce emissions and allow farmers to continue producing the products that are suitable for their current regions.</p>	<p>We have provided hard evidence that shows that almost all of the world's staple crops will gain from increased CO2 levels. Our opponents have only provided theoretical predictions and estimates of pest spread. Prefer our concrete examples to their theory.</p>

Asking and Answering Questions

Questions may serve the following objectives: to clarify points, to expose errors and obtain admissions, and to set up arguments. As a supplemental benefit, effective questions and answers help to demonstrate the debater's skills to the audience.

First, if an opponent's explanation of an argument was vague or unclear, the question and answer period provides the other team with an opportunity to request clarification. Unless both teams have a clear understanding of what their opponents are arguing, they will not be able to refute one another effectively and the quality of the overall debate will decrease. Second, debaters may ask questions that probe weaknesses in the opponent's argument. Specifically, he can try to highlight contradictions and to suggest implications in his opponent's case. Finally, a debater can use questions to gain concessions from an opponent. The question and answer period is a set-up for speeches.

Debaters often overlook the value of good questioning technique. Behavior during the questioning period helps convey to the audience how well prepared the debaters are. As such, debaters should have questions ready and should answer actively and with confidence whenever possible. Additional suggestions include the following:

- Ask short questions designed to elicit short answers. Avoid open-ended questions that will allow your opponent to deliver a short speech. However, do not insist on “yes or no” answers when they are not appropriate.
- Be polite. If the questioner or respondent is rude, the audience will notice.
- Address the audience, not the opponent.
- Whenever possible, attempt to integrate the answers from questions into your speeches. If an important concession was made during the question and answer period, remind audiences of this in subsequent speeches. You cannot assume that the audience will understand the importance of the concession unless you point it out.
- When answering questions, remember to refer to the arguments and evidence that your team has already presented.
- Use questions to highlight weaknesses (or the appearance of weaknesses) in your opponent’s arguments, analysis, or preparation. Strong opponents will have prepared answers to generic questions. Put them on the spot by making the questions more specific. For example, if your opponent has made a comparison between U.S. intervention in Afghanistan and the potential for intervention in Syria, don’t merely ask, “Why is Afghanistan an appropriate example?” Instead, ask “Do you have an alternative example that accounts for cultural or political differences between Afghanistan and Syria, or was this the best case you could find as a model?” Your opponents included the example for a reason - presumably it was the best they could come up with during their research, so if you put the under scurrility they probably won’t find something better when on the spot.

Evaluating Debates

In this class, we ask you to consider the debate in three ways:

First, you will reflect upon the resolution, incorporating both your personal understanding of the issue from other sources and also based on the information that was presented by the debaters during the round. Where do you think the truth of the resolution lies? If forced to make the decision as a policymaker, what might you conclude?

Second, given your overall knowledge of the topic, do you believe that each team identified the strongest possible set of arguments? Were major points of controversy well analyzed and examined in the debate, or did many go unaddressed by either side?

Finally, evaluate the comparative merits of the opposing teams while setting aside your own knowledge of the topic. Which team did the better job of debating based exclusively on what you witnessed during the round? Did one team organize their information more effectively? Did one team express their arguments with greater clarity? Did one team do a more effective job of refuting their opponent’s arguments? Did either team make better use of the time available to them? Did one team convey a sense of credibility and effective preparation? Base your decision only on the debate as it was presented. Do not ask yourself, “Could I have refuted that argument? Was the argument objectively strong or weak?” Instead, ask only whether the participants refuted the argument. To do this, you must take comprehensive notes during the debate.

Questions to Consider When Evaluating Debates

Evaluate analysis: Is each team's approach to the topic reasonable? Are the issues presented really the major issues inherent in the proposition? Do the debaters clearly establish them as such? Which team does the better job of focusing on the major issues? Which team developed the better strategy?

Evaluate reasoning: Does the reasoning of the debaters satisfy the tests of evidence considered earlier? Do the debaters point out weaknesses in the evidence of their opponents? Undoubtedly both teams will introduce conflicting evidence on many points; the judge must apply the tests of evidence to determine which team's evidence has greater weight.

Evaluate organization: Which team organized its case better? Which provided for the better organization of the issues? Which provided the better transition from one argument to another? From one speech to another? Which case was clearer or easier to follow?

Evaluate refutation: Which team did the better job of attacking the case of their opponent? Did they refute the material essential to their opponent's case? Or did they waste time at the periphery of the debate and never close in on the major issues? How effective has the team been in rebuilding those portions of their case that came under attack?