

References:

- Bormann, E.G. (1980). *Communication theory*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
Kennedy, G.A. (1998). *Comparative rhetoric: An historical and cross-cultural introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Endnotes:

- ¹ A simplified synopsis: Whateley, Richard (1787-1863). A bishop of the Anglican Church who taught at Oxford. See *Elements of Logic*, (1826); *Elements of Rhetoric*, (1828); and, *Historical doubts concerning Napoleon Bonaparte*. Whateley introduced the concept of presumption to rhetoric. He borrowed it from the law where guilt or innocence could be presumed. Where presumption lies dictates who has the burden of proof. Whately helped explain by using the (scientific) methods aimed at debunking Christianity to show with equal certainty that one could discredit the existence and significance of Napoleon. He argued that Christendom had presumption in Europe because it had won that status over the previous one and a half millennia. That presumption, then, had to be overturned by those who were using science to deny Christianity.
- ² Except, of course, in tax court where the IRS for years put the burden on U.S. citizens to prove their innocence.
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Debate for Philosophy and Critical Thinking Courses SCOTT STROUD

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Many of the integral features of courses such as introduction to philosophy, ethics, logic, and critical thinking require actual practice in discourse situations to be truly retained. Yet, many classes are taught from the monologic point of lectures on the subject matter and individual evaluation of argument. Classes such as those mentioned above can benefit greatly from utilizing debates in class to put the skills taught into practice in a controlled, monitored discourse situation. This paper shares my experiences of how to conduct time-efficient and skill-effective in-class debates. I draw on my nine years of debate competing, judging, and coaching experience in indicating what has worked for me and what has not worked. The classes in which I have used this debate format are two general education classes, closely resembling "Introduction to Philosophy/Timeless Questions" and "Public Argumentation." This paper will discuss some debate basics, in-class logistics, and some instructor warnings.

Debate Basics

While this paper is much too brief to allow for a complete exposition of debate fundamentals, these are readily available elsewhere (see Freeley, 1996). Some debate basics will be glossed upon to provide some background to the debate event. Debates have a fairly standard format; teams consist of one to two people (any more than two allows for students to “hide” behind the abilities of others), who face off versus a team of the same number of people. The affirmative team attempts to prove the resolution “true,” whereas the negative team tries to prove it false (or at least render the affirmative’s proof illogical). The time limits for each speech will be discussed in the next section.

The basis of debate is the resolution; this is the focus for the debate and all subsequent argumentation. The value that students will derive from a debate is a function of how well the resolution is phrased. If the resolution is biased, skewed, or impossible to support, then the pedagogical advantage gained from debating that proposition will be virtually nil. Taking Freeley’s (1996) argumentation book as a standard for the field, one can easily identify the most common resolutional typology. Debate can focus on resolutions (propositions) of “*fact, value, or policy*” (Freeley, p. 46, 1996). A resolution of fact forces “the affirmative to [maintain] that a certain thing is true, while the negative maintains that it is false” (Freeley, p.46, 1996). Some typical resolutions of fact could be:

Guns are a threat to the security of the United States.

All American citizens monetarily benefit from the rich.

These resolutions lead debaters into supporting or undermining a claim about some fact.

The next type of debate proposition is a resolution of value, which Freeley (1996) describes as requiring “the affirmative [to maintain] that a certain belief, value, or fact is justified, that it conforms to the definition or criteria appropriate to evaluate the matter at hand” (p. 46). The negative attempts to maintain the opposite. Some examples of resolutions of value are:

A reflective life ought to be held above an unreflective life.

“Gangster rap” is harmful.

These resolutions force debaters to define and argue values that contradict other values.

The third and final resolutional type that Freeley (1996) proposes is the resolution of policy. In debates centering on this type of resolution, “the affirmative maintains that a policy or course of action should be adopted, while the negative maintains that this policy should be rejected.” Two examples of resolutions of policy are:

The United States should substantially change its foreign policy toward Israel.

The U.S. should withdraw from N.A.F.T.A.

These resolutions either include or require a specific plan of action; the debaters will then argue whether this policy should be adopted. Alternative ways of approaching resolutions for in-class debates are presented in Stroud (1999).

It is effective to convey to the students the idea that the resolution is the focus of the debate, and that everything they say in the actual debate should contribute toward supporting or undermining that one proposition. I have found it useful to discuss Toulmin's model (see Barnet & Bedau, 1996) before the debates begin. This model is particularly effective in emphasizing that reasons must be reasons for a claim. The basics of argumentation are left up to the instructors of each class to disseminate to their students. Now, I wish to focus on my particular experiences with in-class debate.

In-Class Debate Logistics

The first issue I had to decide was how large or small the teams were to be. This coincided with the worries I had over time per debate, as my class was not centered on the debate activity in itself. Unlike a full-fledged argumentation class, I was limited in the time I could devote to each debate, since I had many other readings and essays with which to proceed. I decided to allow the students to pair up with a partner, who would then be their "opponent" in the debate. One-on-one debates allow for the maximum flexibility in shaving time off of each debate while still allowing each student his or her moment in the discursive spotlight. Appendix 1 is the actual sheet that I passed out to introduce the debate activity.

The pairs of students were allowed to choose their topic area (this class was focused on a variety of easily definable "questions"). Then, each grouping of partners per topic area had to decide which actual resolution (Appendix 2) each pair had to debate. Eventually, each pair had a topic to begin researching. I choose this method to maximize coverage of all topics in the class, while allowing maximum student choice in the topic they were to debate. Students will, in general, be fearful of or unaccustomed to public debate and often view argumentation as "undesirable." Steps to involve student choice and partnership help reduce the confrontational manner of the debate enterprise and actively increase personal involvement.

I decided on the following time parameters:

Affirmative Constructive:	4 minutes
Negative Constructive:	4 minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal:	2 minutes
Negative Rebuttal:	2 minutes

The times could be increased, but the total times for each side must be equal. A benefit of these shorter times is that they allow for time at the end of the debate for audience questions, discussion, and/or instructor feedback. Generally, intercollegiate debate formats end with the affirmative rebuttal; due to time restraints and student unfamiliarity with debate, I decided on the intuitive format stated above.

The constructive speeches allow the sides to construct their arguments for and against the resolution. I typically allow these to be typed and shared with the opponents ahead of time. This has two advantages: first, it allows for more clash and better argumentative practice, and second, the constructive can be turned in to the instructor for a “written” portion of the debate grade. The rebuttals serve two purposes: to rebut the opponent’s constructive arguments and to defend your own (from the attacks of the previous speech). These rebuttals are extemporaneous and should not be prepared ahead of time. In real life, you often do not have the time to prepare responses to claims and arguments; instead, students should get some practice defending their positions and claims against counter-claims “on the fly.”

To keep the audience involved, I utilized a peer critique form to concretize their perception of the round (see Appendix 3). By requiring the audience to indicate and evaluate the arguments that they hear, each debate becomes an excellent practical tool to reinforce and instantiate the skills that the instructor has been teaching. The peer critiques also allow for the instructor to quickly observe class reaction to particular debates, arguments, and topics. In general, the audience must be allowed to participate in some way in the debate, either through peer critiques, questions at the end of the debate, or both.

Warnings

One of the main dangers in running an in-class debate is the problem of the “short-lived debater.” Many students will be tempted to give a 30 second constructive and a 12 second rebuttal and be relieved of the spotlight. The instructor must emphasize that this is tantamount to turning in a shallow one-page essay for an important project; it will not be allowed. I combat this danger through the prepared constructive. No matter how nervous the student is, he or she will have a few pages of prepared arguments to deliver in his or her initial speech. The greatest danger is the rebuttal; since students often have little experience responding to formal arguments in an extemporaneous and organized manner, they often avoid the situation. To prevent short rebuttal speeches, I try to get my students to take good notes of the opponent’s arguments, and then proceed to tell the audience why each (or most of) them are fallacious, incorrect, or insufficient to prove or disprove the resolution. This not only circumvents short speeches, but also increases the level of civilized argumentation and discussion.

Another warning must be issued once students are at the level of presenting cases and arguments. Students run the risk of filling their time with claims that lack support. The Toulmin model is especially effective in dealing with this risk, albeit it must be addressed before debates occur. The students must realize that each overt argument must contain a succinct claim (such as “Guns are a danger to American citizens”) and data of some sort (such as “In California last year, guns killed X number of individuals...”). Without reasons why their claims are true, they are not presenting any logically persuasive arguments for their position.

Conclusion

In-class debates have been extremely profitable, in my experience, because they allow students to undergo a realistic exercise that essays and written argument analysis cannot provide. Organizing and preparing the students for in-class debates usually coincides with the critical thinking and argumentation skills that instructors regularly teach; with some extra effort, in-class debates can become a fun, challenging and rewarding experience for both the students and the instructor.

References

- Barnet, S. & Bedau, H. (1996). *Current issues and enduring questions: A guide to critical thinking and argument, with readings*. Boston: Bedford Books.
- Freeley, A. J. (1996). *Argumentation and debate: Critical thinking for reasoned decision making* (9th ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Stroud, S.R. (1999). "Sophistry No More": The Efficacy of Intercollegiate Debate in Ethics Pedagogy. Paper presented at the R.I.T. Conference on Philosophical Issues in Ethics across the Curriculum, Rochester, New York.

Appendix 1: In-Class Debate Instructions

Instead of a boring, tedious in-class writing assignment, I have opted for a change of pace; in-class debates. I don't expect anyone to be the world's greatest debater, just to have fun and to put some effort into it. These debates are not about winning or losing; they are to be a fun way to review all the topics we have covered so far in an attempt to prepare you for your group presentations.

Format:

You will select a partner, preferably someone you like to work with. Each group of two debaters will be allowed to indicate which "question" areas they would like to debate. A general resolution will then be provided for each team to focus the debate. You each will prepare a short (1.5 to 2 pages) written opening statement of your position and the arguments that support this position. A copy of this statement/speech will be given to the instructor (me) the day of your debate. A copy should be given to your opponent before the day of the debate, so as to facilitate better debate. Here are the time parameters:

- 1st Affirmative Speech: 4 minutes
- 1st Negative Speech: 4 minutes
- Affirmative Rebuttal: 2 minutes
- Negative Rebuttal: 2 minutes

Topic Areas:

1. Where did humans come from? Also, the myths of science vs. religion.
2. What makes humans different from animals? Also, what rights do animals have?
3. What makes for differences between humans? Also, "The battle of the sexes."
4. How should humans live? Also, the clash of ethical systems.
5. What makes life worthwhile?
6. Where are humans going? Also, will our future be better or worse than the past?

(Remember, these are just general topic areas; you will be given a specific resolution to debate after choosing your topic area.)

Grading:

This in-class debate will count as your 6th writing assignment. It will be worth just as much as the other papers. You will be graded on the sheet you give to me (the prepared sheet) and on the effort you put into refuting or rebutting your opponent's points during the debate. I will look for good clash in the debate as indicative that you both discussed your positions before the debate (that is good). I will seriously lower your grade if you don't show up to class or if you read your 1st speech and just talk for 30 seconds in your rebuttal.

Appendix 2: In-Class Debate Topics

Question 1

- 1A. Creation Myths involve essentially the same important elements.
- 1B. Science is a more valuable myth than religion.
- 1C. "Evil" serves a purpose in this world.

Question 2

- 2A. Humans are radically different from animals.
- 2B. Animals have no moral rights.

Question 3

- 3A. Gender is due to natural influences.
- 3B. Women are superior to men.

Question 4

- 4A. Citizens should always obey government laws.
- 4B. Governments should try to provide citizens with as much freedom as possible.

Question 5

- 5A. Work is what makes life worthwhile.
- 5B. Play is the most important thing in life.

Question 6

- 6A. Human society is headed toward a brighter future.
6B. Science and technology help build a better society.

Appendix 3

Your Name:

Debater 1 (Affirmative):

Debater 2 (Negative):

Resolution:

1. What was Debater 1's best argument? Why?
 2. What was Debater 2's best argument? Why?
 3. Which side persuaded you the most? Why?
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Critical Thinking & Learning

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Mapping the Terrain of Thinking

Soon after the beginning of a course in critical thinking, after having worked through some introductory materials, I ask my students to draw maps of the terrain of thinking as they envision it. I have asked them each to make a list of 'elements' of thinking they pick up from the materials and from their own reflection, such as reasoning, metacognition, logic, creativity, intuition, emotion, and problem-solving. The map is a scheme in which they relate these elements to each other. I give no specifications about what the map should look like. It may be a table, chart, flow diagram, illustration, etc. It may be three-dimensional. We spend at least one class period explaining and comparing our maps, noting similarities and differences. I ask them to keep wondering about this as the course goes on, and at the end of the semester I ask them to reconstruct these maps, in light of their experiences and reflections during the course.

In conjunction with this exercise, as we discuss the elements of thinking they have identified, I ask them whether they believe that there is a natural order of thinking elements—a closed set that could eventually be discovered; or whether they suppose such elements to be an open set that is continually constructed.

REASONING

A. *Fill in the blanks to make statements you believe, and write them below:*

My _____ is / may be _____ if it rests on / is _____.

belief	true / false	good reasons
opinion	confident / doubtful	evidence
knowledge	reasonable / unreasonable	relevant
idea	valid / invalid	plausible
thought	valued / not valued	investigation
hypothesis	warranted / unwarranted	custom
habit	worth considering / not ...	tradition
behavior	justified / unjustified	prejudice
feelings	plausible / implausible	lack of courage
fear	feasible / unfeasible	laziness
confidence	more / less likely to be true	inquiry by community
_____	cowardly	adventurous
_____	_____	experimentation
_____	_____	_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

B. *Look over the statements you made and try to imagine counterexamples for each. If you can, you may want to alter the statement.*

C. *Discuss these propositions. Say whether you agree or disagree, and give reasons.*

1. Part of learning a subject is learning what kinds of reasons count as better in that subject.
2. Truth is more likely to result from free, open inquiry into the reasons behind ideas, than from authoritative insistence on the truth of certain ideas.
3. At least in secular subjects like science, math, geography, and even languages and history, and even to some extent in literature and the arts, truth or fact is what a certain community agrees on.
4. A community cannot inquire unless it agrees on a common method of inquiry, and some common standards.

WRAITEC: “The Good-Thinker’s Tool Kit”

A process developed by Dr. Tom Jackson, University of Hawai’I at Manoa,
adapted by Dr. Maughn Gregory, Montclair State University

1. WRAITEC is an acronym; each of the letters represents a category of reasoning moves to be used in a community discussion. See the explanation of these categories following these introductory remarks. Typically, members of the dialogue write and decorate the letters of the acronym on 3 x 5 cards, and hold a card up when they are making that kind of move, or when they are asking for that kind of move.
2. How WRAITEC facilitates dialogue.
 - A. WRAITEC is a set of simple reasoning tools that can help the members of a community turn their conversation into dialogue, by helping them make connections, draw distinctions, uncover assumptions, correct faulty inferences, look for evidence, etc. These kinds of moves advance the dialogue toward its goal of some kind of collaborative judgment.
 - B. WRAITEC also guards against excessive emotionalism which might otherwise disrupt the discussion, by channeling the passion of argument into the productive process of inquiry through dialogue. It imposes a minimal rational structure without at the same time stifling all feeling.
 - C. Often more reticent members use their WRAITEC cards to enter the discussion. It’s easy to lift a card and ask, “Can you give me a reason?”
3. WRAITEC is a way for the community members to coach each other in principles of sound reasoning. The pedagogical goal is not that we master isolated thinking skills, but that we become adept at making certain kinds of reasoning moves in the context of a meaningful dialogue. A further goal is that we develop not merely the ability but the disposition to make these kinds of reasoning moves in situations that call for reasoning. Another important goal is that we develop the social skills that facilitate inquiry in a community.
4. The WRAITEC categories can be used as criteria for evaluating the quality and intellectual rigor of a discussion session. An easy way to do this is to spend five or ten minutes at the end of the session to take each WRAITEC category and have the members vote on how well they thought the community performed that kind of reasoning, by putting their thumbs up or down or somewhere in between, and of course, by explaining. In this way the community members can identify their individual and collective reasoning strengths and weaknesses.
5. WRAITEC is also a “Good-Writer’s Tool Kit.” After discussing an issue together, the community members may write short essays (individually or in small groups), using WRAITEC as a composition format: state a thesis, back it up with reasons, identify your assumptions and inferences, anchor your argument in “true” creditable sources, give examples, anticipate and defend against counter-examples. This format can be used to organize simple or complex idea clusters, such as are often generated by communities of inquiry.

WRAITEC

1. **WHAT:** to get/give explanation, definition, clarification: “What does that mean?” “What do you mean my room is still messy?” “I didn’t understand the assumption.” “What’s the difference between imply and infer?” “When I say ‘soon,’ I mean before Friday.”
 2. **REASONS:** to get/give/evaluate reasoning: “Why?” “Why should they do that?” “Why do you think that?” “What makes you think so?” “How can you say that?” “I agree with Ismail because ...” “What kind of reason is that?” “Is that a good reason?”
 3. **ASSUMPTIONS:** always need to be uncovered: “Wait! You’re assuming that your female employees are not the main breadwinners in their homes!” “Are you assuming the measure will pass?” “What are you assuming?” “Why are we assuming the character has to be a boy or a girl?”
 4. **INFERENCES:** how two ideas are put together so that one follows from another, often in an “If ... then ...” pattern: “If all people are prejudiced in some way, then so am I (since I am a person).” “Just because all men are thinkers, it doesn’t follow that all thinkers are men.” “If I’m related to Rama, and Rama is related to Caramela, it follows that I’m related to Caramela.” “That doesn’t follow.” As we get more sophisticated in our reasoning, we are able to use and criticize more kinds of inferences.
 5. **TRUTH:** “Is that true?” “That’s not always true.” “How do you know?” “How can we find out?”
 6. **EXAMPLES:** “For example, in the ’80s, almost half of all homeless women were refugees of domestic violence.” “Can you give me an example?”
 7. **COUNTER-EXAMPLES:** to undercut stereotypes and other generalizations: “But I have several feminist friends who are ‘pro-life’!”
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