



Verity

Team Policy Judging

Why We're Doing This Training

- Things that most judge orientation trainings tell you
 - Round structure
 - Roles of aff & neg
 - Stock issues
 - Debate rules
 - Reading the ballot
- Things that most judge orientation trainings don't tell you
 - **How to figure out who won**

Some Perspectives On Judging

- Debate judging is inherently subjective
 - In theory, judges should be “tabula rasa” – setting aside all preconceived knowledge, experience, and beliefs
 - In practice, this doesn’t happen
 - Even acting in good faith, judge approaches differ based on experience, debate knowledge, philosophical views
- Why I use this approach
 - Not objective, but less judgment needed than other approaches
 - Focuses on debaters’ arguments and how they interact
 - Allows the judge to evaluate arguments systematically

Topicality - A Threshold Question

- Role of topicality in the round
 - The basic question: “does the affirmative plan fall within the bounds of the resolution?”
 - The underlying question: “are both teams able to engage with the case meaningfully?”
- How to judge topicality
 - Set aside your gut feelings and listen to the arguments made
 - Listen for impacts – if the negative team isn’t meaningfully affected by the alleged topicality violation, the case is either topical or close enough
 - Remember, topicality is a spectrum, not a binary

Net Benefits - Key Concepts

- Framework
 - A lens through which you analyze and adjudicate the debate round
 - Provides criteria and methodology you can use to weigh debaters' arguments
 - Used in the vast majority of rounds, though alternatives exist
- Cost-benefit analysis
 - Do the benefits (“advantages”) of the case outweigh the downsides (“disadvantages”)?
 - Focus on impacts of argumentation
 - Biggest challenge: weighing impacts that aren't easily compared (i.e. how do you weigh environmental damage vs economic benefits?)

Net Benefits - Impact Analysis

- Three dimensions of impact analysis
 - Likelihood: how probable the impact is to occur
 - Magnitude: how serious the impact will be if it occurs
 - Timeframe: how soon the impact is expected to happen
- Important considerations
 - The relative importance of each dimension is arguable – let the debaters tell you what's most important
 - The dimensions work in concert – consider the concept of “expected value” (magnitude * likelihood)
 - The debaters are responsible for weighing impacts – you do so as a last resort

Net Benefits - Step By Step

- Walking through a net benefits analysis
 1. Consider any impact framing or analysis arguments that make particular impacts more important than others
 2. Identify impacts of dropped arguments (though note that a dropped argument is not an automatic loss)
 3. Identify impacts of clearly won arguments – one team provided more persuasive analysis, evidence, or argumentation
 4. Consider disputed or hard-to-judge arguments – do they offer any impacts (if only limited ones)?
- If you can stop at any point, do (i.e. if a crucial argument that outweighs everything else gets dropped, no need to go further)

Net Benefits - Stock Issues

- **Inherency**
 - Minimal benefit to be gained from solving a problem that's going away already
 - The difficulty – how to think about impacts partially solved by the status quo
- **Significance**
 - If you don't solve big problems, you won't gain as much benefit
 - Avoids need for brightline – “how significant is significant?”
- **Solvency**
 - The most direct connection to net benefits
 - Compare advantage impacts to disadvantage impacts

Net Benefits - Alternative Frameworks

- Debaters are permitted to deviate from net benefits and offer a different metric to use for judging
 - Could be based on a specific value or goal
- Teams may disagree on the best framework – and can offer arguments for their perspective
 - If a team offers an alternative framework, they should tell you why it's the best way to judge the round
- Evaluate any framework arguments before dealing with impacts – you won't be able to weigh impacts without a framework

Miscellaneous Thoughts

- Listen to the debaters' impact weighing arguments first
 - Your goal is to judge based on their arguments, not your beliefs
 - However, if the debaters don't tell you why their impacts are better, you have to make your own best decision
- Debaters should ask your experience/philosophy. If they don't, tell them anyway
 - This allows them to tailor their style to you
- Favor specific argumentative analysis
 - Debaters shouldn't just read evidence, they should tell you what it means and why it's better than their opponents' argument



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Questions?