Selected Exercises for Teaching Worlds-Style Debate

Creating a Simple Argument

Divide debaters into groups of two and give them a simple motion that requires little interpretation (e.g. China should abolish capital punishment). Have the debaters create one simple argument either in support of or in opposition to that motion. The debaters should use the components suggested in the following diagram.

![Support + Claim = Argument diagram]

Topic Analysis

1. Divide debaters into groups of two and give them a sample motion. Ask them define and interpret the motion as if they were the First Government team.

2. Have the debaters analyze potential issues of the same motion according to the following model:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Issues From the Government Viewpoint</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ill</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• What problems exist in the present system?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How significant are those problems?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are the problems particularly harmful?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Do those problems and harms affect a significant number of people?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blame</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• What is the cause of the problem?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can the cause of the problem be located to a particular feature of the present system?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Is a particular feature of the present system a barrier to solving the problem?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• What proposal can the Government Team envision that can overcome the barrier that exists in the present system?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What actions other than simply eliminating the barrier to solving the problem does the Government Team need to include in their proposal? Funding? Enforcement? Etc?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In other words, what positive consequences will the Government Proposal produce?</td>
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**Speaker Responsibilities in Worlds-Style debate**

Have students listen to a video recording of a Worlds-Style debate. Debates can be found at http://willamette.edu/cla/china_debate/curriculum/index.html, or at a number of different locations on the Internet. Conduct a discussion in which students comment on every speech, noting whether or not debaters successfully meet the obligations of that speech.

**Creating a Prime Minister Speech**

1. Present a motion to a group of debaters who are divided into teams of two persons each. Give them 15 minutes to discuss the motion and to create a Prime Minister’s speech for the motion. Give each team 3 minutes to present an outline of their speech. After each team has presented their outline, discuss the cases focusing on the arguments suggested as well as whether the outline suggests the speech meets the fundamental obligations of the Prime Minister speech.

2. Modify the exercise listed above by presenting the motion to a single team of two persons and have one of those persons present a full Prime Minister’s speech. Discuss the speech in terms of the cogency of the arguments and how well the speech fulfills the basic obligations of the Prime Minister speech.

**Creating a Leader of Opposition Speech**

Present a sample Prime Minister speech to a group of debaters who are divided into teams of two persons each. After they listen to the Prime Minister’s speech, give them 15 minutes to discuss the speech and, following the “common kinds of opposition arguments” to create at least three different kinds of arguments in response to the speech.

**Extending the Debate as Member of Government or Member of Opposition**

1. Have a group of debaters listen to the first half of an on-line debate. Such a debate can be found at: Willamette.edu/cla/china_debate or at a variety of other places on the internet. Then have the debaters in groups of two discuss possible extension arguments that might be made in the Member of Government speech and two possible extension arguments that might be made in the Member of Opposition speech. Then the debaters should take two minutes to present their ideas to the other members of the group.

2. Based on the information generated in Exercise #1, have the debaters construct and present a complete Member of Government speech to be followed by constructive criticism.
3. Based on the information generated in Exercise #1, have the debaters construct and present a complete Member of Government speech to be followed by constructive criticism.

**Summary Arguments in Whip Speeches**

Provide a debate motion to a group of students. In groups of 2, ask them to write down the main arguments they would expect each side to make. Then, construct a summary framework for the Government side that could crystalize the debate they imagine might have happened about this topic. Then do the same thing for the other side of this topic.

**Fallacies of Argumentation**

For the following exercise, use the RSA triangle to discover fallacies:

- Find an example to deliberative rhetoric to show the class. I often find that shorter arguments work better for this activity. If you are comfortable with competitive debate, there are myriad videos to choose from on Youtube. Otherwise, consider using a political debate, clip from a political talk show, or platform speech of some kind.
- Ask the students to take notes on each argument while watching the clip. Ideally, they should “flow” the arguments. That is, the goal is for the students to take note of each claim and its relevant premises.
- Ask the students to get into small groups (3-4) and fill in one another’s missing premises or claims. By the end of this step, each student should have a relatively complete accounting of the arguments presented.
- Ask the students to individually free write for 5-10 minutes. Here is the prompt: “Find a fallacy in the arguments presented. Once you have identified it, categorize it using the RSA triangle approach and justify why the argument fails to meet the standard.”
- After the free write, ask for volunteers to share their work.
- Discuss
Refutation and Rebuilding

1. Refutation: Have one student present a two-minute speech that offers one argument in support of some action or proposal. Have the second student present one point of refutation in response to this argument. This refutation should carefully use the four-step refutation process as noted below. Of course, the teacher should provide constructive comments to the students’ performances.

   **Step One:** Identify the argument to be refuted.
   “They say…”

   **Step Two:** State your response to their argument.
   “But I say…”

   **Step Three:** Explain the details of your refutation.
   “Because…”

   **Step Four:** Explain the importance of your refutation.
   “Therefore…”

2. This exercise involves two or three students. Have the first student present a two-minute speech that offers one argument in support of some action or proposal. Have the second student present one point of refutation in response to this argument. The refutation should carefully follow the four-step refutation process from the diagram above. Then either the first or the third student will carefully rebuild the original argument using the five-step rebuilding process illustrated below.

   **Step 1:** Identify the original argument.
   “We said…”

   **Step 2:** Identify the refutation to the original argument.
   “Our opponents said…”

   **Step 3:** State the assessment of the opponent’s refutation.
   “But we say…”

   **Step 4:** Explain the details of your assessment.
   “Because…”

   **Step 5:** Re-establish the original argument in light of the refutation.
   “Therefore…”
**Offering and Responding to Points of Information**

This exercise can be used for one student speaker and up to six other students who will offer points of information. Have one student deliver a standard Prime Minister speech. This student should be instructed to accept as many offers of points of information as possible, even if it causes the student to exceed the time limit. Other students in the audience should rise to offer points of information as often as they can think of them. Discussion that follows should focus on the effectiveness of both the offers of points of information as well as on the effectiveness of the responses.

**Delivery**

1. The purpose of this exercise is to allow students to see the effectiveness of their natural manner of delivery and contrast it to their manner of delivery in a debate.

   Have a student prepare an argument and present the argument to a group of students. Video recording this speech is best, but if this is impossible, then comments from the group of students also works well. After the presentation of the argument, ask the student to sit quietly and imagine a very memorable incident in their life. Tell the student to bring their memory of that incident into the foreground of their conciousness imagining that they were physically present in the time and place that the incident occured. After they have sat quietly and contemplated this incident, have the student stand and describe the incident to the other group of students. Discuss the differences in delivery between the students argumentative speech and their description of the incident.