



7.3 Clash Kung Fu

This activity introduces basic clash and argumentation skills. In this activity, the concept of clash is acted out in a mock fight. This activity provides a way to express the concept of clash in an active and memorable way.

Time Allotment

10-20 minutes

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will:

- be introduced to the concept of direct refutation.

Method

Have students line up in rows facing each other about two feet apart. You should demonstrate the activity in front of the class with a student volunteer. Once you have demonstrated a particular move, tell the student pairs to follow your lead.

Instruct your partner not to block, and aim a straight-armed direct punch at his face (of course, your "punch" should be slow moving and you should stop well short of completing the punch). Explain that this is analogous to a conceded argument: it will always be won due to the lack of an answer. Have the pairs of students model the action, emphasizing both the importance of not actually making any physical contact and the strategic mistake of letting your opponent directly connect with an argument.

Next, when you throw a mock punch, have your partner reach up to block your hand or move out of the way. You should explain that avoiding and blocking punches in debate, just like in kung fu, is desirable. The equivalent of a blocked punch is a defensive takeout argument (a no link argument, a statement that the opponent's argument does not apply, etc.). You want to make sure that your opponent connects as few punches as possible.

Finally, have your partner block your punch and, with his free hand, return a punch aimed at your stomach. The equivalent of this scenario in debate, you should explain, is a turned argument. Turns not only neutralize the damage of an opponent's argument, they turn the sequence around to your advantage. By using a turn you can turn an opponent's attack into your advantage. Because you minimize the significance of your opponent's argument, while gaining an offensive advantage, turns can significantly damage your opponent.

Have your students copy these motions to get the feel of them. This activity is most effective when used as a lead in to an extensive lesson about argument theory, direct refutation and line-by-line debating. In ideal situations, this activity can be connected to a previous discussion about an evidenced position. You could encourage the students to use examples that match their moves from the files for arguments you have covered in class. You might, for instance, discuss the affirmative and negative solvency debates for a particular case, asking students to find cards that correspond to defensive take outs and turns.



An alternative activity that can stand alone or compliment Clash Kung Fu is “Battleship.” In this activity, you ask the students if they have heard of Battleship. Ask a student familiar with the game to explain how it is played to the other students. As you know, the object of the game is to sink the opponent’s ships. In the debate analogy, you are trying to sink the opponent’s argument. In Battleship, as in debate, you don’t get credit for having a close hit. You either hit the ship or you don’t, there’s no room to fudge it. In debate, there has to be a direct hit to the logic or evidence of the opponent’s argument in order to neutralize it. If one’s argument doesn’t clash with her opponent’s, it is as if the missile has missed its battleship. The difference between debate and Battleship, is that in debate your opponent announces exactly what their argument is. Tell your students that it is their job to discern, rapidly understand, and then dismantle the logic and evidence upon which their opponent’s argument rests.