14.9 Debating Paradigms

This activity develops and builds advanced judge adaptation and sophisticated argumentation skills. Students consider judging paradigms and practice adapting their style to suit different judges. It is useful for advanced debaters, especially those who complain about judges.

Time Allotment
One class period

Objectives
By the end of this activity, students will:
> • think about the importance of the debate paradigms used to adjudicate debate rounds.
> • understand the necessity of tailoring one's arguments to the intended audience.

Materials and Preparation
You should have a mini-debate prepared that, if possible, highlights the differences between different judging paradigms. Select volunteers before class to perform the debate, or do it with a coaching assistant.

Method
Have students brainstorm a list of the different judging paradigms that are used in your area or league. Some examples are:

> • Stock Issues
> • Policy Maker
> • Tabla Rasa
> • Hypothesis Testing

Have the students choose the paradigm that they think best represents their attitude toward debate. Have a few students argue for why debates should be judged from the paradigm of their choice.

Have a scripted mini-debate in front of the class, in which each student judges from the perspective with which she has identified herself. Then, the class can discuss in small groups (preferably of mixed paradigm affiliates) how their paradigms affected their resolution of the arguments (to work best, the debate should be close and have different possible resolutions).

As a class, have a discussion of the ways the affirmative and negative teams could adjust to the judging paradigms.

Variation: When students have brainstormed the different types of judging paradigms, have the students prepare a short speech or rebuttal on a specific topic geared towards a particular judging paradigm. Have a student give the speech in front of the class. Then, have the same student deliver the same speech to a different type of judge with a different judging paradigm. Discuss as a class the differences between the two speeches and offer feedback.