



Cambridge Debate Institute
team@cambridgedebateinstitute.com

Course Overview

This course is designed to equip debaters with the advanced tools, concepts, and strategies, with the requisite practice, needed to engage with debate arguments at a high level. The course is modeled after the American college seminar, in which a senior instructor guides students through an intensive class session once per week, followed by assigned independent study.

The focus of this course is on fundamental debate *skills*. This is to avoid “teaching to the test,” so that you can be successful in any format or future setting where you will need to apply your debate skills. Our practice drills and assignments are targeted to help you implement each week’s new skills.

The curriculum described below is designed so that by the end of this course, you will leave with a systematic overview of the most important concepts for building and attacking the logic of any argument or position and an understanding of how to use these concepts to reformulate your winning strategies in your speeches. Special attention will be given to more advanced tactics that most debaters do not master even by the end of their careers. Welcome!

Course Policies

1. Participate, participate, participate! We believe engagement with your instructor, classmates, and assignments is the key to improvement, and you will ultimately get out what you put in.
2. To preserve the classroom environment, you will by default be muted but can raise your hand to be unmuted by the instructor.
3. Please see the official CDI Handbook or email us if you need help troubleshooting the Zoom platform.



Overview of Curriculum

Lesson 1

Mastering Argument Structure, Part I: Generating Defense

Lesson 2

Mastering Argument Structure, Part II: Strength of Link

Lesson 3

Attacking the Link and Impact, Part I: Link Turns

Lesson 4

Attacking the Link and Impact, Part II: Internal Link and Impact Turns

Lesson 5

Advanced Refutation, Part I: Uniqueness and the Non-Unique

Lesson 6

Advanced Refutation, Part II: Controlling Uniqueness

Lesson 7

Weighing, or How to Convince the Judge You Won

Lesson 8

Effectively Comparing Evidence

Lesson 9

Asking and Answering Cross-Examination Questions

Lesson 10

Mastering Persuasion and Style



Detailed Curriculum Overview

Mastering Argument Structure, Parts I and II

What is an argument and how can you break it down into its key components? What are link chains and basic argument analyses? Learn how to understand an argument's logical steps to identify the argument's weaknesses. Master a framework for understanding all in-round arguments.

Attacking the Link and Impact, Parts I and II

How do you refute arguments? How do "turns" work -- both against the link and the impact? Learn how to generate and apply key arguments in argument refutation. The tools will help you in any debate and are the key to winning.

Advanced Refutation, Parts I and II

What is the concept of uniqueness, and how can it help you generate some of the strongest refutation? How can this tool be used to control major arguments in the debate? Master this advanced debate concept to strategically defend your own arguments and attack your opponents.

Weighing, or How to Convince the Judge You Won

What are the different forms of "weighing" and argument comparison, and when should you employ them? How can you use weighing to win even if you don't have good answers to your opponent's claims? Answer the debate's central question: why your side is better, not just good.

Effectively Comparing Evidence

What makes a piece of evidence good? How can you spot weaknesses in your opponent's evidence? Learn how to convince the judge your evidence is correct. Strong evidence comparison skills will improve your research process and help you win the debate.

Asking and Answering Cross-Examination Questions

How should you approach cross-examination? What makes a good cross-ex question? How can I get my opponent to answer my questions when they try to avoid them? Debaters often go into cross-ex blind and without a strategy. Learn how to gain the upper hand before rebuttal speeches even begin.

Mastering Persuasion and Style

Strong delivery can often be as important as argument quality in determining the debate's outcome. How will you persuade judges to vote for you? How do you handle tough questions from your opponent? Learn how to polish your performance (and increase your speaker points) by making your style maximally convincing.