



Understanding DiPhi Debate

Guest Edition

Affirmative-Negative Debate

As of 2022, this is considered the 'traditional' style of debate. It follows the meeting style the societies have followed since at least 1988.

Two sides, affirmative and negative, trade the dias over about ten speeches to convince listeners to vote to affirm or negate the resolution at the end of debate.

Topics

Topics are debated according to a resolution of the form “Resolved: ...” followed by a normative statement or debatable assertion. For example, in the Fall 2022 year, the Societies debated:

- Resolved: The idea of a 'hero' harms our society
- Resolved: An omniscient, all-powerful god must be cruel

Stakes

There are two sides to each resolution. At the start of the debate, the JSP calls a general body vote (meaning non-Senators can vote) to test what percentages of the room affirm, negate, or abstain from the resolution before debate has started.

Once the allotted number of speeches have finished, the JSP takes two votes:

The first is another general body vote in which participants may affirm, negate, or abstain.

The second is a dues-paying Senators-only vote. The result of this vote is considered the Society's published and archived position on the resolution.

Positions

Four Senators, called 'slated speakers,' sign up to be the first four to speak. Two slated speakers are 'primary speakers' and two are 'secondary speakers.' The primary affirmative speaks first, then the primary negative, and so on through secondary speakers and speeches given by Guests and Senators who volunteer themselves to the JSP, called 'floor speeches.' Typically, 4 floor speeches are allowed, but this number can be extended via a motion from any Senator that is seconded and passed to extend the time or number of speeches.

Layout

Since at least 1988, most of these debates have been held in Dialectic Hall on the Third Floor of New West ('The Di') during regular meetings of the Joint Senate as a parliamentary body.

The Dias is set up with the JSP's desk and chair in the center alcove on the highest step. The Clerk, to their left, and the SAA, to their right, are seated in the corners of the first step of the dias, positioned in the corners. To the Clerk's left, on the floor, left of the furthest entrance to the back, sits the Critic's desk

and chair. The podium sits on the floor, facing the back wall, with enough space for a speaker to stand at it without stepping onto the dias.

The desks are arranged in rows of 4 on either side of the podium, stretching from a comfortable distance from that podium to the back wall. Between them sits the PPT's desk and the Bone Throne.

The typical layout is pictured here.



A photo of a speaker participating at the Podium during a traditional debate

Timing

Primary speakers receive 7 minutes to speak and 3 minutes for queries.

Secondary speakers receive 5 minutes for a speech and 2 minutes for queries.

Speeches from the floor receive 5 minutes for a speech and 2 minutes for queries.

At any time, a speaker may yield their time to queries, in which case their remaining time for speech is added to their query allotment to answer queries.