

DUO ORATORY OR CLASH OF IDEAS?

Duo Oratory - Why it's become the rage on campus! Haven't you heard? Why are you the last one to find these things out? The rules are simple. You start in a debate--that's right cross examination debate --round with four highly intelligent, highly skilled, and sophisticated (well, O.K., two out of three ain't bad) students that are "prepared" to debate. 1 AC gets up and reads this beautifully scripted speech. After answering a few questions, then 1 N.C. stands and reads his shorter but equally well-crafted, scripted, speech and the debate goes on; but, precious little of merit is said about each opponent's speech. As the proverbial two ships pass in the night, there is very little CLASH!

Just why is it that time and time again college judges insist under RFD (reason for Decision) that the absence of clash muddies the waters of this round? If nine out of ten debate educators state the lack of clash is the preeminent problem in debate, then why isn't there

more of it? Let's examine what clash is by saying what it is not.

1. Simple contradiction. "I say you're stupid." "I say I'm not." Other than the obvious demerits of this ad hominem attack, this beginning of an Abbott & Costello routine of the first magnitude is somewhat lacking. Weigh what is being asserted-- nothing more than unsubstantiated claim and counter-claim. This exercise is as futile and as non-illuminating as the periodic pronouncements of the Flat Earth Society.

2. Arguing Loudly. It is a tragic flaw of rhetoric that some attribute a concomitant increase in the volume with which one expresses an idea with its veracity. Truth trumpeted above the treetops is not any more or less true. Answering an opponent's question/argument loudly is no substitute for substantive analysis. Form does not win over substance!

Just what is Clash, then? It is: 1. the identification of core issues that merit debate. 2. attribution of faulty evidence

and/or analysis to your opponent's argumentation. 3. the listing of substantive reasons for rejecting the argument (with the underlying principle that more is better than the few) and last but not least, 4. the assignation of impacts.

Taking the time to "block out" anticipated arguments is an essential precursor to success in clashing. Whether the argument is "managed trade leads to trade wars" or "managed trade leads to an increase in quality of life" you must be prepared to succeed. Preparation must not cede to canned responses that fail to take into account strong links, correct identification of causal factors, variables, or significant impact claims. Look for assertions, bias, and evidence distortions. Otherwise this meaningful activity we engage in to illuminate truth becomes merely an exercise in the out-loud reading of one-sided argumentation.

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