Argumentation

This is a living document – anyone can improve it.

Making arguments

Impact, harms and likelihood

Thinking about this formula can be very helpful when forming arguments.

impact = harms \times likelihood

People often focus too much on the harms of their impacts and ignore the whether or not their actions are likely to happen. When forming rebuttal you should also think about this – even if you don't disprove their harms can you prove that the probability of their harms happening is so low that their harms don't matter.

Stakeholder analysis

One way of generating arguments that it often very helpful is to think of all the stakeholders who are affected by the motion and how it effects them. When deciding which stakeholders are most important to the debate you might want to think about some of these questions. * How many people are affected by the motion? * To what extent are these people affected by the motion? * Are these a particularly vulnerable group of people who are morally deserving of our protection?

THEN -> ACTION -> NOW

This structure can help when preparing debates. * Then: what is the status quo (what does the world look like before your side of the house implements its idea) * Action: what are you going to do? * Now: what does the world look like after you implement your side of the house?

Comparative

Winning a debate is about showing that your side of the motion is better than the other side of the motion – not just that your side brings benefits, but that it brings benefits that are more important than those on the other side of the house.

It can really help to talk in relative terms instead of absolute terms, e.g. instead of saying something like "Side government helps this vulnerable group", you should say something more like "Side Government helps this vulnerable group better than Side Opposition can."

Framing

Framing is about placing the debate in context. This often includes characterisation of people and groups.

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