

### GENERAL JUDGING ORIENTATION.

1. I view our form of debate as an intellectual game centering on public policy argument. Informed policy judgments are important pretty much wherever we situate ourselves: as policy makers, as concerned citizens, as social critics, or as activists. Even a decision to “walk away” from political engagement requires an assessment of what the government is and should be doing. There are, of course, other worthwhile things to debate beyond public policy. But the fact that we are debating a policy topic should serve to inform the relative germaneness of arguments within this particular context. This does not mean that issues concerning discourse, assumptions, or underlying paradigms are wholly irrelevant, but it does require that their impact be expressed within the logic of policy discourse, that is, as a reason to reject a particular affirmative plan.

2. As the above clearly suggests, my ultimate theoretical allegiances are strongly associated with traditional policy argument. HOWEVER, I find that even after ten years, most debaters do a very poor job of defending a policy framework relative to some critical alternative. This means that in practice I am often (at least relatively often) persuaded to vote for critical arguments.

3. I am strongly disinclined to vote on debate theory. Debate theory is interesting, but in the end it is intellectually trivial. Whatever you take away from the activity, surely among the least important matters will be your knowledge of the agent specification or the PICs good and bad debate. Giving too much weight to theory trivializes more important substantive concerns. It also encourages terrible, flowgo-centric, cheap shot debating. Finally, the debate over most contested theory issues is close and often nearly indeterminate. Ideally, debates should be decided on grounds more substantial than which series of tag lines the judge finds most congenial.

4. Speaking more clearly earns you more speaker points.

### TOPICALITY

1. In even the most minimalist of rule books, it seems necessary for the affirmative to be topical. (The only other indispensable rule is that the negative must compete.)

2. The affirmative is obliged to meet a semantically and syntactically plausible interpretation of the resolution. Being debatable in a given round does not absolve them of this burden, but in round debatability may help to leverage fairness-based negative arguments like limits and negative ground.

### COUNTERPLANS

1. They must compete based on some demonstration of net benefits.

2. Legitimate permutations include all the plan and all or part of the counterplan. Textual permutations which functionally sever are probably illegitimate. A legitimate permutation is a policy option the judge can vote for at the end of the round.

3. I embrace a theory of constrained conditionality in which each team is limited to one proposal for change but the judge can also vote for any logical combination of the two policies,

that is, any legitimate permutation or the status quo.

4. Negative fiat remains a murky area of theory. I tend to think that the negative should be limited to (and can legitimately employ) domestic public actors. A grounding of the counterplan in the topic literature is a further, plausible requirement. Other theories, such as those constraining object fiat, may also have merit.

5. Partially plan inclusive counterplans are generally acceptable, unless their distinction from the plan is too trivial to be worth debating.