Hi! I'm Meredith Deaton, a 1999 graduate of Sapulpa High School and a sophomore at New York University, where I plan to major in politics and Egn. As a member of my school's speech and debate team, I was a state qualifier in Original Oratory, a national qualifier and Super Congressman in Student Congress, a district champion, regional champion, state finalist, and national qualifier in Foreign Extemporaneous Speaking, and a district finalist and state champion in Lincoln-Douglas Debate. I decided to make this debate page because I was bored.

### Common Values & Criteria

**Values**
- **Societal Good or Collective Good**: refers to the good of the entire community; commonly defined like utilitarianism--the greatest good for the greatest number
- **Individualism**: the furtherance and growth of the individual usually created by the exercise of individual rights. Read the introduction and chapter 3 of J.S. Mill's *On Liberty* for further explanation of the importance of individualism.
- **Natural Rights**: Life, liberty, and property. Read John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* for an explanation of the government's obligation to preserve natural rights
- **Individual Rights**: Natural rights plus the civil rights granted to an individual by his particular society.
- **Liberty**: freedom from oppression
- **Sanctity of Life**: refers to the inherent value of life; life is good no matter what its condition
- **Quality of Life**: refers to the standard of living; life is valuable based upon what conditions under which one is living
- **Dignity**: Respect for the inherent worth of man
- **Privacy**: Freedom from the knowledge or interference of others
- **Marketplace of Ideas**: Environment in which all views/opinions are heard and considered and the best one chosen as a course of action for society or as a personal belief. Refer to chapter 2 of J.S. Mill's *On Liberty* for explanation of why this is important.
- **Equality**: comes in two forms: equality of opportunity (everyone has the same chance to achieve something) and equality of outcome (everyone gets the same amount of a commodity, such as money). Make sure you explain which type of equality you are valuing in your case.
- **Justice**: Justice has many definitions. Refer to my recommended reading page for a list.
- **Safety/Security**: just look it up in the dictionary
- **Order**: just look it up in the dictionary
Criteria

- **Social Contract**: the agreement the individual makes with the government which states that the individual will allow his rights to be limited in exchange for the government's protection. It is important to know that we enter the social contract by **tacit consent**, meaning that the social contract is not a piece of paper that we sign; instead we agree to it by accepting benefits from the government. There are 3 major perspectives on the social contract from 3 different philosophers, which are briefly explained on my recommended reading page.
- **Reciprocity**: the idea that because we take benefits from society/government such as the protection of our rights, we have an obligation to contribute to that society, for instance, by paying taxes, serving jury duty, and serving in the military.
- **Deontology**: moral philosophy which says actions are moral or immoral based upon their intention rather than their consequences
- **Categorical Imperative**: deontological moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant which consists of 3 prongs: (1) Act so that you can at the same time will that your maxim should become a universal law of nature. (2) Act so that you treat humanity, both yourself and others, never merely as a means, but always as an ends. (3) All maxims proceeding from our own making of law ought to harmonize with a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature. For a rudimentary explanation of what this means, go to my recommended reading page. For a more detailed explanation, go to Mike West's Kant essay. If you choose to run this, you need to explain how each of the 3 prongs support your stance on the resolution. An easy way to do this is make each prong a contention. The CI is commonly used with a value of dignity.
- **Teleology**: moral theory which judges actions by their consequences rather than their intentions. Put simply, it says that the ends justify the means.
- **Utilitarianism**: the greatest good for the greatest number (J.S. Mill) or the greatest good for the greatest number for the longest period of time (Jeremy Bentham)
- **Cost-Benefit Analysis**: a real-world standard which evaluates an action by weighing its potential costs versus its potential benefits.

**Recommended Reading**

**Social Contracts**

- *Second Treatise of Government* by John Locke
  Highly recommended for anyone who hasn't read much philosophy. It's applicable to many resolutions, and although the language is difficult to understand at times, the concepts should be familiar to anyone with an understanding of American government. Locke believes that man formed society and government for the protection of his natural rights to life, liberty, and property. In return for this protection, man agreed to give up his absolute liberty to violate others' rights. Locke believes that if the government fails in its obligation to protect us, we have both a right and a duty to overthrow it.
- *The Social Contract* by Jean Jacques Rousseau
  Rousseau believes that society is governed by the general will. Contrary to popular conception, the general will does not mean majority rule. Instead, it is what is objectively good for the entire
society. I suggest you read this if you run Rousseau. Many debaters and judges have misconceptions about his philosophy and reading the actual text will help you explain his work. A word of caution: Rousseau's philosophy is very idyllic and sometimes contradictory. As a result, a good debater can tear it apart in an LD round (I found out the hard way) although most don't listen well enough to find the weaknesses.

**The Leviathan** by Thomas Hobbes
Hobbes believes that man has two natural rights: life and the right to preserve his life. Hobbes social contract is based on the idea that man is inherently evil and therefore needs to be controlled by a strong government headed by a benevolent dictator (sovereign) who always knows the best interest of the people.

**On Liberty** by John Stuart Mill
John Stuart Mill, unlike the other philosophers listed here, does not have a social contract, but since *On Liberty* deals with the relationship of society to the individual. Mill, like Locke, believes in the importance of rights. Most important to him is the right to liberty. According to Mill, liberty is what makes us develop and grow as individuals and therefore enables us to benefit society. *On Liberty* deals with the necessity of liberty and the situations in which it can be justifiably limited.

**Moral Theory**

**Immanuel Kant's Moral Theory** by Roger J. Sullivan
Ordinarily, I would recommend that you read philosophy straight from the source, however, Kant's philosophy is very confusing and reading it directly will make your head want to explode. Roger Sullivan's book provides simple analysis of Kant's philosophy which I have found is extremely accurate. According to Kant, moral duties are absolute and inviolable, man's worth is inherent (man is worthy in and of himself), and consequences play no part in determining morality. The cornerstone of his philosophy is the categorical imperative, a 3-part test to determine if actions are moral. If an action fails any part of this test, it is immoral (hence, if you run the categorical imperative in a case, you should explain how you fulfill each prong). According to the first prong, actions are right only if you could will them universally. For instance, because we would not wish that everyone would tell a lie every time they are confronted with a revealing a difficult truth, lying is never justified, even "white" lies. (That's an oversimplification but you get the idea). The basic idea of the second prong of the categorical imperative is simple: don't use people. The third prong of the categorical imperative is rather ambiguous, however, it seeks to create "a kingdom of ends" in which everyone's worth is respected and moral law is always obeyed. If you fulfill the first 2 prongs of the categorical imperative, you have automatically fulfilled the third.

**Utilitarianism** by John Stuart Mill
Utilitarianism is a philosophy that believes actions are moral when they produce the greatest good for the greatest number. That's pretty self-explanatory; however, you should note this doesn't mean a simple majority. Actions which help 85% of society are better than those which help only 51%. And because Mill believes that the suffering of any portion of society is harmful to the whole, actions which would cause great harm to a few for the good of the many are typically not justified through utilitarianism.

**Justice**

**Lucilius A. Emory**
According to Emory, justice is "the equilibrium between the full freedoms of individuals and the
restrictions thereon necessary for the safety of society." Simply put, Emory believes that justice consists of a balance between individual rights and society's good. It is important to note that equilibrium does not imply that these 2 things can be equal; instead, it refers to creating stability. This definition didn't come from any particular book I know of. Emory is a rather obscure legal philosopher and his definition of Justice is all that anyone ever uses.

**Leslie Lipson**

According to Lipson, "justice consists of a method and a certain positive result. The method is one of fair-dealing, the result to recognize equally the basic interest of all and promote harmony between them." This seems fairly self-explanatory. The definition came from her book entitled *The Great Issues of Politics*. It's devoted to a number of issues in political philosophy and has some good quotes. It's worth checking out.

**A Theory of Justice** by John Rawls

Rawls believes that justice (fairness) is achieved through the veil of ignorance. While we create the social contract and when we resolve any dispute in society, we must place ourselves behind this veil of ignorance. When we are behind it, we do not know our own needs or position in our society, therefore, it is in our best interest to come to a mutually advantageous and fair ruling. My understanding is that the veil of ignorance is an elaborate way of saying that to be just, we must be objective.

**Miscellaneous**

- **The Person and the Common Good** by Jacques Mauritian

- **Man and Society** by Jacques Mauritian

Neither of these are exceptionally brilliant philosophical treatises and they both contain a great deal of Christian theology unsuitable for inclusion in an LD case, however, they are excellent sources for generic quotations on the inherent worth of man and society's duty toward him.

- **Anarchy, State, Utopia** by Robert Nozick

Nozick, the major opponent of John Rawls social philosophy and today's most prominent libertarian philosopher, argues for the "minimalist state," one which enforces absolutely no paternalistic laws and never uses other citizens (or their tax dollars) for the good of other members of society.

- **Morality & Moral Controversy**

I can't remember the name of the editor, but this is a collection of essays on various moral philosophies as well as present-day social issues such as affirmative action, nuclear war, and civil disobedience. Contains excerpts from ancient Greek philosophers, Enlightenment-era social contract thinkers, and present-day philosophers. I found Ronald Dworkin's essay, "Rights," to be particularly useful.

- **Taking Rights Seriously** by Ronald Dworkin

I haven't had a chance to read very much of this yet, however, it considers both rights as a principle as well as current social/political issues involving rights. It includes a chapter on affirmative action in case that topic comes up. It's probably worth a look at your local library or bookstore.

- **Interpreting the Constitution** edited by John Rakove

Another book I haven't had the chance to read in its entirety, however, it considers several present-day Constitutional controversies. Probably useful since one Constitutional topic seems to come up every year.
Handbooks

- A Word About Handbooks
  The use of handbooks, in my opinion, is to be avoided. Almost all of them take philosophy out of context, and when you take all your evidence from quote books, you are left with little understanding of the philosophy that you are presenting. But since handbooks are often a necessary evil, I've provided descriptions of the best 2 that I've found.

- The Value Debate Handbook
  I recommend this handbook with reservation. Some quotations are taken out of context, however, they seem to correct flaws in later editions. My biggest objection is that most of the quotes are terribly generic and some are not of good quality. Since they are meant to go in any case on any topic, they provide little analysis for you to work with, but they are sometimes useful to proving the importance of your value or criterion. I have used this mostly as a source for case ideas, and I have used the quotes when I wanted to get experience debating the NFL districts topic without using my real cases. Also, the values section can be a useful tool for simplistic explanation of values to beginning debaters.

- Blaze-On Briefs
  The only handbook I can wholeheartedly recommend. Unlike most handbooks, this one includes actual philosophical text accompanied by easily-understandable explanatory commentary. In addition, it contains a section on how to apply the philosophy to your debate cases written by Neil Bradley, a highly successful debater on the national circuit in the early 90s. These books are sold over the internet. I will provide a link as soon as I can find it. In the meantime, if you are interested in purchasing one of these, email me (Mnesnome@aol.com) and I will put you in touch with the author.

Buy these books from Amazon.com. No they're not paying me to do that, they just have good service...

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Student Congress Tips

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General Information

Student Congress is exactly what it sounds like; it is an event in which each school provides legislation which the competitors will debate and vote on. Competitors can speak for or against any piece of legislation and are scored on a scale from 1-6 (six being the best). A presiding officer who has been elected by the student congress is in charge of keeping order, recognizing speakers, and moving smoothly down the agenda. The rules of student congress follow basic parliamentary procedure. Congress is not as politicized as it may appear, but because other students are voting for you, keep in mind that it is important for you to make impression on everyone.

Suggestions
Make sure you receive a table of parliamentary procedure and motions from your coach. Become familiar with the table as it explains the rules of congress.

Your school should receive a package of legislation at least one week before congress. Make sure that you receive a copy of each bill/resolution and bring them with you to congress for reference.

Speeches cannot exceed 3 minutes. If you have time left at the end of your speech, you will be cross-examined by other members of congress. Filling up the complete time allotted to you is your best decision. It deprives members of congress to expose weaknesses in your speech and the more analysis you provide, the more intelligent you appear.

Avoid playing parliamentary games or making unnecessary motions. This takes away time from speeches and will annoy other members of congress, the presiding officer, and the scorer.

Be involved: be the first one to make a motion WHEN IT IS NECESSARY. Ask intelligent questions when a speaker has time left over. Speak as early in the session as you can and speak continuously throughout the session.

Be friendly to all members of your house; they are the people who will elect you to be the presiding officer, outstanding representative/senator, or to attend nationals. Ask intelligent questions which expose weaknesses in a speech, but do not humiliate an obviously frightened and faltering speaker. Do not, however, "play politics." A fake disposition or overtly plotting to attract people's votes will only annoy other members of congress.

Prepare beforehand. Include evidence in your speeches. Have outlines ready for both sides of each piece of legislation to increase the likelihood that you will get to speak. Also be prepared to think on your feet. After the first 3 or 4 speeches on a bill/resolution, start refuting things previous speakers have said rather than echoing the same analysis the scorer has just heard. Bring your research with you so that you can add quotes to these speeches as well.

Support your teammates. Ask them a friendly question if they are struggling during their cross-examination period. If you have qualified for nationals in another event or do not want to take congress to nationals, work to convince other representatives to vote for one of your teammates. Refute the speeches of your teammates' strongest opponents. Push for your school's legislation to come out of the committee first.

If you are trying to qualify for nationals, write a highly debatable but reasonable piece of legislation. This will put you in the spotlight and give other representatives a favorable impression of you before you even begin.

ALWAYS politely speak up if you have precedence (meaning that it is your turn to speak b/c you have given fewer speeches than the speaker who has been recognized)

If You Want to Preside...

Know the risks. A good job as PO can elevate you in the opinion of other representatives and increase your chances of going to nationals; however, a poor job will destroy your hopes and goals.

Memorize the table of parliamentary procedure so that you will know how many votes it takes to pass each motion and what each motion accomplishes.

Promptly discourage disruptive behavior or the entire house will be motivated to behave poorly.

Learn to keep a precedence chart. This means you must keep track of the number of speeches each representative has given. A representative with only 1 speech will get to speak before a representative with 2 or more, and so on.

Do not show favoritism to your teammates or friends. This will damage your score and harm your chances of attending nationals.