Arguments and Debates

11.225
Session 6
What is an Argument?

- Is it about:
  - Winning?
  - Asserting your position?
  - Convincing someone else?
  - Listening?
  - Speaking?
  - Finding the truth of the matter?
The Three Bases of an Arguments

- Based on credibility
- Based on logic
- Based on emotional draw
How do you Debate?

- Deliver your point of view and sit down?
- Deliver your point of view and stand firm?
- Deliver your point of view and listen?
- Deliver your point of view, listen and understand?
- Deliver your point of view, listen, understand and ....noooooo.... Change?
Arguments/Debates

- A chance to learn
- A chance to match wits
- A chance to have an impact on the listener
- A dialogue out loud
  - Statements
  - Questions
  - Answers

New Ideas
Debate Obstacles

- Fear of your opposition
- Tenacity to one view
- No clear, concise message
- Lack of a willingness to consider another view
- Do you consider change to be failure?
Step 1 = Research, Perspectives, Message

- Know your Material
- Know who your audience is – what do they know?
- Know who you are – what is your bottom line?
- Know your opponent – what is his/her bottom line?
- Find your message as an individual
- Find your message as a group
Step 2 = Play with Your Message

- Are there faults in the logic of your message?
- Are there faults in the evidence supporting your message?
- Are there gaps in information that need to be filled?
- Are you convinced by what you say?
- What are your assumptions?
- What are your opponent’s assumptions?
- Are there other assumptions? Different starting places?
Map Your Argument

CORE MESSAGE

DUSP Should Reduce the MCP 1 Class Size to a total of 60

- Caliber of students is not high
- Housing is scarce
- Not enough funding for students
- Advisors are hard to find
- Individual Classes are too big
Decide on Point Hierarchy

DUSP Should Reduce the MCP 1 Class Size to a total of 60

1. Not enough funding for students
2. Housing is scarce
3. Advisors are hard to find
4. Individual Classes are too big
5. Caliber of students is not high enough
List Counter Points

DUSP Should Reduce the MCP 1 Class Size to a total of 60

1. Not enough funding for students

2. Housing is scarce

3. Advisors are hard to find

4. Individual Classes are too big
   **Counter:** more diversity, more experience, better discussions, more networking opportunities

5. Caliber of students is not high enough
   **Counter:** Forces students to sell themselves better, to try harder to impress, to focus on who they really want to work with.
DUSP Should Reduce the MCP 1 Class Size to a total of 60

1. Not enough funding for students
2. Housing is scarce
3. Advisors are hard to find
4. Individual Classes are too big
5. Caliber of students is not high enough

Paying for school is not our only concern
Faculty are constrained
Research assistant positions are hard to get

Connect the Points
DUSP Should NOT decrease class size

- DUSP needs the extra tuition funds -- $300,000/yr!!
- DUSP needs a variety of views from around the world
- Larger numbers = more power at MIT
- Larger numbers = more active research
Step 3 = The Strategy

The 12 minute presentation

- Intro – quick intro/deliver core message 2-min.
- Body – deliver no more than 3 supporting points – 7 minutes
  - Most important point first
  - Provide at least 1 or 2 details on one or two points
- Conclusion – Repeat Core message - 2 minutes
- Have no more than 7 slides
The Critique

- **Intro – 20 seconds**
  - Tell the Audience you are glad to review your colleague’s work and that you will be brief – be respectful of differing opinions
  - Highlight no more than 1 or 2 criticisms

- **Body – 2 minutes – could use a back up slide if you are fast and planning ahead**
  - Deliver only 1 or 2 important criticisms
  - Provide at least 1 detail, if possible

- **Wrap up – 30 seconds**
  - Repeat main points
  - Connect back to your core message
The Rebuttal - 3 minutes

- **Strategy A** – if you have a strong response
  - Acknowledge 1 of 3 critical points (10 seconds)
  - Say what problem with critical point (3 minutes)
    - Logical Problems
    - Credibility Problems
    - Emotional Argument Problems
  - Back to Core Message

- **Strategy B** – if you have a weak response
  - Acknowledge one point
  - Give an alternative view
  - Bring audience back to your core message and say why it is stronger.
Persuasion

- Connect your message to you – who you are and why what you say matters
- Narrative to make themes come alive
- Address the specific concerns of your audience
- Address counterpoints in your talk
- Be serious – but don’t be afraid to smile