LESSON 10: IMPACT CALCULUS

TOPIC:

In this lesson, students will use the skills they've learned in the previous lessons to weigh the benefits (advantages) of the affirmative against the harms (disadvantages) presented by the negative in a process called "impact calculus" or "risk analysis."

Essential Question + Objectives

With multiple impacts in the 1AC and multiple disadvantages in the 1NC, how do debaters convince a judge that their impacts are most important?

1. Students will examine the importance of impacts in a debate round.
2. Students will compare their impacts to that of their opponents using specific metrics.
3. Students will communicate the importance of their impact versus that of their opponent.

MATERIALS:

- Notecards

RESOURCES:

- *Impact Calculus PowerPoint*

Insight:

More often than not, the final speeches in a debate round come down to a simple question: does the plan do more good or more harm? The affirmative wants to convince the judge that the plan solves impacts with no negative outcomes, while the negative wants to convince the judge that the plan doesn't solve anything and has a number of negative side effects. But what if the judge believes there are both positive AND negative impacts of passing the plan? How should they evaluate the round then?

The answer is ***impact calculus***. Impact calculus is the process by which debaters argue which impacts are most important in the round, and it is arguably the single most important skill for winning debate rounds, so it's definitely important for students to understand!

TWO-DAY (+) LESSON

DAY ONE

HOOK *5-10 minutes*

Warm Up – using the practice debate resolution from previous lessons, have students list potential impacts that their plans could solve.

- ***Common impacts include:***
  - Global Warming
  - Economy
  - War with a specific country
  - United States hegemony *(global leadership)*

Next, have the students list some disadvantages they might run on the negative against these plans. Then, ask students how they might argue that one impact or disadvantage is more important than another. This sets the foundation for the formal impact calculus they will do later.

BODY *30-40 minutes*

Take students through the ***Impact Calculus PowerPoint***, which includes lecture notes and activities.

CLOSURE *5 minutes*

Collect students' notecards with their advantage and disadvantage for the tournament. You may use the notecards to select seeds for the bracket or as an assessment tool. To assess these impacts, make sure students are told to include all of the "big three" on their notecards, and then assess the inclusion of all three: magnitude, timeframe, and probability.

DAY TWO +

HOOK *5 minutes*

Begin the day*(s)* with a reminder of the rules for the bracket tournament, and get into the tournament as soon as possible so students have as much time as possible!

BODY

30-40 minutes

Starting on Day Two and lasting as many days as needed, the students will compete in an ***"impact calculus tournament"*** using their advantages and disadvantages that they selected during day one. Have students give short *(30-seconds to one-minute)* speeches comparing their impact to their opponents' impact, and either have the class vote on a winner or make a decision on your own, depending on preference. Tips for assessing these debates are included below.

CLOSURE

5 minutes

At the end of each day of the tournament, give students a brief recap of the day and discuss some strategies for improving their impact calculus moving forward *(either in the next day of the tournament or in their future debates, depending on the time you have)*. For assessment, take notes during tournament debates on how well students address the big three *(magnitude, probability, timeframe)* and if students include "turns the case" arguments in situations where they are relevant. Generally, "turns the case" arguments should be considered extra at this point in students' development. If they understand the concept well enough to execute it, that's amazing! But it's okay if they don't get it just yet, it's a very complex argumentative approach.