

## Summer Debate Programs

Every year I get a few inquiries from parents and students about summer debate programs. Many groups sponsor these programs, often held at colleges and universities, lasting anywhere from one to six weeks (perhaps longer, I'm not familiar with them all) focusing on various debate and speech formats. Some are "sleep away", other day camps, and some are online.

The workshops are generally led by experienced college and high school debate and speech coaches, with college debaters assisting in workshops and judging debates. The skills taught are largely transferrable from one type of debate to another. Most workshops focus on a single debate format, usually one of the formats sponsored by the National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA), the largest high school debate organization in the United States.

The Connecticut Debate Association (CDA) is not affiliated with the NSDA. Our parliamentary debate format is what I would call "North American parliamentary debate", used by US and Canadian colleges and universities, and by a number of high school leagues. There are two other common "parli" formats: World Schools Debate, an international high school format, in recent years, adopted by NSDA; and, World Universities Debate, often called "British parli", an international college and university format (though there are a few high school events in this format). A summer debate program that uses any of these three formats would teach debate in a style and with a skill set that is most easily transferred to CDA debate.

Parliamentary debate formats have two main characteristics. First, they are extemporaneous. The debate topics are announced at the tournament or even just prior to a debate. Debaters have limited preparation time and limited access to research materials. Second, they tend to be more audience-friendly, in that the speaking style and the arguments made are expected to be understood and appreciated by non-debaters.

There are three other common formats, each of which originated in the US and are sponsored by the NSDA: Policy debate, Lincoln-Douglas debate, and Public Forum debate. These three formats differ from parli in two primary ways. First, topics are announced well before the tournament and debaters are expected to do substantial research and preparation beforehand. Second, though not the intention, the speaking and argumentation styles have become more difficult for those not part of these debate communities to follow. A program that teaches any of these three styles will be more research focused than a program that teaches one of the parli formats.

Debate is about persuasive argument. All debate styles rely on similar theory and presentation. Most debate programs teach skills that apply to any debate format, and which are useful in school and later life. I know former and current CDA debaters who have benefited from camps that focused on different styles, and some who have gone to camps teaching different styles different summers.

## Information on Summer Debate Programs

There are several ways to find information on summer debate programs:

- simply type “summer debate camps” into Google or some other search program, possibly adding some of the debate formats described above to get a more specific list;
- the NSDA web site has an online publication called Rostrum and each issue carries advertisements for summer debate workshops ( <https://www.speechanddebate.org/rostrum/> ).

Every workshop has a web site with information on location, dates, cost, lodging, personnel, etc. You should read and consider these carefully before selecting a program. Some programs offer online classes.

## Parliamentary Debate Workshops

These are workshops that have come to my attention, with no attempt to be an exhaustive list:

- Cornell International Debate Camp ( <https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/cornell-international-debate-camp> ) held at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY.
- Debate Camp ( <http://www.debatecamp.com/> ) with various locations in the US and Canada, including Connecticut.
- Harvard Debate Council Summer Workshops ( <https://hdcsw.org> ) is held at Harvard University in Boston.
- New York Parliamentary Debate League ( <https://www.nyparli.org/camp> ) is an online, free, student-run (but with significant help from NYDDL alums and coaches) program.
- Stanford National Forensic Institute ( <http://www.snfi.org/> ) at Stanford University in California.
- Westfield Academy ( <http://www.westfieldacademy.net/> ) in West Hartford.
- The Yale Summer Debate Workshop ( <https://udl.sites.yale.edu/> ) was created for the New Haven Urban Debate League but is open to others.

Their web sites will provide you with details.

## Debate Workshops Abroad

I haven't gone looking for debate workshop opportunities abroad, though I am sure they exist. Debate Camp, mentioned above, has classes in several Canadian cities.

## CDA Policy and Disclaimer

This note is for information purposes only. The CDA does not recommend, sponsor or benefit from any of the programs described above. Before attending any of these programs, you should carefully review their materials and decide whether the program meets your needs.

I have taught at summer debate programs and have been paid for doing so in some cases.

The CDA does not market to CDA members or permit marketing at CDA events. If you know of a program that you think would be of interest to CDA members, please email us ( [ejrutan3@ctdebate.org](mailto:ejrutan3@ctdebate.org) ) with information and we will review it for inclusion in this note.

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