

Many Lincoln-Douglas resolutions do not impose an evaluative term, leaving it up to the debater to select the value to be used. Consider the resolution “Resolved: An oppressive government is more desirable than no government.” This resolution leaves it up to the individual debater to decide which value will be used in determining desirability. The affirmative debater is more likely to choose a value such as safety, arguing that even oppressive governments offer protection from the anarchy that is present in the “state of nature.” The negative debater is likely to select a value such as freedom, arguing that anarchy is preferable to tyranny.

CONDUCTING RESEARCH

Lincoln-Douglas debaters can productively engage in two types of research: readings in philosophy and news articles dealing with contemporary issues. Top Lincoln-Douglas competitors are conversant with key philosophical concepts such as utilitarianism, the marketplace of ideas, and the categorical imperative. The best way to develop an understanding of what Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, or Immanuel Kant had in mind is to read some of their original works. Fortunately, such classic works are often freely available on the Internet. If you have difficulty understanding some of these original works, numerous Internet sites offer assistance. Two such sites are *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (available at www.utm.edu/research/iep/) and *Assembled Western Philosophers* (available at www.philosophypages.com/ph/index.htm).

The second type of Lincoln-Douglas research examines contemporary news and commentary concerning the debate resolution. One of the reasons resolutions are selected for debate is because they are timely; there is some current controversy that makes a resolution a debatable issue. The best place to begin in conducting research is to locate the current issue that created the value controversy. Consider the resolution used at the NFL national tournament in 2006: “Resolved: In matters of collecting military intelligence, the ends justify the means.” This resolution was timely because of the controversy surrounding the military’s use of unusual interrogation methods on detainees in the Guantanamo Bay facility.

By doing research on the interrogation methods at Guantanamo Bay, you can uncover justifications for competing values. Defenders of these interrogation methods typically use a utilitarian calculus: making life uncomfortable for one terrorist suspect might uncover information that could save the lives of millions of innocent people. Opponents of forceful interrogation use the term *torture* to describe the methods used by the American military. They say that America lowers itself to the level of the terrorists themselves when it ignores standards of human decency in the treatment of detainees. By