**Red Book**

**Stoa 2015 Early season addendum**



Red Book Early Season Stoa Addendum 2015  
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Articles

And Suddenly, Nazi Germany was Irrelevant   
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Article on Resolution #1 by Joseph Abell

Strategy: The Reason LDers Are Learning a New Way to Impact

Lincoln-Douglas is often about the “big issues.” That’s why topics like genocide, war, and tyranny are viewed as the most common lines of argumentation within LD debates.

With the past three years, LD resolutions have had the same immediate and obvious impacts. Example: It’s bad when people can issue bomb threats. The reason? It compromises school safety and interrupts academic process. It’s bad when judges can interpret the law in any way that fits their political fancy. The reason? It leaves judges with copious amounts of dangerous power.

We haven’t been taught to discern what is valuable, we’ve looked to what is completely not valuable and forced links between it and the opposing side. People joke about LDers always connecting everything to Nazi Germany, and that’s because it’s true. Extremity is the norm.

Until now. You’re finally debating a resolution that has nothing to do with privacy, tyrannical governments, or Adolf Hitler. Besides just vastly different logical territory, this means that for the first time in a long time, the value clash will be meaningful. Everyone won’t be running synonyms of justice or human rights. And the application pool is anyone’s.

Oh yeah. You may not have ever done LD before, or any other form of debate. Don’t worry at all! Count yourself as fortunate to get to deal with such an awesome resolution early on. You’re going to learn like crazy, and won’t have to mess with the obstacles previous resolutions gave to previous debaters.

For the more experienced crowd, enjoy the ride. These unchartered waters are exciting, but will also force you to take approaches you aren’t used to. This article is going to explore a few.

# I. Short term Impacts vs. Long term Impacts

As mentioned, the past of LD impacts have centered on radical, short-term impacts. “Unlimited free speech means anyone right now can say whatever horrid, abusive things they want. And that isn’t peachy.” This isn’t just some rogue strategy that only a few tried experimenting; this is the strategy that’s been winning rounds. The broad field of application options slowly shrinks as debaters realize that the biggest applications are the only ones that do serious damage.

But this resolution brings something entirely different to the table.

Here’s a test question: What are the immediate detriments of learning liberal arts? Or practical skills? Can you think of some?

Minus the obvious “sitting in class cured my insomnia,” there really aren’t any radical impacts at first glance. Liberal arts and practical skills are knowledge bases, not nuclear weapons. Voting for one doesn’t terminate the lives of American troops overseas. In fact, you can openly admit it’s a good thing to have your opponent’s side as an intellectual resource (liberal arts/practical skills). Education is unique in that there generally aren’t any harsh physical impacts like the ones we found in previous topics.

This year, the effect of an average application is going to be significantly farther down the timeline than it’s cause. A state can pass a tax law and ruin the lives of middle class citizens within the same fiscal year, while students can learn liberal arts and wait half a century for its full use to come to fruition. The results of an educative model will always take a lot longer to materialize than a governmental/political one. For you the debater, as case writing begins to emerge on the scene, this means one thing:

# II. Google Is Your Friend

This year evidence is no longer just a reference; it’s a requirement. Copy-pasting a URL so you can verify the exact number of deaths in the Rwandan Genocide should your opponent ask isn’t enough anymore. Because an average applications impact timeline is much broader, you have to research, not surmise, the ways and reasons it matters. Here’s why.

Since the average life expectancy in America is around 78 years, [1] and most people go through at least 17-18 years of education (if we include college), that means that a little less than 25% of your life is spent in school, to prepare you for the rest. Education exists because we’re willing to sacrifice a quarter of our life to make the other three quarters awesome. You have to prove what the *result* is of a certain education model, and whether its result is superior to your opponent’s alternative.

But that’s hard. You’re literally measuring what education for students in their teens will do for them in one to four decades. This is, without any evidence, near impossible to predict. Semantic arguments like “hardly any people use liberal arts after they graduate anyway” or “practical skills are best taught by someone else outside of a school setting” should be quickly weeded out within the first couple of tournaments. Why? *Because facts don’t care about feelings.* Although it might take a couple tournaments, debaters will quickly realize that academic studies, educational research, and solid evidence will always be the trump card to someone else’s assumption.

Don’t be afraid to research. There is this sad myth that inevitably gets passed around every year like a malignant virus: “LD shouldn’t require evidence.” You’ll notice, uniquely enough, that people who repeat this line are typically unable to submit any evidence to support such a statement, aside from the semantic assumption that evidence is policy-exclusive. False. It’s factual claims that require evidence, which is why you’ll see any credible writing offer source citations for its claims. Policy cases, political news blogs, and this article included, if you look at the bottom of this page (though not nearly as many as a case will have).

For this resolution, your evidence will be centered on three issues: What kind of information gets taught in formal education, how much information students retain, and how students will use it after school. Be curious about the economy. The type of education our country’s youth receive will be the largest influence on what job they take, and in what areas the vocational market grows. In short, it will define how the next generation lives and functions in their economy. Also, be willing to research more than just the American economy. This resolution refers to formal education in Kansas as much as it does formal education in Kenya. If the world displays diversity, so should your applications. And if you can be prepared to talk about formal education in lands other than our own, you’ll be in the driver’s seat for your next LD tournament.

Returning to the original thought: Cause and effect are in a long distance relationship this year. If you want to have the upper hand, load your applications with evidence. And remember: education takes roughly 25% of your life to sustain the other 75. Your job is to prove that your side is the best 25 in the room. So be excited: We aren’t just encountering a brand new resolution, we’re encountering a brand new way to impact arguments.

It’s pretty awesome.

## Endnotes

1. “Geoba.se: Gazetteer - The World - Life Expectancy - Top 100+ By Country (2015).” Geoba.se: Gazetteer - The World - Life Expectancy - Top 100+ By Country (2015). N.p., n.d. Web. 22 July 2015.

More About Formal Education  
—  
Article on Resolution #1 by Levi Gulliver

Five Elements of School Life

If your mom and your friend’s mom are arguing about which grocery store is better, they can, and should, consider the elements of a grocery store; e.g., meat produce, dairy, frozen food, and dry foods, etc. Likewise, when debating Stoa’s first resolution, debaters should consider the specifics of formal education.

In this article, I will discuss the curriculum, teachers, assessment, governance, and environment of a school from the liberal arts and practical skills perspectives.

First, however, I would like to define the terms in the resolution, as I am using them here.

* By “formal education” I mean education characterized primarily by an institution, secondarily by having an established standard curriculum, a physical building, and outside (usually governmental) recognition.
* By “liberal arts” I mean the classical seven arts of thinking: grammar, dialectics, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, harmonics, and astronomy.
* By “practical skills” I mean any necessarily immediately beneficial skill; e.g., carpentry is a practical skill because carpentry always has as its end a piece of furniture (or other wooden object) that is necessarily useful; dancing is not a practical skill because it can be done for its own sake, whereas carpentry can not.

# 1. Curriculum

The first element of formal education is the curriculum. From a liberal arts perspective, the curriculum is simple: the seven liberal arts. The purpose of this curriculum is to create a free-thinking person who can rule himself. This, historically, has meant the study of classical languages (Greek and Latin) great works of literature (often in Greek and Latin), mathematical studies (also in Greek and Latin) and musical education (thankfully, not in Greek and Latin). The negative, practical skills curriculum is comprised of learning to do the most practical things very well; today, that includes computer programming, the trades—woodworking, plumbing, welding—ranching, gardening, construction, making clothes, engineering, cleaning, driving, and many more.

The end of these skills is the benefits for one’s life or the selling of the products. In schools, this curriculum looks like coaching students in the skills that they either have an aptitude for or an interest in. The curricular difference between liberal arts and practical skills is, in short, that one is about thinking and the other is about.

# 2. Teachers

The second element of formal education is the teachers. A liberal arts teacher is a revealer of truths, a thinker that students strive to imitate, and a guide to the mastery of the liberal arts. These teachers train students to think, to be free people through words and numbers. To bring this about, teachers often model skills for their students to imitate and then provide correction and more modeling. Also, teachers may lecture, question and discuss (Socrates is the master of these), experiment, and tell stories.

A practical skills coach, however, more closely resembles a master craftsman or artisan than a teacher. In farming, the experienced rancher demonstrates how to herd cattle and then coaches a new hand through the process. The new guy makes mistakes. The master corrects him and the hand tries again. This process repeats about 10,000 times until the new guy becomes a master. In this way, the practical skills are passed on from master to master, whereas, in liberal arts education, the teacher seeks, first, to free the students from ignorance.

# 3. Assessment

The third element in formal education is assessment. For the liberal arts educator, assessment is the ascertainment of the student’s relationship to the liberal arts. With this knowledge, a teacher can adjust his teaching to better fit the student and the student’s homework. A teacher may administer quizzes, ask questions, discuss great artifacts (I mean artifacts in the broad sense; i.e., anything made by an art; e.g., an epic poem, a geometrical proof, or a symphony), evaluate an artifact made by the student, evaluate the process the students used to make the artifact, or even ask the students to self-assess.

The master of particular practical skill assess in order to determine what the student, or apprentice, needs to practice again. Usually the student performs for the master, and the master critiques him, like a basketball coach.

# 4. Governance

The fourth element of formal education is governance. In liberal arts schools, the governance often consists of a headmaster or principal and other administrative staff. Their purpose is to provide direction for the school, keep teachers, students, and parents accountable to each other, and facilitating the learning process. They do this by training teachers, interviewing families, managing school spaces, resolving inter-school conflicts, hosting school-wide function, and casting a unifying vision.

On the other hand, a practical skills education could be organized more like a guild of craftsmen than a school. The heads are the masters with journeymen subordinate to them, and apprentices subordinate to them. In this arrangement, the masters function similarly to headmasters in their facilitation roles, with a key difference: while headmasters do not own a school, master artisans usually own their business and the products thereof.

# 5. Environment

The fifth element of formal education is environment. For a liberal arts school, the environment is a help to the liberal arts; it facilitates them. A good school environment focuses the people in it on the task at hand. For liberal arts, that likely means an orderly place with few visual or auditory distractions, somewhere bright with only a few students.

For language and mathematics, chalkboards are useful. For music and astronomy, a theater is good. For astronomy, a good observatory is a game-changer. Contrariwise, a practical skills environment would simply be whatever that is normally done in; e.g., a gardener would apprentice a student in the garden itself and in those other places where a gardener would normally go.

These five elements of formal education define the possible contexts for the debate. Therefore, this list could be a good metric for the topicality of arguments and applications. Also, it could be used as a source for discovering applications. Either way, remember that a generic debate about a grocery store pales in comparison to the more specific, substantial, and meaty debate about the grocery stores’ meat departments.

Cases

“21st Century Workplace Competitiveness”  
—  
Affirmative Case (R1) by Peter Anderson

# Summary (Not to be Read in the Round)

Stoa resolutions have been very straightforward because they either imply a value (justice, in the case of In Federal jurisprudence, “the letter of the law ought the take priority over the spirit of the law” or some variation of citizens” rights in the case of “The United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.”) In other resolutions, value debate is almost avoided altogether, as was the case with “when in conflict, an individual’s freedom of speech ought to be valued above a society’s moral standards.” This is unfortunate because Lincoln-Douglas is intended to be a value debate. However, Stoa is turning over a new page with the two resolutions for next year, which both encourage strong value debate.

The first resolution for the 2015-16 season in particular is extremely relevant from a political standpoint. Over the past few decades, American students have faced increasing pressure to go to college. A greater number attend college every year, but unfortunately, for many, their expensive education hasn’t paid off. This has caused many people (even within academia) to question the basic premise and effectiveness of a liberal arts education.

The first resolution is also very relevant from an economic standpoint. Due to the enormous expansion of technology jobs in the US, getting a degree in electrical engineering or computer science seems to be the best way to ensure getting a job after college. However, some have used this to justify practical skills over liberal arts, and discount the benefits of liberal arts altogether. On the other hand, many ‘practical skills’ education are limiting in workplace and workforce environments. While there is an argument to be made against certain liberal arts disciplines that are particularly un-employable, studying the liberal arts offers many benefits even within a thoroughly practical discipline like engineering.

This departure from previous resolutions will yield an interesting debate that will often center on a debate over pragmatism vs. idealism.

For instance, there are two general approaches that can be adopted. The first is idealistic. Debaters will discuss the purpose of education, the definition of liberal arts, the meaning of success and well-balanced lifestyles. Education, especially the ancient Greek concept of Philosophy or “love of wisdom.” How is this best achieved, applied and what makes it meaningful will all be topics of contention.

On the other hand, many negatives will concede the inherent benefit of a broad education, but argue that it is difficult to gain such an education. Top liberal arts colleges have been targeted in recent years as students have spent more years in college than ever before, incurring massive debt, only to graduate with a degree that is unemployable. While a plumber might not earn as much as a Dartmouth educated liberal arts major, he is more successful if the arts major can’t secure a job. The alternative therefore meets the goals of pragmatism: successful practical application.

Unlike past resolutions that are often resolved in a few early tournaments, this one promises to provide an intense debate over the purpose of education and the fundamental aspects of a successful career and life that will persist throughout the season.

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# Introduction

Suppose for a moment that I am a liberal arts student at UCLA. In order to graduate, I must take credits of English, history, language, math and science. My ultimate goal is to get an MBA and go into business. But, one might ask, how do classes in history, or language, or science, contribute to a successful business career? So goes the argument against a liberal arts course of study. I seek to prove that a liberal arts education is actually foundational to other pursuits and am firmly resolved that:

Resolved: In formal education, liberal arts ought to be valued above practical skills.

# Definitions

Before I explain my position in more detail I’ll provide the following definitions:

**Formal education:** An education that is “classroom-based, provided by trained teachers.”[1]

**Liberal arts:** A “curriculum aimed at imparting general knowledge and developing general intellectual capacities”[2]

**Practical skills:** “The ability to do something” “appropriate or suited for actual use.”[3][4] Prioritizing practical skills means choosing the most pragmatic course of study to the exclusion of other fields.

Before I continue I want to give context in the way of resolutional analysis:

**Resolutional Analysis:** Liberal arts foundation - I want to make it clear that by valuing a liberal arts education I am in no way indicting the importance of the hard sciences. My position is merely that everyone, engineers, scientists and doctors included, will benefit from a foundation in the liberal arts. By valuing liberal arts, we hone important skills like creativity, critical thinking and problem solving, which all contribute to our ability to adapt in any workforce. Incidentally, my value is:

# Value: Job Adaptability

Job adaptability is defined as flexibility and the ability to react successfully to changing circumstances both within the workplace and within the overall labor force.

As much as people complain about them, jobs are an extremely important part of our lives. The ability to adapt to constantly changing workplace and workforce environments ensures personal livelihood as well as the continued functioning of our economy.

## Value Link: Goal of Education

While the goal of formal education is not exclusively to land a job, this end is nonetheless a very important part of education. Yet that education will have been a useless waste of resources if it does not equip us to tackle changes at work. Unfortunately, a pragmatic training in practical skills greatly limits our ability to adapt. This brings me to:

# Contention 1: Practical skills hamper adaptability

The problem with prioritizing practical skills is that it requires one to view education from a purely pragmatic standpoint. For instance, using this logic, one would conclude that because of the great need for software engineers right now and the high potential salary, one should study computer science and ignore the liberal arts altogether. Unfortunately this approach limits one’s job adaptability both within the general workforce and within a specific industry. You can tag subpoint A as:

## A: Practical skills eliminate flexibility

Valuing practical skills demands that one specialize in a specific field. However, just as technology advanced past vacuum tubes, punch cards and floppy drives, the workforce must constantly adapt to changing situations and standards. One example of this is the astonishing rate at which practical engineering knowledge becomes obsolete.

**Application 1: Engineering half-life** - The National Academy of Engineering published a fascinating study that analyzed the half-life of engineers’ technical skills, in other words, the amount of time it took for half of an engineer’s knowledge of engineering to become obsolete. The study found that, for mechanical engineers it was 7.5 years, for electrical engineers, 5, and for software engineers, only 2.5 years. The article summed it up well by noting: “a generation ago, an engineer could expect to carve out a niche in one well-defined area…and remain there for a lifetime. No longer. As technological change accelerates engineers must be prepared to switch nimbly to a new field when the old one peters out.”[5] The important, varied, adaptable problem solving skills developed in a liberal arts education enable engineers to succeed. Strictly practical skills don’t.

Subpoint B:

## B: Practical skills overlook critical thinking

Critical thinking, a key skill that is developed through a rigorous liberal arts education, is integral for success in the workplace. The ability to process information in different forms from different sources and draw rational conclusions is important to every profession. Unfortunately, many proponents of practical skills overlook this. At most universities, students on a strictly practical track can avoid literature, English, philosophy, language and the arts altogether. While seemingly more efficient, this approach ignores crucial skills necessary for job adaptability. An example of this is the:

**Application: Asian labor stagnation -** When we hear about labor in Asia we often think of the millions of workers performing both skilled and unskilled tasks for the American consumer. But for the past decade a startling change has taken place. China and Japan specifically have placed so much emphasis on practical technical skills, to the exclusion of any form of liberal arts education, that workers have become less adept creative problem solvers and critical thinkers. This is beginning to negatively impact the competitiveness of Chinese and Japanese industries causing both nations to reconsider their approach to education.[6]

So here’s the alternative:

# Contention 2: Liberal arts enable flexibility

Liberal arts education, by definition, gives workers in all fields the tools they need to truly think. Learning a practical technical skill only goes so far. Without the ability to apply, reason and communicate, workers in any field will be unable to adapt to changing conditions. This is relevant when viewed from the macro perspective of entire economic sectors, and when considered from the micro perspective of creative problem solving in specific labor applications.

In order to promote job adaptability we must value liberal arts in formal education.

# End Notes

[1] http://enhancinged.wgbh.org/started/what/formal.html

[2] http://www.britannica.com/topic/liberal-arts

[3] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/practical

[4] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/skill

[5]https://www.nae.edu/Publications/Bridge/LearningforEngineers/LifelongLearningforEngineersRidingtheWhirlwind.aspx

[6]http://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/Myth-A-Liberal-Arts-Education-Is-Becoming-Irrelevant.aspx

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# Negative Brief: Job Adaptability

As defined in the 1AC, job adaptability is simply valuing a flexible skill set. If you are only trained to do one task, and one task only, like screwing on toothpaste tube caps, (yes, I borrowed that analogy from Roald Dahl), then losing your job, or switching to a different type of task, would be bad. However, these kind of mono-dimensional jobs are rare, especially in the developed world. Even basic technical professions require a considerable number of prerequisite skills that lay a foundation for career success, even though they don’t pertain directly to the end-goal job. In developing countries on the other hand, the economy is generally unstable, so most workers, even unskilled ones, have developed skillsets that make them adaptable by necessity. The exception lies in countries that are transitioning, like China. Here, it is possible for a worker to train specially for one task and then lose their job, essentially alienating them from the workforce.

From a pragmatic standpoint, changing workplace environments also rarely affect an entire market sector. The Aff is assuming that a technically-trained worker has one specific job; once he loses that job, he is unable to adapt. In reality this is rarely the case. A basic job is usually synonymous with a common job, meaning there will almost always be another similar job, or a job that uses a similar skillset, to be had.

All this is to say, the Aff makes a reasonable argument in theory. However, in reality the Aff’s argument only applies in very specific, very rare circumstances. This is a great opportunity for the Neg to list all of reasons why these circumstances are almost nonexistent, proving that, while logically sound, the case is not particularly relevant to education, especially with the high costs associated with modern formal education.

Contention two again relies on theory. The ancient concept of the liberal arts Quadrivium, when properly taught, probably does enhance one’s ability to think critically and problem solve. But once again, the issue lies in application. Over the past few decades many liberal arts programs have received criticism over a perceived loss in quality of education. Sadly for the Negative, this decline is very difficult to objectively quantify. One approach might be to research the (many) articles and interviews from well respected intellectuals or even corporation executives that explain why many liberal arts majors a woefully unprepared for a real workplace environment.

An effective negative strategy will come down to a debate of pragmatism versus idealism. Under ideal circumstances the Aff can seem convincing, especially if he emphasizes the goal of education being an ideal, rather than something that should conform to limitations. However, the Negative has ample opportunity to argue the opposite, not that we should dismiss educational ideals, but that in a imperfect world, we should take a proven, pragmatic course of action.

“Yep, Algebra is Basically Useless”  
—  
Negative Case (R1) by Joseph Abell

Pragmatism

# Summary (Not to be Read in the Round)

Your first resolution pulls at the competing worth of two educational approaches: *In formal education, liberal arts ought to be valued above practical skills.* It asks us to decide which of these two items deserve a heavier focus in modern schooling.

Neither liberal arts nor practical skills are bad things to know at all; the question of the resolution lies in which are better to know. Unlike the phrase “practical skills,” liberal arts are pretty quantifiable; it’ll include things like literature, philosophy, science, and math. On practical skills: What’s actually practical can differ slightly on interpretation, but generally it refers to how things work in practice, rather than theory. Thus, practical skills are skills that center on action, instead of ideal.

This case supports education with a heavier emphasis on practical skills than liberal arts. Applications show how the lack of practical education in the present is setting our students up for failure, and how while liberal arts are nice to know, a heavy focus on them is useless for the majority of the classroom. Affirmatives will likely point out that liberal arts can be useful too, but this is where you get the upper hand: You have evidence. Unless they can outweigh the credible data you have, don’t let your opponent claim that their side of the resolution is just as useful as an educative method.

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# Introduction

A couple of months ago, I bought my first car. And along with this purchase came a thick, dusty booklet known as the instruction manual. Written in more languages than I knew existed, it gave me a seemingly endless supply of details about my new vehicle. And although memorizing every bit of information about my car wouldn’t have been harmful, it wouldn’t be nearly as important as the understanding of how to drive it.

Knowledge is power. But when that power can’t be practically applied, we’re about as powerful as a PhD Engineer who can’t tell you which pedal controls gas. And it’s because I believe that education is only good when it serves practical use, I would ask you to prefer practical skills over liberal arts.

## Definitions

* **Formal Education**: An education that is “classroom-based, provided by trained teachers.”[[1]](#footnote-1)
* **Liberal Arts**: “areas of study (such as history, language, and literature) that are intended to give you general knowledge rather than to develop specific skills needed for a profession”[[2]](#footnote-2)
* **Practical Skills** are operationally defined as: The active application of a particular ability.

Let’s kick things off with a single point of

# Resolutional Analysis: Universal Applicability

In formal education, all the students are being taught at once, with one teacher. Because of that, the scope of what’s taught must be applicable to as many people as possible. It would be ideal if students learned the exact same material at the exact same pace, but that simply isn’t the case. Instructors can’t teach concepts that exceed the students’ intellectual grasp, but at the same time can’t dumb the education down to a place where no one is truly learning. They have to find a balance of material that reaches as much of the class as possible. This doesn’t mean education should be generic and vague, it just means that curricula have to be useful for as many people as they can be. Formal education means one teacher for many students, so the instruction must be universally applicable for it to be effective.

Understanding the function of formal education, let’s talk about how we’ll measure the worth of liberal arts and practical skills. This comes with the

# Value: Pragmatism.

Pragmatism is operationally defined as the idea that we value a concept based on how useful it is. For the resolution, this means we value liberal arts or practical skills based on which is most useful, or works the best, in the real world.

The reason I want you to use this value over my opponent’s lies in my

# Reason to Prefer: Purpose of Education

Believe it or not, there actually is a reason we burn the first couple decades of our life behind a textbook. It isn’t that formal education has value in and of itself, but rather, its value is predicated on being useful after we graduate. Instruction exists and has always existed as a utility: A function of providing knowledge that we can use post-diploma. If it fails at that task, it has failed to be worth our time.

Let’s look at the first Contention.

# Contention 1: Practical Skills Are Useful

Because education should do its best at preparing students for the real world, it makes sense to heavily focus on real world skills. From basic car maintenance, to self-marketing, to money management, you would think that such essential skills would be taught everywhere. But in spite of these subjects being universally applicable to the classroom’s occupants, school curricula fall deathly silent about them. And when these critical skills aren’t made the focus in formal education, the students will inevitably suffer.

## Application: Financial Problems

Just a year ago, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development tested the financial literacy of 15-year-olds in 18 countries, asking them to do basic financial math. The test included things like balancing checkbooks, looking for potential fraudulent charges in a bank statement and creating a monthly budget. Michael Davidson, head of OECD childhood and schools division, said, “What the study shows is that 60 percent of American students across the country don’t perform to a level that we would consider necessary in order to be successful later in life.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

Students will spend their time studying through chemistry, calculus, and anatomy- things which in and of themselves aren’t bad things to learn. But when this is what defines high-school education, we’re failing to make education useful. It makes no sense to sleight real world problem solving to focus on information that students have a low probability of ever needing. And not having basic financial knowledge doesn’t just make you dumb, it sets you up for failure: You’re more likely to overspend because you have no experience budgeting, you’re more prone to suffering fraud, etc. Knowing what year the Aztec Kingdom rose to power isn’t a bad thing to know, but it can’t trump the knowledge of real, practical life skills.

Remember: We’re valuing pragmatism. This means that we judge between practical skills and liberal arts based on their usefulness to students. And understanding that practical skills are useful, let’s look at the second contention, which shows the contrast:

# Contention 2: Liberal Arts Aren’t Useful

Before I go any further, I want to explain what this contention is not about.

It’s not my position that liberal arts can never be used. After all, the few jobs that specialize in high levels of maths or sciences, such as chemists or engineers, could definitely use such a full liberal arts education. But remember the res analysis: We’re focusing on what’s universally useful for the class. Because of that, I’ll maintain that prioritizing education of the liberal arts won’t be useful for most people.

## Application: Algebra

Of course, everyone should learn basic numerical skills: decimals, ratios, and estimating, sharpened by a good foundation in arithmetic. But the formal education of a liberal art like math means going far beyond the minimal necessities: Things like algebra, trigonometry, and calculus comprise the majority of high-school math education. And all the evidence is telling us that we don’t need it. According to data compiled by Northeastern University sociologist Michael Handel, only 19% of Americans use Algebra at work. And as the complexity of math increases, its usefulness in the workplace goes down. Complex Algebra is used by 11%, and calculus rings in at a whopping 5%.[[4]](#footnote-4)

But what’s even worse is that these numbers are going to keep shrinking. According to a definitive analysis by the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, only 5% of entry-level workers in the next decade will need to be proficient in algebra or above.[[5]](#footnote-5), [[6]](#footnote-6)

# Conclusion

The facts are clear. Schools aren’t giving students the education that the real world demands of them. Seniors finish the final exam without basic financial skills, utterly unprepared to manage the most relevant pieces of paper in their lives. Education exists to give us knowledge we’ll actually use, not information that’s irrelevant to 81% of the workforce, and useless to 95% of the future.

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# Affirmative Brief: Pragmatism

Your key to beating this case will not be on framework. If you can, accept the value of pragmatism, but push the neg to explain what liberal arts entail. If you’ve done your homework (heh), you can quickly turn that liberal arts are more useful: Currently, most colleges use test scores from the ACT/SAT to determine scholarship/acceptance rates. If that’s the case, you can quickly outweigh the neg applications: If you can’t even get into college without prioritizing liberal arts, then you can forget a college degree, which is the very thing that lead to the careers neg argues liberal arts are useless in.

You immediately seize the apriori (latin for first things first) logic: Nothing the neg says can matter because they predicate their arguments on already having a liberal arts foundation to get into higher education. Only after that is the achievement of a career possible, and then the neg starts to argue liberal arts aren’t as useful.

But you still have to deal with practical skills. It’s really tempting to just argue the necessity of liberal arts and sit down, but until you deal with the neg warrants that practical skills are useful, your job is only half done. Here’s something to consider: Let’s pull an application of public school (being formal education) and ask some key questions. “Who gets to determine the curriculum for practical skills?” “What if it’s a financial class, and a teacher with fringe economic theories instructs the class that borrowing money on credit is a fabulous idea?” Your opponents will argue that practical life skills are extremely important, but you can actually turn this: If they’re that important, should we really trust them to be taught by a teacher that a child’s parents don’t know, and are powerless to silence?

Remember, your side of the resolution doesn’t have this problem. Liberal arts like math don’t have room for interpretation: Algebra is algebra. Agree to the value framework, turn the necessity of liberal arts, and push your opponent to defend the real world consequence of practical skills education. It’ll be fun.

“The Jobs Case”  
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Negative Case (R1) by Travis Herche

I’m excited to argue against this resolution because it means I get to dispel some of the big myths about today’s job market. There’s this widely-held belief that jobs you do with your hands are dirty and low-tech and don’t pay well. But nothing could be further from the truth. So we’re going to shake free from that myth – and this resolution.

Let’s start with my

# Value: Career Outlook

Career Outlook is operationally defined as: “The likelihood that a student will be able to obtain meaningful, stable, well-paying work soon after graduation.”

Here’s why this is the best way to measure the resolution:

## Reason to Prefer: Purpose of Education

Modern formal education was invented as a way to prepare students for jobs other than what their parents did. It is the foundation of the dream that you can grow up to be anything if you study and work hard.

That’s why education is structured in terms of careers, and why your choice of a college major is so important. Career outlook is the whole focus and purpose of education, which makes it the only suitable way to measure this resolution.

# Contention 1: Liberal Arts have Weak Outlook

For liberal arts majors, the real world after graduation is less “Indiana Jones” and more “moving back in with your parents,” and “getting a job at Taco Bell.” That’s because so many people want these jobs, but there are very few actual jobs in those fields to go around. Not everyone gets to be a ballerina.

Rick Newman wrote an article in The Exchange in 2013 titled: “The 10 Worst Majors for Finding a Good Job.” He listed: Business Management, Criminal Justice, Drama/Theater Arts, Anthropology, Liberal Arts and Sciences, History, Psychology, Biology, English, and Economics.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Every entry in that list is, either wholly or in large degree, based in liberal arts.

That doesn’t mean everyone should avoid liberal arts, or that it’s always a mistake to study them. But it does mean that having everyone focus on liberal arts as a rule of thumb – which is what the resolution proposes – is a recipe for failure.

# Contention 2: Practical Skills have Strong Outlook

Everyone knows theres a job crisis for college graduates. Here’s the thing: that crisis is only for people who studied liberal arts.

People who study practical skills are often being hired before they even graduate. The demand for skilled workers – and the potential salary – are both enormous.

## Application 1: Engineering

Engineering is one of the most important fields in the modern age, driving growth and innovation in every sector of the economy. Engineers enjoy tons of job offers with great salaries.

PayScale lists bachelor’s degrees by salary potential. Here are the top entries:

Petroleum Engineering, Nuclear Engineering, Actuarial Mathematics [which is applied math used for things like calculating insurance], Chemical Engineering, Electronics & Communications Engineering, Computer Science & Engineering, Electrical & Computer Engineering, Systems Engineering, Aeronautical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Mining Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, and Computer Science & Mathematics.[[8]](#footnote-8)

In other words, 13 of the top 15 majors are engineering, and the remaining 2 are applied professional math. Not one of them overlaps with liberal arts. There is a huge demand for good engineers, and students who choose to focus on it have excellent career outlook.

## Application 2: Manufacturing

Forget what you’ve heard about downsizing in factories. Anywhere but Detroit, the demand for skilled practical laborers is sky rocketing.

CNN reported in 2012:

“As millions of young Americans struggle to land jobs, students in manufacturing trade schools are sitting in a sweet spot. They're being hired even before they graduate.”

The article goes on to quote Jimmy Hodges, dean of applied technologies at Wallace State Community College, saying:

"Young people in the country think manufacturing is nasty and dirty," he said. "Not so. It's clean, high-tech, and the pay isn't bad."

By not bad, he means the average salary for a new hire is

“about $40,000 a year, with the potential to jump to $55,000 to $65,000 in less than two years.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Let me conclude with this thought.

A lot of college students are scared right now because they’ve seen last year’s seniors graduate and fail to get jobs. And it’s true, it’s really hard to get your career going when you made the mistake of upholding the resolution.

Again from Rick Newman of the Exchange:

“Sure, the human psyche is fascinating and bottomless. That doesn’t mean somebody’s willing to pay you to study it, which may be why one of the top jobs held by recent psych majors is barista, earning about $19,000 per year.”

But crucially, the future doesn’t have to be bleak. Practical skills jobs are awesome and there are plenty to go around. We just have to choose our education wisely by rejecting the resolution. Thank you.

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# Negative Notes

The key to this case is the evidence. You want your opponent to buy into your narrative by making arguments like: “The job outlook for liberal arts isn’t that bad.” Which means he agrees that job outlook is important and he’s okay with having the judge rule on it.

Once that happens, paint your opponent’s position as objectively wrong based on the hard empirical evidence in your case.

This case can be value-centric if you need it to be, but you’d rather focus on your contentions. Look for opportunities to accept or conditionally accept your opponent’s value to minimize the fighting there. The more is being said about your contentions – by both debaters – the better.

Persuasively, you’re working to dispel the myths perpetuated by big four-year schools that practical skills jobs are dirtier, pay less, offer less job satisfaction, etc. Confront those ideas directly throughout your case.

# Affirmative Notes

Don’t get tangled up in an evidence war.

The best way to counter this case is with an affirmative case that doesn’t focus on career. Talk about all the other things that are more important than a job, like personal character. Battle against the value by pulling your value links through and running new reasons to prefer. Do whatever you need to do to the value so you can run a group response to the contentions of either “No Impact” or “Outweighed.”

If your case is career-focused, look for things other than chances of getting hired or salary to set liberal arts apart. For example, you might argue that liberal arts majors are better at adapting to career changes, or that liberal arts helps you find the job you’re most suited for by helping you understand yourself and society.

As a last resort, you still stand a chance of victory if you disagree with the contention evidence. If you go this route, you should have a clear plan for how you’re going to stand above the negative evidence so the judge has no doubt you’re right.

Don’t let your own contentions and applications fall through the cracks. Keep moving in the 1AR so you have enough time to remind the judge how great they are.

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