

Mars Hill Overview

This is not an extension of the event rules; rather, it is information for competitors to consider.

Purpose – Mars Hill is a speech event that trains students to connect culture and Christianity. The name of this event is taken from the Apostle Paul’s speech in Athens as described in Acts 17 where he uses Greek cultural ideas to find common ground to make a connection to Christ. The goal is to have students recognize that God’s truth is not divorced from culture; rather, God’s truth undergirds all of culture because God is the maker and sustainer of all things. In addition, the intention is that students will begin to see shared cultural experiences as a way to draw unbelievers into a conversation about Christ in a natural and understandable way.

Categories of Topics – Topics will be divided into several categories – for example: movies, books, songs, art, media, etc. Each round must provide topics from only one category.

Topics/Titles – A list of Mars Hill topics/titles will be published on the Stoa website. Each tournament may use these topics or may generate off-list topics that are aligned with the description and goal of the event. If a tournament uses off-list topics/titles, those topics must be published on the tournament website no later than the opening of registration, giving competitors adequate time to research those topics before the tournament. All topics in a given round (e.g. 1, 2, 3, Semis, Finals) must be from a single category on the published Mars Hill list, or from a single category of the off-list topics generated by the tournament, not a combination of the two.

Binder – Each competitor may bring a binder into the room with them, which may include summaries of the topics, historical notes, character descriptions, etc. No pre-written outlines may be brought in with the binder. The competitor may not share a binder with any other competitor. Each speech should be an original presentation based on the selected topic and prepared during the prep time.

Research – Just as Paul demonstrated to his audience that he understood the culture, the competitors should communicate knowledge of the topic and its context. The Mars Hill competitor identifies one or more theme(s) within the topic/title and the appeal and impact of those theme(s) to the culture (e.g. news, social media, events, values, trends, etc.). The competitor then relates those theme(s) to the biblical truths of Christianity and God’s work in the world.

Competition – After the competitor enters the competition room, the competitor will draw three topics and select one topic for their speech. Preparation time begins as soon as the competitor draws the first topic. The competitor will have four (4) minutes to prepare an original six (6) minute speech.

Presentation – The speech should be delivered in a conversational style and in a manner that would leave someone who does not embrace the true claims of Christianity open to hearing more.