

## ARGUMENTATION AND DEBATE: PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATIONS

by James Edward Sayer

Sherman Oaks, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 1980

Textbooks in all areas of speech communication abound. The process of choosing among them frequently follows the old adage: You pay your money and you take your choice. All such books have strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, a strength to one reader can be a weakness to another. All of these observations are true for James Edward Sayer's *Argumentation and Debate: Principles and Applications*.

For some teachers and some courses, Sayer has written an outstanding, excellent text. For other teachers with different, but equally sound, objectives, this text would be considered inappropriate. Sayer's objectives are clearly stated in his preface:

*Argumentation and Debate*: is designed to acquaint you with the principles of argumentation and debate and to show their pertinence to all our argumentative encounters, formal (such as debates) and informal (such as daily conversations and decisions). To meet that twofold goal, this book is structured to take you through the unique experience that is argumentative communication.

As with most texts, especially those which can be utilized at beginning and intermediate levels, the author(s) rarely completely meet their goals(s). Such is the case in this instance. Chapters 11-18 treat "formal debate" (by which Sayer seemingly means academic, competitive, contest, tournament debating, utilizing propositions of policy). While the emphasis on both of these areas is fairly evenly divided, it obviously does not encompass *all* argumentative encounters.

Those areas which the text covers, it covers well, and it does so in a concise, well-written, jargon-free style. Therefore, if your teaching emphasis is in one or more of these areas, this is a fine text. To that extent, if you teach a basic course in Argumentation and/or Debate, this text is worthy of your consideration for adoption. If you teach a course in debate which emphasizes debate on propositions of policy, this text is worthy of your consideration for adoption. If your orientation toward debate reflects a Whatelian concept of presumption, and a judicial judging paradigm, this text is worthy of your consideration for adoption. If you find that the last paragraph of this review applies to you in total, look no farther; *Argumentation and Debate: Principles and Applications* will be an excellent, if not ideal, text for you to use.

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