

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMUNITY

Reclaiming a Heritage: A Proposal for Rhetorically Grounded Academic Debate

Michael D. Bartanen
Pacific Lutheran University

David A. Frank
University of Oregon

Webmaster's note: Many of the URL's in the references have changed. As much as possible, I've tried to list updated URL's. The previous URL's are also listed for historical completeness.

The history of debate is very old, dating back nearly as far as the study of rhetoric itself. In fact, rhetoricians invented debate as a valuable learning tool as part of a rhetorical education, which today we call the study of the liberal arts.¹ In the rhetorical tradition, teachers of rhetoric sought to educate students to be informed, articulate, and ethical citizens. Both rhetoric, and debate as an extension of rhetoric, and dialectic were viewed as pedagogical tools designed to teach students the art and science of wedding wisdom to eloquence.² We believe this tradition, where the sometimes contradictory elements of knowledge, communication, logic and civil argument are joined, needs reclamation by those who teach academic debate.

The rhetorical tradition and the musing of ancient rhetoricians may seem to have little to do with contemporary academic debate, which almost seems to be the antithesis of the rhetorical principles articulated so long ago.³ Yet, we believe academic debate would best meet its boundless potential by reclaiming its rhetorical heritage and grounding. In reclaiming its heritage, we believe academic debate should maintain a focus on educating ethical citizens and emphasizing teaching students to research and speak on crucial issues in the public sphere. Our goal here is to outline a vision of academic debate that draws from the rhetorical tradition, a vision that simultaneously affirms and challenges current practices in policy debate (CEDA/NDT) and parliamentary debate (NPDA/APDA).

We believe the two debate movements make some problematic assumptions about the objectives' of academic debate, which the rhetorical tradition can bring into alignment. In particular, we need to

interrogate the assumptions about ethics, logic and research, delivery, and audience made by our colleagues in both debate movements. We conduct this interrogation with respect for the value of supporting many forms of forensics and as critics "from within."⁴ We are members and products of the academic debate community. We believe academic debate is a wonderful activity, that our debate colleagues are dedicated professionals, and see our criticism as an invitation to a friendly and constructive argument about the direction academic debate, and in particular, parliamentary debate, should take. Our effort here is an extension of a rhetorically grounded debate pedagogy we have developed in texts and other writings designed for forensic educators and college and high school debaters.⁵

Pedagogical Divides and Common Ground

There are two pedagogical divides which concern us: one which separates the speech field from academic debate, and the other that marks the space between parliamentary and policy debate. We believe the rhetorical tradition can bridge these divides. We believe that academic debate would best meet its boundless potential by locating its practice in the traditional realm of its rhetorical grounding and on a responsibility to help promote robust "civic debate," as an integral part of encouraging "public citizenship."

David Zarefsky writes that people who "who grow up" with a "respect for and proficiency in the tools of argumentation, discussion, and debate" and possess "them as part of their equipment for living will be able to practice and demand the art of deliberation. That, more than anything else, will make it possible to reclaim the public sphere."⁶ Zarefsky, a former debater and debate coach, author of texts and articles on academic debate, also scores the National Communication Association for treating debate programs as "backwaters" and our profession for its "insularity":

The area of our field which most directly bears on public affairs, the study of argumentation and debate, we too often have treated as an intellectual backwater of programs staffed by paraprofessionals and undeserving of our support. And our colleagues in this area have defined their own professional concerns with such insularity that they deprive the rest of us their insight into the conduct of public controversy.⁷

Zarefsky's views should provide debate educators with the inspiration to reclaim the vision that seems to have been sacrificed in the internal debate about academic debate should best be conducted.

Zarefsky is particularly critical of those who are willing to "express opinions and preferences immediately, without the need for deliberation or, sometimes, information."⁸ The quality of deliberation and argument, Zarefsky, observes, is dependent on the research and information used in public advocacy. He cites a Kettering Foundation study revealing that college students want and need better information to make decisions and value judgments.

To reclaim the public sphere, Zarefsky argues, we must restore quality public deliberation. To accomplish such a restoration, he continues, we must create a space where there is civility, diversity of views, broad participation, a willingness to consider opposing arguments, a comparison of different approaches to problems and their tradeoffs, and a focus on the broader issues rather than on technical details. The rhetorical tradition, we believe, may better link academic debate to the National Communication Association,⁹ provide a treatment for our insularity, and helps our student-citizens reclaim the public sphere by establishing a debate pedagogy designed to achieve the Zarefsky's aspirations.

The need for debate pedagogy that draws from the rhetorical tradition is also evident in the philosophical divide between parliamentary debate and CEDA/NDT. This divide may represent Robert Frost's belief that "[g]ood fences make good neighbors." On one side of the divide, educators in parliamentary debate restrict the use of evidence in the debate round and provide a "user-friendly" entrance for students interested in argument. On the other side of the divide, educators in CEDA and NDT place a premium on the organization and use of huge files of evidence. The use of evidence from authority, and to a lesser degree, delivery and civility, are issues dividing the two debate movements.

The American Parliamentary Debate Association states in its web site that it sponsors an "off-topic, extemporaneous form of competitive debate which stresses rigorous argumentation, logical analysis, quick thinking, breadth of knowledge, and rhetorical ability over preparation of evidence."¹⁰ In addition, APDA debate

is audience-centered; speaking skills learned on APDA can be directly appreciated by the general public, not only specially-trained judges. By focusing on argumentation and rhetoric rather than rapid recitation of evidence and technical rule-based strategies, parliamentary debate is an activity which is easily learned, extremely adaptable, and widely accessible, yet still rigorous, intellectually demanding, and rewarding.¹¹

In this declaration of principles, "speaking skills" are privileged in the debate pedagogy, and are derived from the expectations of the "general audience." To better guarantee an emphasis on speaking skills, the "rapid recitation of evidence" is faulted because in

parliamentary debate, emphasis is placed on quick thinking, logical argumentation and analysis, a command of rhetoric over extensive research or collection of evidence. Accordingly, no recorded evidence or other outside written material may be consulted during the round.¹²

The assumption made here is that effective speaking skills, quick thinking, analysis of argument, and a "command of rhetoric" is undermined by extensive research, huge files of evidence, and such material is banned from the debate round.

The National Parliamentary Debate Association makes similar aspirational statements. Parliamentary debaters are expected, according to the 1999 NPDA constitution and Bylaws, to combine "an emphasis on both content and delivery."¹³ NPDA does have specific rules concerning evidence. Robert Trapp, in a well-written chapter on the pedagogical justification of parliamentary debate, notes that in parliamentary debate:

the most effective use of time is spent on argument construction instead of consultation of published materials. From a practical point of view, parliamentary debaters might have time to consult a dictionary or a recent news magazine, but little more. Thus, parliamentary debate places a premium on what debaters can do with information they have rather than on how much information they can amass.¹⁴

This pedagogical aspiration places the content of evidence in the "background" of debate pedagogy and translates into specific rules forbidding use of particular forms of evidence in the debate round.

The rules for the 1999 National NPDA tournament (4A and 4B) prohibit debaters from bringing published materials, prepared arguments, or resources for the debater's use" into the debate round. They may "refer to any information which is within the realm of knowledge of liberally educated and informed citizens."¹⁵ NPDA is designed, Trapp explains, to place inference in the foreground and evidence [published materials and external sources] in the background. More specifically, parliamentary debaters are to focus on the inferences made in deriving claims from evidence. This form of debate is designed to encourage students to debate about the structure of reason used in argument rather than the evidence supporting claims. Certainly the inferences used and the logical form of an argument are, broadly speaking, expressions of evidence. Yet, the inferences and logical form of an argument about the living world are only as strong or weak as the information [e.g., published materials and the data and claims offered by field experts] used to construct the premises of an argument.

The basis of the view is, as Trapp states, that students should be able to draw upon their pre-existing knowledge. Both forms of parliamentary debate emphasize the importance of reasoning while seeming to almost ignore the role of careful, sustained, and focused research in creating and testing sound reasoning. Good research cannot be the product of "resolution guessing," nor can it be the product of a hurried consultation of a dictionary or a newsmagazine. The effective critique of any inference requires the skill in disassembling the parts of the inference, which can only come from sustained research of the scholarly literature and an unhurried analysis of a resolution.

This choice to devalue the use of evidence is likely an intentional one, and certainly not a choice reflecting the practice in legislative assemblies such as the British House of Commons. Although Members of Parliament are not permitted to use notes during debate, the debaters know in advance the topics before the house and have considerably more time to research and rehearse claims that they present. Even the Prime Minister, who can bring a notebook with briefs and materials, has access to questions about which he or she will be asked during question time. Witness, for example, the famous speech delivered by Richard Crossman on the issue of the British mandate and the Arab-Zionist conflict on 1 July 1946.¹⁶ This address was the result of Crossman's careful, sustained, and focused study of the conflict and benefited from his 120-day investigation in Palestine as a member of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. This speech was a well-

modulated argument integrating analysis of inference with empirical evidence. It is more likely that American parliamentary debate practice, while borrowing from similar formats in Europe and elsewhere, is structured as a perceived antidote to the evidentiary excesses of American policy debate formats.

An even more serious problem is the assumption that the debaters who are college students have sufficient information to build or justify an argument on a topic in which they have 15 minutes to prepare. College students are not particularly well informed on public issues, and using the "common knowledge" of the average college student as a standard is quite problematic. The 1998 annual survey of freshman conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles substantiates our concerns. The report's conclusions, based on the responses of 275,811 students at 469 two- and four-year institutions, revealed that only 26% of students believe it is important to keep up with political affairs, 14% discuss politics on a frequent basis, and that the major reason freshman attend college is to "get a better job."¹⁷ These students need more than a brief consultation with a dictionary and a newsmagazine to understand current policy issues. Using the process of "resolution guessing," parliamentary debaters may talk about and read generally on issues they might debate. Yet, at best, this general reading and the discussion that ensues will lack the focus and the depth needed to gain an understanding of the literature and its nuances. And even the most general of general education courses, the analog Trapp draws to parliamentary debate, have more depth with their texts and expert professors than the cursory exposure to information sanctioned by NPDA and APDA.

In addition, relying on the "common knowledge" standard reinforces class distinctions as the college student from an affluent family, from a good public or private school system, or who had other material advantages will tend to have greater "common knowledge" than students lacking such advantages. Providing advocates the opportunity to conduct careful, sustained, and focused research on topics or issues about which they will debate can level the playing field. This is particularly critical given the changing nature of the typical college student, a point we will later address.

Although CEDA was originally a response to the style and evidentiary excesses of NDT, the trajectory of debate practice in CEDA has led to its de facto merger with NDT. CEDA and NDT do not limit

the use of evidence, nor do they have expectations concerning delivery practices, and their ideal audience is the critic who understands and appreciates the nuances of debate practices in the CEDA/NDT culture. In justifying CEDA debate, leaders of the organization state "Students learn to organize huge files of evidence and briefs, arguments in their cases and persuasive points in their speeches. Students learn to analyze the claims other students make and to refine their arguments so that they are rhetorically and logically sound arguments."¹⁸ NDT debate educators offer similar justifications.¹⁹ As Trapp accurately notes, external evidence rather than the structure of reason is the focus of argument in CEDA/NDT. This point is confirmed by Hill and Treadaway who document the wide difference between what organizational documents say that CEDA is (communication oriented) and what student practitioners believe that the organization is (content oriented).²⁰

The parliamentary debate movement is a direct response to "rapid recitation of evidence" practiced in CEDA/NDT. Students in parliamentary debate do speak slower and their debates are generally more interpersonally polite than those in CEDA/NDT. Yet, the proof for claims, in the form of evidence, offered in CEDA/NDT tends to be stronger than that offered in parliamentary debate. Our belief is that by reclaiming a rhetorical heritage we can help foster the healthy habits of communication seen in parliamentary debate and sponsor the research and knowledge that is the strength of policy debate. The rhetorical tradition supports the assumption that neither the inference between evidence and claim nor the content of evidence should be in the background; a proper pedagogy for academic debate places both in the foreground. There is, in other words, a middle ground.

Rhetorical Principles of Academic Debate

In the rhetorical tradition, the focus of a debate education is on all the features of argument, including ethics, logic and proof in all of their manifestations, and their effective communication to diverse audiences. In what follows, we distill from the rhetorical tradition and the standards set forth by Zarefsky four sets of pedagogical principles that we believe should be used in creating a rhetorical model of academic debate.

Rhetorical Principles of Ethics and Civility

In the rhetorical tradition, the student was inculcated with humane values before debating. Persuasive success was not the only criterion used to measure a student's command of argument strategy.²¹ In their reclamation of the rhetorical tradition, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write:

the orator is nearly always at liberty to give up persuading an audience when he cannot persuade it effectively except by the use of methods that are repugnant to him. It should not be thought, where argument is concerned, that it is always honorable to succeed in persuasion, or even to have such an intention.²²

Viewed from within this vantage point, debate students should know the "methods" of persuasion that ought to be considered repugnant, and that there are times a places where a "principled defeat" is a moral victory. In short, the rhetorical tradition calls debate educators to place the education of the student's conscience and the impact arguments have on people at the forefront of their agenda, placing a brake on the competitive impulse.²³ The forensic community has several well-written, but largely ignored, statements of ethics, each of which stipulate specific ethical and moral expectations for the forensics community.

Civility, another expression of ethics, is a quality academic debate should better emphasize. The quality of contemporary discourse has become less civil and more confrontational in recent years. Former National Endowment for the Humanities Chair Sheldon Hackney described the process of deliberating public issues as "drive-by debating."²⁴ Others suggest that television has encouraged more confrontation in our lives. Even the briefest visit to the Jerry Springer show demonstrates how easy it is for personal conflict to devolve into violence when civility is absent. Many commentators believe that the absence of civility in our public deliberations have caused a decline in the problem-solving abilities of our public decision-making forums. Members of Congress, for example, recently met in Hershey, Pennsylvania, to create a context outside of their normal interactions to get to know one another. They did so hoping that knowing each other as people was a necessary prerequisite to creating solutions for pressing problems.

The importance of civility to effective public deliberation should not be underestimated. Civility means more than just being polite. It requires that people take the time to try to understand and appreciate opposing viewpoints. Civility inhibits the tendency of conflicts to devolve into personal attacks on other people. Civility also provides the framework for people to accept outcomes when their position does not prevail.

The structure of all forms of academic debate inhibit civility. The "competition component" of debate gives debaters incentives to ignore or misrepresent the views of their opponents. Even without deliberately doing so, debaters tend to over claim the strength of their claims and underestimate opposing views. One of the major advantages of parliamentary debate is the reintroduction of politeness to the debate process, which at least encourages greater civility. Reminiscent of all forms of debate in earlier times, speakers take the time to recognize each other and the "Speaker of the House" before beginning their speeches. This is a very important aspect of the debate process and, perhaps, one of the most appealing features of parliamentary debate. There is evidence that even taking the time to perform the simple task of acknowledging another person, as a form of phatic communication, is a vital part of maintaining a sense of acknowledging the individuality of the other.

Such acknowledgment promotes acceptance of the ideal that the relationship between the arguers is more important than the outcome. This serves to de-escalate the controversy and help prevent the arguer from making the outcome personal. This attempt to promote civility can be contrasted with policy debate where more and more frequently, profanity, personal insult and confrontation with the judge have become the norm. Each of these behaviors, in and of themselves, shows a lack of civility and a corresponding lack of appreciation for the humanity of the participants in the debate round.

Unfortunately, without compensating for the zero-sum game element of competitive debate, even parliamentary debate cannot fulfill its potential in encouraging greater civility in the debate process. Any form of debate works best when arguers interact with their opponents in a context where "risk taking" occurs. The importance of taking the risk of "being proved wrong," is a vital characteristic of debate introduced by Wayne Brockriede.²⁵ Debate is just a game when arguers are encouraged to defend their own arguments without reference to adapting to the views of others.

The structure of both policy and parliamentary debates heavily relies on gaining as an organizing principle.²⁶ The zero sum outcome of the debate round, where one team wins and the other loses, destroys any incentive to seek common ground or modify any pre-conceived position. Further, the zero sum outcome encourages debaters to overstate the strength of their own position and denigrate the status of their opponent's views. Debaters only re-examine their own views if those arguments are competitively unsuccessful, rather than if an opponent has raised substantive flaws in the argument.

Rhetorical Principles of Logic and Proof

In the rhetorical tradition, all forms of logic and proof were taught to students. An emphasis was placed on the testing of logical forms as well as on discovering the experiential proof used to build particular arguments. Students were expected to know how to test the inferences that bridge the premise of an argument to its claim. As important, students were expected to have conducted the research necessary to discover the best evidence on a particular issue.

Both policy and parliamentary debate fail to promote habits of effective argument analysis and research. Trapp is right that policy debate discourages careful testing of the inferences between evidence and claims. In addition, policy debate, by emphasizing the use of expert testimony evidence and discouraging debate about the traditional stock issues, effectively narrows the range of viewpoints that can be considered. There is a third tendency in policy debate for arguers to develop positions which mirror those of many other teams. Some of these positions have an almost notorious reputation (e.g. "Nuke War Disad") for accentuating the tendency in policy debate to prefer "low risk / high impact" positions rather than ones which effectively test the causal relationships between a proposed policy change and its potential disadvantages.

Parliamentary debate is no more effective in this regard. Discouraging the use of careful, sustained, and focused research, and the use of that research in the debate round fails to encourage the development of habits necessary for the development of sound reasoning skills. If policy debate is too predictable in terms of the kinds of arguments that are presented, parliamentary debate is too unpredictable. The "carte blanche" given the government to define terms and set case

areas in every round makes it highly unlikely that the opposition will be able to effectively develop alternative approaches or legitimate critiques of the government's position. The structure of the debate, giving only fifteen minutes before the debate to prepare, provides a significant advantage to the government. Even if the government chooses a "middle of the road" approach the opposition cannot depend upon that likelihood. The inability of the opposition to prepare means that the best strategy is to produce positions rather than ones that specifically test the policies or values advocated by the government. This helps to explain the discrepancy between the win-loss records of the government and opposition at the NPDA National Tournament and at other tournaments. At the 1999 NPDA National Tournament the opposition won the vast majority of the debates. One explanation, assuming that the topics were reasonably balanced for both sides, is that debate teachers, rather than worrying about direct case refutation, teach general refutation skills which are applicable to most cases. The government, not having adequate time to research and develop sound cases, is forced to rely on shallow analysis, "canned" case areas; or "off the wall" analysis of the resolution. As NPDA debate matures, it is likely that government teams will develop more sophisticated case writing skills which will effectively reverse the win-loss disparity in their favor. But given the constraints of the current format, it is unlikely that the government side will ever consistently enjoy the same success as the opposition without consistently resorting to either "canned" or "off-the-wall" analysis.

The inconsistent nature of topics used in Parliamentary rounds also inhibit meeting the rhetorical principles of research and logic. It is difficult to consistently write well-balanced, interesting and significant topics to debate. The lack of any consensus regarding whether policy-oriented, value-oriented, "loose-link/tight link" or philosophical aphorism topics also undermines the ability of debaters to develop sound reasoning and case writing skills. Different skills are emphasized, for example, in writing a policy case as opposed to analyzing an aphorism. It is difficult enough to write a sound case in a short period of time, even without factoring in the need to quickly analyze the problem area for the round.

Topics used in CEDA/NDT also do not promote effective research and reasoning. CEDA has moved in recent years from two topics to one; and from value propositions to extremely narrow policy propositions. These narrow resolutions often are not balanced, leading to the need for negative teams to rely on procedural arguments, generic counter-plans, low-link/high-impact disadvantages, or resolutional

critiques. Certain stock issues, most notably inherency, are rarely argued by either team in the debate round.

Rhetorical Principles of Delivery

In the rhetorical tradition, delivery was seen as an essential canon, running parallel with argument invention. Rather than reducing the delivery to the pejorative term "communication skills," students in the rhetorical tradition were taught that the language, pronunciation, and organization used in an argument were essential to its logical power. In contrast, the failure of academic debate to build a pedagogy that attends to matters of orality and delivery may explain its political alienation from the speech profession and the NCA. The rapid delivery in policy debate and the attention to humor and wit at the expense of researched knowledge in parliamentary debate serve to devalue academic debate in the eyes of the speech profession.

We also anticipate a time, with trepidation, that email will become distance learning's answer to academic debate, and debate professionals will be called to justify the need for oral argument.²⁷ The answer can be found in the rhetorical tradition. As Marshall McLuhan and others have detailed, no medium of communication is neutral.²⁸ Scholars have discovered that arguments delivered through email, for example, are framed and interpreted differently than those delivered through the oral channel.²⁹ Critically, oral communication retains a primacy in human affairs, and a command of its principles is essential for the competent arguer.

The rhetorical tradition calls attention to the matter of "presence" in oral argument.³⁰ This notion separates oral argument from argument delivered through other mediums. Oral communication requires the speaker to adapt to a rhetorical situation that consists of an audience, its situation, and constraints as they exist at the moment the speaker introduces an argument.³¹ Adaptation of an argument to the audience, situation, and constraints is essential to an argument's success and dependent in public speaking contexts on the oral channel.

Adaptation of oral argument to the rhetorical situation calls for an understanding of the audience, its values and aspirations, a proper use of language, an organizational structure well suited for the occasion, and the selection, through careful research, of the best arguments and proof. Such choices inform and constitute part of the reason, logic, and proof

that make up an argument. The use of language and the organization of proof should not be reduced to "comm skills" [sic] for they are, particularly in the oral setting, found in the premises, inferences, and proof that lead to claims.

Rhetorical Principles of Audience

In the rhetorical tradition, students expected to face diverse audiences, knowing as well that different audiences and individual audience members required different kinds of proof. Because audiences and audience members hold different values and use a variety of modes of inquiry, students were taught the art of adaptation. Students were expected to study the sociological pluralism and the various logics at work in the world. Again, ethical constraints were placed on the methods of persuasion; students were not encouraged to pander, rather, they were invited to use moral arguments to improve the lot of fellow citizens.

The audience forensics educators address, their students, must be broadened. The traditional assumption of all elements of education, particularly those elements relating to co-curricular activities such as debate, is that those activities must be accessible to as many students as possible. In contemporary forensics the ideal of broad participation has been blurred. While it may be true that many students participate in "forensic activities," unfortunately, the explosive growth in the number of events has had the concomitant effect of decreasing the number of students participating in any particular event. A student, for example, who might have participated in debate and one individual event in the past, may now participate in three or four individual events now. This has two effects. First, the growth of the number of debate and individual events has encouraged specialization. To be successful, a student must spend considerable time preparing for particular events (whether debate or individual events) rather than sampling a wider range of all the events. Second, specialization has created considerable entry barriers to participating in forensics.

The entry barriers to participation take many forms. Students wishing to be competitive in policy debate, for example, must begin training as high school students and, more importantly, have access to summer high school workshops to learn the intricacies of debate theory. A student waiting until college to enter policy debate is faced with the overwhelming reality that he or she is literally four or five years behind the students who were able to enter the activity at a younger age. There

are rarely sufficient numbers of new students to justify holding novice divisions, and when such divisions are held, students may observe debaters in higher divisions who have much more developed skills and decide that they do not have enough time or energy to learn those skills. The entry barriers in Parliamentary Debate, while minimal at this stage in its development, are also present. As noted earlier, the event is easier for students with a stronger liberal arts background who have a wider range of knowledge. Further, as the event becomes more popular, the competition will become keener, making it more difficult for inexperienced students to participate. While not a widespread event at the High School level, when high school debaters enter college with Parliamentary background, they will likely "raise the competitive bar," in the same way that the growing popularity of High School Lincoln-Douglas debate had the same effect at the college level.

There are also resource-based entry barriers. Jack Rogers documents some of the competitive advantages of debate programs who have more resources. The ability to provide scholarships; to access research aids such as Lexis-Nexis; to hire coaching help, and even to travel to more events provides a demonstrable "rich-poor gap" in forensics.³² While Rogers confines his analysis to CEDA debate, the same resource-based barriers exist in parliamentary debate and individual events. While the "rich-poor gap" may not yet seem significant in parliamentary debate, its development seems inevitable. Remembering the aphorism, "those who fail to recognize the lessons of history are condemned to relive them," it would behoove all in the debate community to recall the experience of CEDA Debate, whose creation was motivated by a desire to provide an alternative for students unable or unwilling to overcome the entry barriers which existed in policy debate of the late 1960's. For a while, CEDA provided a meaningful alternative. Eventually, however, CEDA moved away from its initial vision and, as an organization, devoted more energy to providing competition rather than emphasizing education.

The issue of how to insure broad participation in debate is exacerbated by the changing demographics of the American college student population. College students face different challenges than their counterparts of thirty years ago. Today's students are more likely required to hold a part time job to help pay their expenses; they are often older people who are returning to school; they may be required to complete internships as part of their degree program; and less likely to live on campus, making them less connected with the larger campus

community. To serve this changing population, the forensic activity must also change. The contemporary model, where students devote significant amounts of time to pre-tournament preparation, travel, and week end tournament competition may no longer be appropriate for the needs of the majority of college students. Further, the unpredictable nature of Parliamentary Debate, added to the difficulty in doing meaningful research to prepare, will likely lose its appeal to the growing non-traditional student population. It is our observation that non-traditional students are much more interested in achieving a substantial educational payoff and not as motivated by the simple rewards of competition. The debate activity, and debate tournaments must adapt to clearly provide a stronger educational pay-off for participants. Winning "hardware" will not suffice in attracting "the best and the brightest."

Finally, both contemporary policy debate and parliamentary debate de-value the role of teachers as a key audience in the debate process. In policy debate, the narrowness of issues debated and the emphasis on privileging student voices over those of other groups has effectively reduced the role of the teacher to almost that of an adjunct researcher and van driver. Parliamentary debate, by rule, discourages coaching of students during the preparation time of the debate. Given the very wide disparity between types of resolutions and the almost infinite ways that a particular topic can be analyzed (especially by the government), that form of debate misses a critical "teaching moment" that can occur when a teacher might help students analyze a particular resolution. Many teaching scholars promote the use of cooperative models, where the teacher and student work together to learn. There needs to be a debate form that strikes a better balance than the existing forms in articulating the role of the teacher in the process.

This distillation of the rhetorical tradition allows us to question the pedagogical assumptions of our colleagues in parliamentary and policy debate and to suggest some common ground. First, an ethical brake must be placed on the competitive impulse at work in both debate movements. Competitive success should not be the primary criterion of judgement, and principled defeats should be considered moral victories. Second, the testing of logical inferences and the discovering proof must not be limited by artificial constraints or by an overemphasis on one particular kind of proof. Third, delivery should be liberated from the category of "skills" and realigned with argument invention and logic. Fourth, audiences before whom debaters present arguments should be

diverse because students learn about pluralism and the variety of logics used by listeners in the evaluation of claims.

These viewpoints suggest that both movements should establish an expectation that a principled defeat is better than a victory in which repugnant persuasive methods are used. They also suggest that policy debate should center more attention on the testing of argument inference, and that parliamentary debate should place a greater emphasis on the discovery of proof. Both communities need a better view of delivery and the reason why we should attract more students from different backgrounds who should speak before a diversity of audiences. In the next section, we outline a rhetorical model for academic debate.

A Rhetorical Model of Academic Debate

We believe that there is a "third model" that would better meet the criteria suggested both by rhetorical principles and by Zarefsky's vision of effective civic debate and one that would utilize the great strengths of the two currently predominant models. Whenever people suggest "new models" of debate, such calls are greeted with responses such as "why don't you just change the existing models," and/or "it won't do any good to change, whatever new alternative that is suggested will eventually be co-opted." These may be legitimate complaints and certainly deserve a response.

Why not work for change in the existing systems? As two people who worked long and hard to maintain the vision of CEDA as a more rhetorically grounded debate form, we believe that one of the principle problems facing any "reform" as opposed to "revolution," is that organizations typically are conservative in nature, resisting change.

This is not an indictment of those people who participate in those organizations, merely an observation about the relative speed and likelihood of substantial change. CEDA, for example, did not make a conscious decision to become an "anti-communication" form of academic debate. CEDA only gradually moved back toward a de facto merger with NDT debate, and only after making changes over the years that seemed, at the time, to reinforce the original goals of the organization rather than ones that ultimately undermined those goals. We have less experience with NPDA debate, but our observations lead us to be wary of the likelihood that NPDA will move toward a more evidence-oriented model any time soon.

Why prefer a new model to modification of the existing models? Our goal is not to destroy the existing models of debate. Instead, we propose a model that would best meet our criteria for sound academic debate and stimulate discussion about how to improve the current models. There is considerable room for many models of debate. Parliamentary and International debate have brought many new students into the activity. We could anticipate even more students being attracted to "on-line" debating, which is currently in its infancy. We do not see our model as a threat to other forms of debate. The two current models appear strong and resilient. If they should evolve toward a stronger rhetorical emphasis, all the better. A model of rhetorically grounded academic is found in figure 1.

Figure 1. A Model of Rhetorically Grounded Debate

1. A designated yearly problem area from which a fall and a different spring topic would be chosen.
2. A designated yearly problem area from which a fall and a different spring topic would be chosen.
3. The topics would be narrow policy or value resolutions designed to be researchable without the necessity of relying on Lexis-Nexis, but broad enough to allow multiple case areas.
4. Each tournament offering this division would sponsor a subject-matter forum, featuring an expert (a professor, legislator, citizen activist, etc.) to discuss issues connected to the problem area.
5. Each tournament would sponsor a public debate between two or more schools on the resolution and invite members of the general and university communities to attend.
6. Each tournament would recruit between 25 and 50 percent of the judging pool from non-traditional judges. Would instruct the judges in the basic rules of debate and stress the need for impartiality and careful deliberation of arguments.
7. Each tournament would use a modified Parliamentary format: 6-7-7-7-4-4-4-5 with 5 minutes of consensus time; and 4 minutes of preparation time for each team for a total debate time lasting 53 minutes. Debaters and the judge could ask questions during any constructive speech.
8. Tournaments would make speaker points the primary determinant of advancing to elimination rounds, with the decision used only as a tie-breaker. Judges would not be

permitted to give equal points to each speaker and instructed that the winning team must receive cumulative points equal to or greater than those of the losing team. The criteria for speaker points would be identified as: Ethics and civility, analysis of argument inference and reasoning, use of qualified evidence and proof, and delivery.

9. Debate rounds would include a consensus time (5 minutes) between constructives and rebuttals. During that time the two teams, without intervention from the judge, will identify the salient issues to be argued in rebuttals. If both teams reach consensus on which issues are most important, each team would be awarded five additional speaker points; if teams do not reach consensus, the judge will determine which set (the affirmative's or negative's) will be debated, and the team with the preferred set will be awarded three additional speaker points and the other team none. If the judge determines that either or both teams are not negotiating in good faith, the judge may subtract three points from either or both teams.
10. Elimination round debates would not include consensus time and win/loss would be the criteria for advancement, as is done currently.
11. Debate rounds would be scheduled so students could participate in individual events competition. Students would be encouraged to do so.

Justification for the model

No model is perfect. The benefits of this particular model (which obviously ought to be tested in tournaments) are found in figure 2.

Figure 2. Benefits of Rhetorically Grounded Debate

1. Broad Participation. Model would minimize the entry barriers of policy debate, and maintain the benefit of parliamentary debate of allowing students to participate in both debate and individual events. The event would also appeal to students who desire the greater academic rigor associated with a formal researched form of debate.
2. Civility. Including consensus time; expanding the judging pool; and promoting the use of speaker points as more

important than wins and losses should help to reintroduce a greater sense of civility to the debate process.

3. Diversity of Views. Promoting a form of evidence based debate while simultaneously expanding the pool of non-traditional judges should promote discussion of a broader range of ideas about important issues. Utilizing subject-matter experts and public debates as integral parts of the tournament format should also contribute to this outcome.
4. Consideration of Opposing Viewpoints. The consensus time feature encourages both debaters (and judges) to seriously think about the quality of opposing viewpoints rather than just rhetorically dismissing them in the context of debate speeches.
5. Comparison of different approaches and their tradeoffs. Utilizing a yearly problem area with different semester-long topics provides time for sufficient research depth to allow students to understand and evaluate various solutions.
6. Focus on broad themes rather than technical details. Shortening the length of policy debates, increasing the length of parliamentary debates, utilizing consensus time and non-traditional judges all contribute to encouraging a focus on general concerns rather than technical intricacies. Use of both policy and non-policy resolutions can also facilitate this end.

In addition to addressing Zarefsky's concerns, the model also is beneficial in meeting the more general expectations established by the rhetorical tradition.

The model establishes an emphasis on ethics. First, the model creates a structure, reflecting reality, so that students are encouraged to find common ground. Thus, there is an incentive to include agreement, as well as disagreement, in the debate process. In so doing, students would be encouraged to treat their opponents, at least for a limited period, as allies in search of similar goals. In turn, this should inspire some civility.

The model encourages an integration of argument analysis and research. Using a single semester topic and yearly topic area provides a framework for students to effectively conduct library research to analyze a topic. Changing topics each semester provides the opportunity for a fresh perspective on the topic without requiring students to completely

start over the research process. The emphasis on having a public forums with experts in the field of the debate topic, public debates, and non-traditional judges provides greater emphasis on blending topic knowledge with the analysis of argument form.

The model encourages public deliberation through oral communication. The model promotes a more general public appreciation of debate as a vital form of education. The long-term health of debate depends upon the continued perception of university and general communities that debate is a valuable rhetorical and educational form. Students who must address diverse audiences will need to attend to their habits of oral communication, and may come to see them as essential to their competence as debaters.

The model places the audience at the center of debate pedagogy. The model validates the importance of debate teachers and judges in academic debate. Judges can now act as a participant in the debate round, intervening when necessary to secure a better education, rather than as a voiceless agent of the game. In addition, the model deliberately opens up the judging pool to invite audiences and judges who employ different logics and values to assess the claims made by student debaters. Finally, the audience of the debate educator, the student debaters, would find a debate activity designed to help them develop the habits of mind and speech they will need to reclaim the public sphere. To accomplish this goal, they will need to know how to encounter disagreement and then create common ground, command the ability to test the inferences between premises and claims, conduct the research necessary to find the best evidence and proof on the issue of debate, and present this proof to diverse audiences with oral communication.

Conclusion

Academic debate is one of the most significant learning tools in the arsenal of the liberal arts. Thousands of students use debate to hone their reasoning and communication skills in preparation for the sometimes difficult task of actively participating in the public sphere. Forensics educators must clearly identify the outcomes they seek from forensics training and assess the means they use to insure that outcome. A debate format estranged from a rhetorical grounding is sophistry in the vulgar sense of the contemporary use of the term. It is time for teachers and practitioners to re-discover a debate format that embraces rather than marginalizes rhetoric.

Works Cited

¹ Bruce A. Kimball, *Orators & Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education* (New York: Teachers College Columbia University, 1986).

² Kimball identifies seven general characteristics of a rhetorically grounded system of liberal arts, Kimball, *Orators & Philosophers*, pp. 37-38. We derive our sense of the rhetorical tradition from the following sources: George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2nd. Rev. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). Thomas M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1994). That the tradition spans cultures, see Xing Lu, *Rhetoric in Ancient China, Fifth to Third Century, B.C.E: A Comparison with Classical Greek Rhetoric* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998). Although not specifically mentioning the rhetorical tradition, feminist Martha Nussbaum has called for a return to classical philosophy and literature for a more humane sense of reason that is consistent with feminist goals and objectives. See Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). For a system which enacts a system of argument and debate within the rhetorical tradition, see Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969).

³ There are critiques regarding the failure of debate to fulfill rhetorical principles, the most famous of which may be Herman Stelzner, "Tournament Debate: Emasculated Rhetoric," *Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 27 (1961): 34-42.

⁴ See Michael Walzer, *The Company Of Critics: Social Criticism and Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

⁵ Michael Bartanen, *Teaching and Directing Forensics* (Scottsdale: Gorsuch Scarisbrick, 1993), Michael D. Bartanen and David A. Frank, *Lincoln-Douglas Debate* (Lincolnwood, Ill.: National Textbook Co., 1994), Michael D. Bartanen and David A. Frank, *Nonpolicy Debate*, 2nd ed. (Scottsdale, Ariz.: Gorsuch, 1994). Michael D.

Bartanen and David A. Frank. *Debating Values* (Scottsdale, Ariz: Gorsuch, 1991), Michael D. Bartanen, "The Case for Using Nontraditional Judges in Forensic Contests," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 30 (1994): 248-254. David A. Frank, "Debate as Rhetorical Scholarship" in *CEDA 1991: 20th Anniversary Conference Proceedings* (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 1993), pp; 75-95.

⁶ David Zarefsky, "The Decline of Public Debate," *USA Today* (Magazine), March 1998, p. 59.

⁷ David Zarefsky, "The Postmodern Public: Revitalizing Commitment to the Public Forum," *Vital Speeches*, 60 (1994), p. 310.

⁸ Zarefsky, "The Decline of Public Debate" p. 59.

⁹ On this issue, David A. Frank, "A New Forensics for a New Millennium" *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta*, 83 (1997): 4-16.

¹⁰ American Parliamentary Debate Association, About APDA, http://www.apdaweb.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=34 (April 1999, was at <http://www.apdaweb.org/welcome.html>) (URL updated May 2006)

¹¹ American Parliamentary Debate Association, About APDA, http://www.apdaweb.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=34 (April 1999, was at <http://www.apdaweb.org/welcome.html>) (URL updated May 2006)

¹² APDA, Guide to Parliamentary Debate, http://www.apdaweb.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=23&Itemid=42 (April 1999, was at <http://www.apdaweb.org/guide.html>) (URL updated May 2006)

¹³ NPDA. Constitution and Bylaws, <http://www.parlidebate.org/1999constitution.html> (April 1999)

¹⁴ See National Parliamentary Debate Association, Parliamentary Debate, Robert Trapp. <http://www.parlidebate.org/parliamentary.html>

¹⁵ NPDA, 1999 National Tournament Rules, <http://www.parlidebate.org/99invite/rules.html> (April 1999). (URL no longer valid)

¹⁶ See Richard Crossman, *Palestine Mandate* (New York: Harpers, 1947).

¹⁷ 1998 CIRP Press Release, http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/norms_pr_98.html (URL updated May 2006) (was: <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/press98.html> in May 1999)

¹⁸ The Values of Participating In Debate: A Selected Bibliography, Glenda J. Treadaway, <http://debate.uvm.edu/valueofbib.html> (April 1999).

¹⁹ See Charter of the National Debate Tournament. <http://www.wfu.edu/organizations/NDT/Documents/charter.html> (April 1999) (URL updated May 2006)

²⁰ Glenda Treadaway and Bill Hill, "Constructing Narratives: Organizational and Individual Stories about Intercollegiate Debate." *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta*, 84 (1999): 1-25.

²¹ This view is developed in David A. Frank, "Audience-Centered Debate: In Praise of Principled Defeat," *Southern Journal of Forensics* 2 (1998): 325-331.

²² Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1969), p. 25.

²³ The placement of ethics before all else is a theme in the rhetorical tradition, beginning with Plato's *Gorgias*. In this work, which is mistakenly seen as a rejection of all things rhetorical, Plato argues that it is better to suffer injustice than to do injustice. Similarly, our debate students should come to see that it is better to suffer a defeat in a debate round rather than win and cause suffering.

²⁴ Amy E. Schwartz, "Hackney Comes Out Swinging," *Washington Post* 17 Nov. 1993, p. A23.

²⁵ Wayne Brockriede, "Where is Argument?" *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 11 (Spring 1975): 179-182.

²⁶ One element of the game-playing model in Parliamentary Debate is the curious lack of rebuttal speeches for both members of a team. There would appear to be no educational justification for not giving both speakers equal opportunity to speak, so the justification lies

either in "conformity with other forms of competitive Parliamentary Debate" or as part of the "competitive debate game."

²⁷ Email debating is a reality at the high school and college level. See, for example, Alan Cirlin and The International Public Debate Association 1998-99 Email Tournament, <http://ipda.anadas.com/ip07000.html> (May 1999). (URL no longer exists May 2006)

²⁸ For a representative sample of McLuhan's work, see Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994).

²⁹ See James Joseph O'Donnell, *Avatars of the Word: From Papyrus to Cyberspace*. (Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Richard A. Lanman, *The Electronic Word* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), and Laura J. Gurak, *Persuasion and Privacy in Cyberspace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997)

³⁰ Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, p. 116.

³¹ Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1-14.

³² Jack Rogers, "David's Slingshot: The Case for Resource Based Divisions in Intercollegiate Forensics," *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta*, 84 (Winter 1999), 9-28.