

## **IPDA National Convention – 2024 List of Paper Presentations & Panels**

### **Hannah Morris - “The Constitution, The Bylaws, and You: Exploring the Framework of the IPDA”**

#### Abstract

This paper, and its subsequent presentation, will cover topics related to the International Public Debate Association’s Constitution and Bylaws, which are frequently utilized by debaters in rounds, whether the topic is meta or otherwise. The confusion that stems from the improper use of, or non-use of, the framework of our organization has become a continuing problem on the circuit as of late. The IPDA Founder Dr. Alan Cirlin stated, “the Public Debate format was created by starting with the educational goals and working backwards.” That is what this presentation seeks to achieve.

### **Brett Harvey – “Abolishing IPDA’s Presumptive Right to Define”**

#### Abstract

This presentation is based on a short essay arguing for the repeal of Article 1, Section J of the IPDA Bylaws, which grants the Affirmative side the presumptive right to define the terms of the resolution. Disagreements about the meanings of terms are an essential and healthy part of everyday communication and competitive debate. From courtrooms to scholarly journals to simple conversation, people argue productively and reasonably about what words mean. Section J regards these exchanges as “definitional squabbles” and seeks to deter them by allowing one side to define away legitimate arguments and modes of analysis, provided it does not get *too* greedy.

This approach has failed spectacularly at preventing definitional disputes, replacing straightforward arguments with the complicated ritual of “calling abuse” and litigating the requirements of the IPDA Bylaws before often-oblivious judges. In doing so, it makes IPDA debates less substantive, less fun, and less fair. Worst of all, Section J creates a technical barrier to access for layperson judges and new participants that undercuts IPDA’s stated goal of promoting “real-world” debate. IPDA should trust the skill of debaters and the common sense of judges in evaluating definitional arguments and should repeal Section J. Recognizing that Section J and the other traditions of IPDA have many defenders, however, discussion and disagreement are more than welcome.

### **Janine Wilkins – “The Impact of Competitive Debate on News Media Literacy”**

#### Abstract

Academic competitive debate has long been recognized as an activity that increases students’ critical thinking skills. American educators recognize the need to teach critical thinking and specifically news media literacy. There is no evidence found in the literature that connects competitive debate with news media literacy. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the difference between the way debaters and non-debaters approach news media, investigating whether competitive debate should be a tool in the news media literacy education toolbox. The findings from interviews with twenty-two college students (11 debaters and 11 non-debaters) indicate that debaters are more proactively engaged with news, understand how to mitigate bias better, and are able to efficiently articulate analysis strategies when critically reading and evaluating news sources.

### **Rainey Page – “Big Questions”**

#### Abstract

In this paper, I will be discussing the importance of diversity in the college debate circuit. My solution to it is the event Big Questions. BQ is a very interesting style of debate and I believe that we should start doing it in college. The paper discusses burn out that college students experience from the repetitive action of competing in IPDA, with no diversity. The paper discusses the goal of BQ and the effects it will have on college students. It discusses the intricacies of BQ and example topics. BQ is a more intensified version of IPDA. Overall, the paper promotes BQ in college.

**Anthony McMullen and Rigo Ruiz – “Back in the day:  
A historical analysis of IPDA speaker point trends”**

Abstract

This panel presents an analysis of a decade’s worth of speaker-point data at various mid-South IPDA tournaments. We review speaker point data from tournaments at Lee College, LSU-Shreveport, and the University of Central Arkansas as well as the Southern Forensics Championship and the IPDA National Championship. We find that the average speaker points have significantly increased from 33.5 (out of 40) points in the 2012-13 season to 36.5 (out of 40) points in the 2022-23 season. While acknowledging that there is need for further study, we hypothesize that the increase is partially attributable to the evolution of the IPDA ballot, which over the years had deemphasized the use of a rubric for calculating speaker points. With the rubric deemphasized, we express concern about whether speaker point determinations are becoming arbitrary and unreliable. Without a consistent standard for assessing speaker points, speaker point totals become unduly influenced by qualities of the judge (e.g., whether they are a lay judge or an experienced judge, whether the judge is from a program new to IPDA) rather than the performance of the competitors. Because IPDA values and rewards effective rhetorical delivery in its format, we cannot abandon speaker points. Instead, we must review the methodology in which IPDA judges award speaker points and consider whether explicit community standards ought to be put in place. We hope that this panel serves as a starting point for that conversation.

**Sarah Partlow Lefevre – “Back To Basics:  
Applying Argumentation Theories and Principles in IPDA and TIPDA”**

Abstract

This presentation will discuss concepts of argumentative theory that can and should be applied in IPDA debate formats. In particular, I plan to discuss how students can use the concept of sound argument in which a claim is both valid and true to improve their debates. Additionally, I will propose a guideline for using basic argument diagramming to generate arguments without the need for evidence in a debate. Finally, I will discuss the top ten fallacies that debaters should know and use regularly to improve their argumentation and effectiveness in debates.

**Skip Rutledge – “Back to the Basics: Mastering Solid Debate Fundamentals to Combat Destructive and Deceptive Efforts to Derail IPDA Debate”**

Abstract

This presentation argues that we should encourage our debaters to return to the basics, or solid fundamentals, as the desirable core of intercollegiate debate in IPDA and TPDA in the face of practices bleeding over from other formats.

We will first set forth Five Fundamental Principles for what interscholastic debate should be (and briefly remind debaters of the importance of four-point refutation and the three essential elements of a good argument). For beginning debaters and novice coaches these tips will give you a huge step forward in your competitive debate development. Mastering these core elements are key to becoming an amazing debater.

For the more advanced debaters and coaches though, examining these fundamentals in greater detail will also help steer the higher divisional rounds back to traditional core practices for traditional debate. It asks us to test more wide-ranging practices such as Kritiks, Topical Counterplans, and other counter intuitive practices, perhaps designed in part to derail affirmative teams from debating their prepared cases designed in prep, based on the resolutions. The discussion will also explore how Government teams could best oppose those approaches.

More advanced debaters and coaches will also be invited to discuss the merits and or detriments of exploring the fundamentals of debate pros and cons of the resolution, versus other alternative approaches that could move us away from this more traditional style of debate. Such a strategic drift may or may not be a real threat in this format of debate currently, but it has represented major threats in other formats of debate. Such a discussion might be relevant to concerns of preserving the heartbeat of IPDA debate. It is easier to prevent organizational entropy through such an examination ahead of time, rather than trying to salvage it later, or attempt to put the toothpaste back in the tube once it is too late.