Research report to AFA 2023 – Ben Voth

Winner of the Daniel Rohrer Research Monograph award for 2023 is:

Dr. Dale Herbeck and **Dr. Sara Mehltretter-Drury's** article, "The first Kennedy-Nixon debate: The McKeesport Junto of 1947," for the American Forensics Association appeared in volume 58 of *Argument and Advocacy,* published online in September 2022.

We are especially gratified to make this award in posthumous honor of Dale Herbeck's incredible career on behalf of the AFA community. This is a join award for professor Mehltretter- Drury and Professor Herbeck.

Nominator professor Ed Hinck wrote this regarding their important scholarly article:

"Taking advantage of historical perspective, their study reveals how such frames, situated in time, have shaped how scholars make sense of argumentation within debates. By showing how technology and campaign context intersect, to shape scholarly understanding of political debates, their work encourages scholars to reflect carefully on the historical and technological forces shaping political campaign outcomes. In doing so, they push scholars to enlarge the scope of analysis beyond the content of a single campaign. In looking back to campaign history and asking new questions about the relationship between what kinds of arguments are possible given changes in media, technology, and political culture, Herbeck and Mehltretter-Drury demonstrate the value of a more encompassing historical scope than studies of debate have previously undertaken.

Additionally, their study renews interest in the role of policy argumentation in presidential debates. Herbeck and Mehltretter-Drury clearly showed that policy arguments mattered in the McKeesport Junto event--the candidates understood that their audiences expected exchanges over the merits of the competing policy positions. Argumentation scholars might consider how campaign context creates expectations for argument, what kinds of conditions make policy argument more likely, whether recent developments in American political culture make policy argument less likely, among other longitudinal questions about the quality and content of debates. Addressing questions of this nature encourages future research asking how candidates can engage audiences in contemporary campaigns with changes in technology that might help audiences assess the leadership potential of candidates running for high office."

We have no nominations this year for **top dissertation award** but would welcome more in the future.