Master's Thesis Presentation

Austin Koort

Department of Statistics
The University of Chicago

"Evaluating the Effect of Round Type on Collegiate Policy Debate Outcomes"

April 26, 2024, at 10:30 AM
Jones 111, 5747 S. Ellis Avenue

Abstract

In intercollegiate policy debate, two teams argue in front of a judge who decides the winner. The affirmative team argues in support of a provided resolution, and the negative team in opposition to it. Within the debate community, teams and judges are thought of as belonging to one of three categories based on their argumentative preferences. Each combination of judge and team categories creates a category for debate rounds. Although there has been some community discussion of side bias, or the skew between affirmative and negative win rates, there has been no statistical analysis of the effect of team and judge categories on round outcomes. Reverse engineering the Mutual Preference Judging algorithm, I create and fit a Bayesian model to infer team and judge categories from pairings of teams and judges. Then, I use Microsoft's TrueSkill Through Time rating algorithm to evaluate the effect of categories on debate outcomes. Ultimately, I find one particular style of debating results in consistently better competitive results.

———————————————————