

APPENDIX F

GLOSSARY OF DEBATE TERMS

1AC The first affirmative constructive speech.

1AR The first affirmative rebuttal speech.

1NC The first negative constructive speech.

1NR The first negative rebuttal speech.

2AC The second affirmative constructive speech.

2AR The second affirmative rebuttal speech.

2NC The second negative constructive speech.

2NR The second negative rebuttal speech.

a priori This Latin phrase literally means “before the fact,” meaning that something is thought to be true without any need to test or examine experience. A debater might attempt to establish a decision rule by claiming that something is known *a priori*. Philosopher John Rawls argued, for example, that questions of “justice” should be decided from behind a “veil of ignorance.” By this he meant that we should decide which standards should define justice before seeking to know the details of a particular situation.

affirmative The affirmative defends the resolution.

agent of action This term in policy debate refers to the agency doing the plan or counterplan. For the affirmative, the agent of action is assigned in the resolution—in every resolution since the 1970s, this agent of action has been the “United States federal government.” The negative team may propose an agent counterplan in which the agent of action might be the state governments, the United Nations, or the government of another nation.

attitudinal inherency Inherency is one of the stock issues in policy debate; an *inherency* argument specifies a reason the harm cited by the affirmative will likely continue given the absence of the affirmative plan. Unlike *structural* inherency, an *attitudinal* inherency argument claims that an unwillingness to act on the part of the president or the Congress can constitute an inherent barrier.

ballot The term given to the piece of paper completed by a debate judge at the end of a round of competition. On the ballot, the judge declares a winner and loser as well as speaker points.

big picture This is a term debaters use when they want to group an opponent’s arguments, rather than to go line-by-line through each argument.

break round This is a term debaters often give to a preliminary debate round that must be won to advance to elimination rounds. In many tournament competitions, judges announce their decisions at the end of each round. In a six-round tournament, for example, contestants usually must have no more than two losses to qualify for