

War and Argumentation in 2008 American Presidential Debates

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Abstract

The article analyses the three American Presidential Debates held in 2008, in particular the two candidates' perspective and critical discussion on military conflicts such as the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. The analytical framework combines Critical Discourse Analysis, theories of argumentation, in particular pragma-dialectics, and cognitivist approaches to political discourse in terms of the mental representations arguers use to position other entities in relation to themselves. I analyse the political debate as argumentation both as the process of arguing and as its product. I investigate the way in which 'strategic maneuvering' and its fallacies function, pointing out the linguistic devices used by the arguers to achieve their dialectical and rhetorical concerns.