

A theory of presumption for everyday argumentation

*David M. Godden and
Douglas Walton*

ABSTRACT

The paper considers contemporary models of presumption in terms of their ability to contribute to a working theory of presumption for argumentation. Beginning with the Whatelian model, we consider its contemporary developments and alternatives, as proposed by Sidgwick, Kauffeld, Cronkhite, Rescher, Walton, Freeman, Ullmann-Margalit, and Hansen. Based on these accounts, we present a picture of presumptions characterized by their nature, function, foundation and force. On our account, presumption is a modal status that is attached to a claim and has the effect of shifting, in a dialogue, a burden of proof set at a local level. Presumptions can be analysed and evaluated inferentially as components of rule-based structures. Presumptions are defeasible, and the force of a presumption is a function of its normative foundation. This picture seeks to provide a framework to guide the development of specific theories of presumption.

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