

a r g u m e n t a t i o n



*We cannot change the world simply by evidence and reasoning. ...
[but] we can surely not change it without them, either.*

—Kwame Anthony Appiah

*I argue very well. Ask any of my remaining friends. I can win an argument
on any topic, against any opponent. People know this, and steer clear of
me at parties. Often, as a sign of their great respect, they don't even
invite me.*

—Dave Barry

c o u r s e e p i t o m e

We will study the discursive, social, and rhetorical principles of argumentation, including topics such as evidence, reasoning, and the organization and presentation of arguments. Scholars studied will include Aristotle, Jurgen Habermas, Stephen Toulmin, Chaim Perelman, Lucie Olbrecht-Tyteca, Mikhail Bakhtin, Kenneth Burke, and Jeanne Fahnestock.

c o u r s e d e f i n i t i o n

Argumentation, noun; the principles governing acts of cooperative competition, and competitive cooperation, over standpoints.

c o u r s e p h i l o s o p h y

There is a tension in arguing, an inevitable one, which frequently leads to imbalance—of discourses, of people, of relationships, of entire cultures. Our main job this term will be to find points of balance. The tension is between arguing to pursue knowledge, find agreement, and think through issues collectively, on the one hand; and arguing to win, dominate, and score points, on the other.

e n g l i s h 4 0 9 a , f a l l 2 0 0 8

r a n d y h a r r i s , h h 2 4 7 , x 3 5 3 6 2

o f f i c e h o u r s t , 8 : 0 0 - 9 : 3 0 ; w , 12:30 - 2:00 PM

texts

Christopher Tindale. 2004. *Rhetorical Argumentation: Principles of Theory and Practice*. Sage Publications Inc.

Christopher Tindale. 2007. *Fallacies and Argument Appraisal*. Cambridge University Press.

Anthony Weston. 2001. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. Hackett Publishing.

Newspapers and online fora. Read them frequently, on the lookout for arguments. In the newspapers, for instance, read the editorial pages, op-ed pages, columnists, and letters especially, but when you start looking for standpoints and their support systems, you'll see them in movie reviews, advertisements, even news reports and sports articles. Your analyses will be drawn from this body of discourse.

formal requirements

take home midterm (28 Oct - 4 Nov)	20%
essay (27 Nov)	25%
final (tba)	20%
course participation	35%
15% for analyses	
20% for being argumentative	

exams**30 oct. - 4 nov.; tba**

The take-home midterm will be an analysis and a counter-argument, to a text I will provide; you will be expected to use the terminology of the course knowledgeably, to analyze, evaluate, and extend or counter the text.

The final will also involve analysis, but will include lots of fact-based questions (short answer, true-false).

essay**27 nov.**

The essay should analyze an argumentative exchange (that is, it will involve at least two sides), delivering a verdict on which side is the strongest. It should be a research essay, of roughly 3,000 words, with documented sources.

analyses**weekly 22 sept. - 1 dec.**

These are eight submissions, of 300-500 words, due each week (with a few exceptions; see the schedule), on Friday by 11:59PM. Post them to the relevant discussion forum on UWACE. They are worth 15% in total, but they will not be graded. If you complete them all, on time, you get a full 15% of your final grade. If you miss one, you will get 10%. If you miss two or more, you will get 0% (yep, zero).

You are strongly encouraged to read each others posts, and, when so moved, to comment on them as well (using the *Reply* function).

Each analysis will be a response to an argument—an appraisal of that argument and a counter-argument to it (when there are multiple arguments, just pick one to counter). Note that you must offer a counter argument whether you agree or disagree with the argument.

being argumentative

Come to class prepared, contribute to discussions, participate in the building and the development of the course. In particular, think reflectively about all the readings, and think publicly. Make sure, for starters, to read all of the other analyses.

Ways to get a good grade: ask relevant questions, make salient observations, look for and point out connections in the material, complain about the unbelievable pressure of having to be argumentative on demand, ...

Ways to get a mediocre grade: come to class, sit in your seat, say nothing, avoid eye contact with the professor.

Ways to get a poor grade: stay away from class, make long irrelevant commentaries, treat your fellow students with extravagant disrespect, ...

By the way, I am almost impervious to arguments that third- and fourth-year university students, in a rhetoric programme, destined for careers involving the professional use of language, should not 'be required to talk in class'.

notes

Do the readings before the assigned class. If you need to, read them again after class.

If you have any questions, please make sure you ask them.

Familiarize yourself with Policy #71, particularly with regard to plagiarism and other forms of cheating.

schedule

date	topics	analyses	readings
9 Sept	You, me; me, you		RA1. Introduction: A Rhetorical Turn for Argumentation
11 Sept	Rhetoric, argument; standpoints		FAA1. Introduction to the Study of Fallaciousness
16 Sept 18 Sept	Figural logic	The Independent (19/9)	RA2. Argument as Rhetorical... RA3. ...And Rhetoric as Argument
23 Sept 25 Sept	Adversarial construction	The Jerusalem Post (26/9)	RA4. Rhetorical Contexts and the Dialogical
30 Sept 2 Oct	Rules of engagement	The Khaleej Times (3/10)	RA5. Martians, Philosophers, and Reasonable People
7 Oct 9 Oct	Standards of evaluation	National Post (10/10)	RA6. Developing the Universal Audience
14 Oct 16 Oct	Flaws of reasoning	Globe & Mail (17/10)	FAA2. Fallacies of Diversion FAA3. Fallacies of Structure
21 Oct 23 Oct		Your choice!	FAA4. Problems with Language FAA5. Ad Hominem Arguments
28 Oct			FAA6. Other 'ad' Arguments
30 Oct			
4 Nov	Pick-up take-home mid-term		
6 Nov	Hand-in take-home mid-term	Wall Street Journal (7/11)	FAA7. The ad Verecundiam and the Misuse of Experts
11 Nov 13 Nov	Flaws of reasoning	The Washington Post (14/11)	FAA8. Sampling FAA9. Correlation and Cause
18 Nov 20 Nov	Analogy		FAA10. Analogical Reasoning
25 Nov	A life in argument		RA8. Rhetorical Conclusions
27 Nov	Review and exam preparation Essay due		