

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

*You do not like them. So you say. Try them! Try them! And you may. Try
them and you may, I say.*

—Sam-I-Am

course epitome

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 Richard Whatley, Jurgen Habermas, Stephen Toulmin, Chaim Perelman, Lucie Olbrecht-Tyteca, Kenneth Burke, and Pierre Bourdieu.

course definition

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

course philosophy

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.

English 409A, Fall 2005
Randy Harris, HH247, x5362
Office Hours Tuesday 8:00-10:00

texts

Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor. *A rhetoric of argument*. 3rd edition. Columbus, OH: McGraw Hill, 2004.

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 blog assignments will be drawn from this body of discourse.

formal requirements

take home midterm (27 Oct - 1 Nov)	20%
essay (6 Nov)	20%
final (13 Dec, 9:00 -11:30, PAC 10)	20%
course participation	40%
20% for blogs	
20% for being argumentative	

exams **27 oct. - 1 nov. ; 13 dec.**
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 also will include lots of fact-based questions (short answer, true-false).

essay **6 dec.**
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.

blogs **weekly 22 sept. - 1 dec.**
These are ten submissions, of 300-500 words, due each Friday by 6:00 PM (with a few exceptions; see the schedule). They are worth 20% in total, but they will not be graded. If you complete them all, you get 20% of your final grade. if you miss one, you will get 15%. if you miss two or more, you will get 0% (yep, zero).

We will be using www.nicenet.org for the blogs. Go to the site. Click on 'join a class' and register. Use the key, AZ39392E25. Under 'conferencing' there are spaces for each blog topic for the term.

Each blog 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). Note that you must offer a counter argument whether you agree or disagree with the argument.

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being argumentative

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

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	blogs	readings *
13 Sept 15 Sept	You, me, Sam-I-Am Rhetoric, argument; standpoints		1. Introduction to the study of argument
20 Sept 22 Sept	Logical structure	WSJ Opinion	2. Building the case: logos
27 Sept 29 Sept	Character	Globe & Mail: Editorial	3. Establishing credibility and appealing to emotion: ethos and pathos
4 Oct 6 Oct	Emotion	National Post: Editorial	
11 Oct 13 Oct	Fallacies	Toronto Sun: Editorial	
18 Oct 20 Oct	Invention, stasis theory	Toronto Star: Editorial	4. Generating the argument: questions and claims
25 Oct 27 Oct	Diction, figures Pick-up take-home mid-term		5. Expressing appeals: language and voice
1 Nov 3 Nov	Hand-in take-home mid-term Definition	KW Record: Editorial	6. Definition: what is it?
8 Nov 10 Nov	Cause	Imprint: Editorial	7. Causal argument: how did it get that way?
15 Nov 17 Nov	Quality	Molly Ivins	8. Evaluation: is it good or bad
22 Nov 24 Nov	Rules of engagement	Salon.com: Opinion	
29 Nov	A life in argument	Nat Hentoff	
1 Dec	Review and exam preparation		
6 Dec	Essay due;		

* While there are specific readings that you are responsible for at specific times in the course, and some parts of the book are scheduled, I advise you to read the whole book. In particular, I will not be teaching basic research, but I expect you to be able to research and write a 4th-year essay with appropriate skill and sophistication: you should read Part III. Chapter 9 may also be of considerable use in constructing your final essay.

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