RHET 325
The Rhetoric of Argument in the Humanities and Social Sciences

PROPOSED BY
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PREREQUISITES
RHET 201

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course immerses students in the study of argumentation in the humanities and social sciences (philosophy, law, rhetoric, journalism and politics) - an overview and comparison of its theory, structure, mechanisms and practice. By approaching argument in a systematic fashion, students will be introduced to instruments for identifying differences of opinion, analyzing and evaluating argumentation and presenting arguments in oral and written discourse.

Students will be made familiar with a theoretical, normative background to the evaluation and creation of arguments. They will learn to identify explicit and implicit standpoints of argument and assess their structure and merits.

OUTCOMES
By the end of the semester, the students will demonstrate ability to
- Identify and analyze the structure of arguments, either implicit or explicit, in terms of purpose, motive, and method
- integrate and take a position on broad and narrow theories of argument within their written work
- effectively employ the jargon of argument theories and components in their analysis
- identify faulty reasoning in published works and provide an explanation of why a valid conclusion cannot be derived from the reasons provided
- produce cogent arguments in both oral and written mode
ASSIGNMENTS

Exercises: The textbook, Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation, includes exercises with each chapter. These are designed to demonstrate both a familiarity with the readings themselves, as well as with the skills taught. In particular, these exercises offer occasion for the directed analysis of textual argument. Satisfactory completion of these exercises will constitute 10% of the total class grade.

Exercises include:
- Composing an expository report on the debate within which that text speaks
- Composing a defense of the same text's position
- Composing a refutation of the same text's position
- Composing a personal reflection on its basic theme
- Writing a critical response to 3 different positions on an issue (symposium style)
- Summarizing the sides in a debate only without supporting any or putting forth any position of your own
- Criticizing a popular person with a popular view
- Defending an unpopular person with an unpopular view
- Composing a review of the literature (bibliographic essay) for an issue
- Developing a position for each separately by these modes of proof (topics assigned):
  - Economic feasibility
  - Social-values (received values) of targeted audience appealed to
  - Factual observation/s
  - Examples of similar proposals that were successful
  - Analogy

Midterm and Final Papers: Comprising 20% and 40% of the total grade, respectively, these papers will involve the careful analysis of arguments in the specific context of the theories presented within the class. Research of both primary sources (the issues themselves) and secondary ones (theoretical bases for analysis) will be required. Students will identify arguments and sub-arguments; questions of value vs. questions of fact; independent reasoning, hypothetical reasoning, logical chains, cause-effect chains, analogy, example, and definitions

Final Exam: Comprising 30% of the total grade, This “take-home” exam will test students' capacity for the application of the analytical skills taught in the class.

ASSESSMENT

Textbook Exercises 10%
Midterm paper 20%
Final Examination 30%
Final paper 40%
**READINGS**


**SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Book Chapter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Identifying differences of opinion, positive and negative, implicit and explicit.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Models of critical discussion, resolving differences of opinion, identifying standpoints.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Implicit elements in argument, ellipsis (unexpressed premises), violation of communication rules.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Argumentation structure (1): mapping types of arguments</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Argumentation structure (2): presentation of argumentation, representing arguments schematically.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Midterm assignment: class time devoted to work on midterm paper</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Essentials of evaluating argument; soundness and acceptability; the four levels of argument strength</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Logical Fallacies as violations of rules of argument(1).</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Logical Fallacies as violations of rules of argument(2).</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Written argument: techniques and evaluation.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Oral argumentation: techniques and evaluations</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>“Take-home” final – class time will be allotted for test work</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Scheduled individual consultations regarding final paper</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Final paper due</td>
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