

PART II**TEACHING INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS****CHAPTER 1: DEFINING ARGUMENTATION**

This chapter introduces students to the key concepts in argumentation. It is important that students get a clear idea of what it means to seek the adherence of relevant decision makers. It is also important that they see the types of support for claims and the greater usefulness of supported claims over assertion.

They should also understand that when they argue they are making claims about uncertainty. The idea that certainty is possible, that there are true and false arguments that can be determined by simple tests is common with many of them. It is very important to make uncertainty clear without implying that anything goes. Decision makers have standards that are defined by their sphere and long established customs. But, these standards are not absolute.

In the first and second editions we included a historical treatment of this idea. We contrasted Aristotle and Plato. If you use historical material to make this point, you will probably want to assign outside reading. Post-modernist and feminist thought calls for placing more emphasis on dialectic and less on rhetoric. Regardless of your point of view, it is important to help students understand the difference between dialectic and rhetoric at this early stage.

The detailed analysis of an argument (shown by a variation of the Toulmin model) is introduced in chapter 4. In previous editions, the nature of arguments and the Toulmin layout of arguments were not introduced until the 6th chapter. Because many of our critics called for this to come earlier in the term, we have moved it to chapter 4. In this way, students will have been introduced to the major concepts of argumentation and they will have an overall sense of the process and the various ways people approach argument, and then they should be able to grasp the value of the Toulmin layout as a way to open arguments up to critical scrutiny. It is important to help students understand that the layout is only useful in making a critical appraisal of an argument, and that when they get into the process of forming and communicating arguments, they will use quite different organizational structures as are detailed in chapter 6.

In discussing spheres, it is useful to select a major issue such as gay/lesbian marriage, and look at arguments emerging in different spheres. For example, history, culture, religion, law, biology, and politics all produce arguments on this subject. Students should be able to see how each produces a different set of criteria with which to evaluate arguments. The concept of “ultimate purpose” is a difficult one for students to grasp, and in a discussion such as this, one can discuss the differing ultimate purposes of each of those spheres.

The exercises/projects included at the end of chapter 1 in the text ask students to read editorials in newspapers and then answer these questions:

What adherence is sought from the reader?
Who are the appropriate decision makers? Why?
What claims does the editorial make?
What support is provided for the claims
What criticism can you make of the arguments?

And then students are given the project of selecting a familiar topic on which they need to make a decision, and to prepare an argument and label the parts in response to these questions:

In what kind of sphere is the decision to be made?
What is the ultimate purpose of the decision?

What proposition expresses their desired decision?
What issue(s) needs to be addressed?
What claim directly responds (seeks to answer) the issue?
How can the claim be supported argumentatively?

With easy access to the Internet, we find it useful to suggest that students look for editorials in newspapers from other parts of the country than where they live. Particularly, it is useful for them to locate points of view that differ from their own. Evaluating arguments from diverse perspectives is challenging and a useful way to become sensitive to various ways of arguing.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The intersection of a claim and its support is called
 - a. a syllogism.
 - b. a topic.
 - * c. an argument.
 - d. adherence.
2. Evidence, values, and credibility combine to
 - * a. support a claim.
 - b. confuse the issue.
 - c. demonstrate truth.
 - d. reduce adherence.
3. Stephen Toulmin says the test of an argument is
 - * a. its ability to stand up to criticism.
 - b. its truth value.
 - c. whether people believe it.
 - d. its validity.
4. A critical decision is one that
 - a. rests on true arguments.
 - b. can be criticized.
 - * c. survives the test of a relevant set of criteria.
 - d. proves to be the most effective in action.
5. When sports fans at non-BCS schools argue that their team should compete in the BCS championship game, they often fail to consider
 - a. the true qualities of their team.
 - b. what a championship game really means.
 - * c. who the appropriate decision makers are.
 - d. what makes for a good argument.
6. When you test ideas by having a conversation with yourself, the process is called
 - a. an internal dialogue.
 - b. an internalized conversation.
 - c. an imagined interaction.
 - * d. all of the above.
7. What kind of claim is this: "Medical marijuana use ought to be legalized."
 - a. fact.

- * b. policy.
- c. comparative value
- d. value-object.

8. The first level of critical thinking to test possible arguments is

- * a. imagined interactions.
- b. formal logic.
- c. gathering facts.
- d. informal logic.

9. Decision making within a context of uncertainty

- a. is rarely accomplished.
- * b. falls within the domain of argumentation.
- c. requires the application of scientific methods.
- d. typically yields mediocre decisions.

10. “The clash of two opposing claims stated as a question,” is the definition of

- a. a comparative-value proposition.
- * b. an issue
- c. informal logic.
- d. Interrogation.

11. Decision making groups with recognizable goals and norms and sets of rules and resources and patterns of interaction under ongoing tension are called, in the text,

- a. fields.
- * b. spheres.
- c. argument systems.
- d. interactional, communities.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the relationship between claims, issues, and propositions.
2. Define and explain critical decision making through argumentation.
3. Discuss the inner dialogue and its role in argumentation. How does it relate to dialectic?
4. Explain the difference between dialectic and rhetoric, and discuss how each contributes to critical decisions.
5. Explain what the text means by “critical decisions,” and how they contrast with uncritical decisions.

EXERCISES/PROJECTS

1. The editorial project at the end of the chapter in the book can be expanded by asking students to respond to these questions:

- a. Does the writer have credibility for you?
- b. Is the claim in conflict with your values?
- c. Would the argument be more likely to get your adherence with better support?

This kind of discussion approach needs to be carefully directed to the key terms, but if you can do that the students will begin to see the concepts functioning in their own lives.

2. Still working with the editorials, it is helpful for students to exchange papers with each other and write critical responses. They will see that different people apply different perspectives to the same issue. They will respond differently to evidence, values, and credibility. If they then discuss in class their different perspectives, they can grow in their grasp of the process of argumentation.
3. Select a topic of contemporary concern and divide the class into teams. Ask them to engage in dialectic on the topic seeking an understanding of the issues that seem to be involved and the propositions that might be advanced. Be sure they practice the open-ended, question-answer inquiry characteristic of dialectic rather than moving directly to rhetoric. They should consider the question of presumption – what will society do in the absence of any argumentation to the contrary?
4. Ask the students to write a one-page paper discussing the difference between dialectic and rhetoric. Use the papers as the basis for an in-class discussion.