

ELEMENTS OF ARGUMENT

A Text and Reader
ANNETTE T. ROTTENBERG



SECOND EDITION

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A Text and Reader

Annette T. Rottenberg

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST

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Preface for Instructors

PURPOSE

Argumentation as the basis of a composition course should need no defense, especially at a time of renewed pedagogical interest in critical thinking. A course in argumentation encourages practice in close analysis, use of supporting materials, and logical organization. It encompasses all the modes of development around which composition courses are often built. It teaches students to read and to listen with more than ordinary care. Not least, argument can engage the interest of students who have been indifferent or even hostile to required writing courses. Because the subject matter of argument can be found in every human activity, from the most trivial to the most elevated, both students and teachers can choose the materials that appeal to them. And those materials need not be masterpieces of the genre, as in courses based on literature; students can exercise their critical skills on flawed arguments that allow them to enjoy a well-earned superiority.

Composition courses using the materials of argument are, of course, not new. But the traditional methods of teaching argument through mastery of the formal processes of reasoning cannot account for the complexity of arguments in practice. Even more relevant to our purposes as teach-

ers of composition is the tenuous relationship between learning about induction and deduction, however helpful in analysis, and the actual process of student composition. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., in *The Philosophy of Composition*, wrote, "I believe, as a practical matter, that instruction in logic is a very inefficient way to give instruction in writing."¹ The challenge has been to find a method of teaching argument that assists students in defending their claims as directly and efficiently as possible, a method that reflects the way people actually go about organizing and developing claims outside the classroom.

One such method, first adapted to classroom instruction by teachers of rhetoric and speech, uses a model of argument advanced by Stephen Toulmin in *The Uses of Argument*. Toulmin was interested in producing a description of the real process of argument. His model was the law. "Arguments," he said, "can be compared with law-suits, and the claims we make and argue for in extra-legal contexts with claims made in the courts."² Toulmin's model of argument was based on three principal elements: claim, evidence, and warrant. These elements answered the questions, "What are you trying to prove?" "What have you got to go on?" "How did you get from evidence to claim?" Needless to say, Toulmin's model of argument does not guarantee a classroom of skilled arguers, but his questions about the parts of an argument and their relationship are precisely the ones that students must ask and answer in writing their own essays and analyzing those of others. They lead students naturally into the formulation and development of their claims.

My experience in supervising hundreds of teaching assistants over a number of years has shown that they also respond to the Toulmin model with enthusiasm. They appreciate its clarity and directness and the mechanism it offers for organizing a syllabus.

In this text I have adapted — and greatly simplified — some of Toulmin's concepts and terminology for freshman students. I have also introduced two elements of argument with which Toulmin is not directly concerned. Most rhetoricians consider them indispensable, however, to discussion of what actually happens in the defense or rejection of a claim. One is motivational appeals — warrants based on appeals to the needs and values of an audience, designed to evoke emotional responses. A distinction between logic and emotion may be useful as an analytical tool, but in producing or attacking arguments human beings find it difficult, if not impossible, to make such a separation. In this text, therefore, persua-

¹ *The Philosophy of Composition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 142.

² *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 7.

sion through appeals to needs and values is treated as a legitimate element in the argumentative process.

I have also stressed the significance of audience as a practical matter. In the rhetorical or audience-centered approach to argument, to which I subscribe in this text, success is defined as acceptance of the claim by an audience. Arguers in the real world recognize intuitively that their primary goal is not to demonstrate the purity of their logic, but to win the adherence of their audiences. To gain this adherence, students need to be reminded of the necessity for establishing themselves as credible sources for their readers.

ORGANIZATION

The organization of Part One, *The Structure of Argument*, represents, as far as possible, the steps students take in organizing their own arguments. After the introductory overview in Chapter 1, a chapter is devoted to each of the chief elements in the argumentative process — claims, definitions, support, warrants, and language. Chapter 7 treats popular fallacies; here a brief review of induction and deduction seems appropriate. Because fallacies represent errors in the reasoning process, a knowledge of induction and deduction can make clear how and why fallacies occur.

I have made every effort to provide examples, readings, and teaching strategies — including questions and writing suggestions for every reading — that are both practical and stimulating. The examples throughout, with the exception of several student dialogues, are real, not invented; they have been taken from speeches, editorial opinions, letters to the editor, advertisements, interviews, and news reports. They reflect the liveliness and complexity that invented examples often suppress.

The readings in Part One support the discussions in several important ways. First, they illustrate the elements of argument developed in each chapter. Second, they are drawn from current publications and cover as many different subjects as possible to convince students that argument is a pervasive force in the world they live in and read about. Third, some of the essays are obviously flawed and enable students to identify the kinds of weaknesses they should avoid in their own essays. One or more essays in each chapter have been analyzed to emphasize the chapter's principle of argument.

Part Two, *Opposing Viewpoints*, exhibits arguers in action, using formal and informal language, debating head-on. The subjects — AIDS testing, animal rights, choosing parenthood, collegiate sports reform, euthanasia, and pornography — capture headlines every day. These subjects,

despite their immediacy, are likely to arouse passions and remain controversial for a long time. Whether as matters of national policy or personal choice, they call for decisions based on familiarity with and analysis of competing views.

These subjects also lend themselves admirably to theme assignments and research papers. Students can respond in writing to discussion questions and cull the suggested research paper topics at the end of each section. In the Appendix an expanded section on the research paper provides the help students need to find appropriate support both in the articles in the text and in books and periodicals in the library and to organize what they find in defense of their claims.

Part Three, Additional Readings, offers an alphabetical arrangement of examples of good argument drawn from many sources. This mixture of old and new includes a number of classics that many teachers find invaluable in any composition course.

Finally, the appendix on writing an argumentative paper is a succinct but comprehensive guide to which students can refer throughout the semester for help in composing both the parts and the whole of every assignment. This appendix is followed by a glossary and index of terms and an index of authors and titles.

The editor's notes provide additional suggestions for finding and using the enormous variety of materials available to us in a course on argument.

I hope this text will lead students to discover not only the practical and intellectual rewards of learning how to argue but the real excitement of engaging in civilized debate as well.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

Revising a successful textbook — the publisher says that *Elements of Argument* is now the bestselling book of its kind — presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is not to make changes that undermine features well received in the previous edition. The opportunity is to tap into the varied experience of instructors and students alike with the previous edition so as to ensure that a new edition grows out of that experience and builds upon those features. That is how we have seen it anyway and it accounts for all that we have done — and not done — in preparing this new edition.

The principles and concerns of *Elements of Argument* have not changed; rather, a greater breadth of material that will widen the range of teaching possibilities has been included. The number of arguments has grown from seventy to seventy-eight — fifty of which are new to this edi-

tion — with a corresponding increase in the number of debatable issues. Part One's discussions of warrants and fallacies have been expanded. Part Two now features six Opposing Viewpoints instead of five: The most popular issues from the first edition have been retained and strengthened (Animal Rights, Euthanasia, and Pornography), while three new issues that should appeal widely to students have been added (AIDS Testing, Choosing Parenthood, and Collegiate Sports Reform). Finally, the research process receives greater attention: The Appendix features more expansive and useful coverage of research issues and provides models of the new MLA citation format; topics for research appear at the end of each Opposing Viewpoint; and a fully documented student paper arguing for the abolishment of zoos follows the Appendix. Taken as a whole the changes in the second edition should enhance the versatility of the text as a teaching tool, while deepening students' awareness of the pervasiveness of argument in their daily lives.

The second edition profited from the informed critiques of Patricia Bizzell, College of the Holy Cross; Richard Fulkerson, East Texas State University; William Hayes, California State College — Stanislaus; and Marcia MacLennan, Kansas Wesleyan University. For their comments and suggestions I am most grateful. The editor's notes are the better for the contributions of Gail Stygall, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis.

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