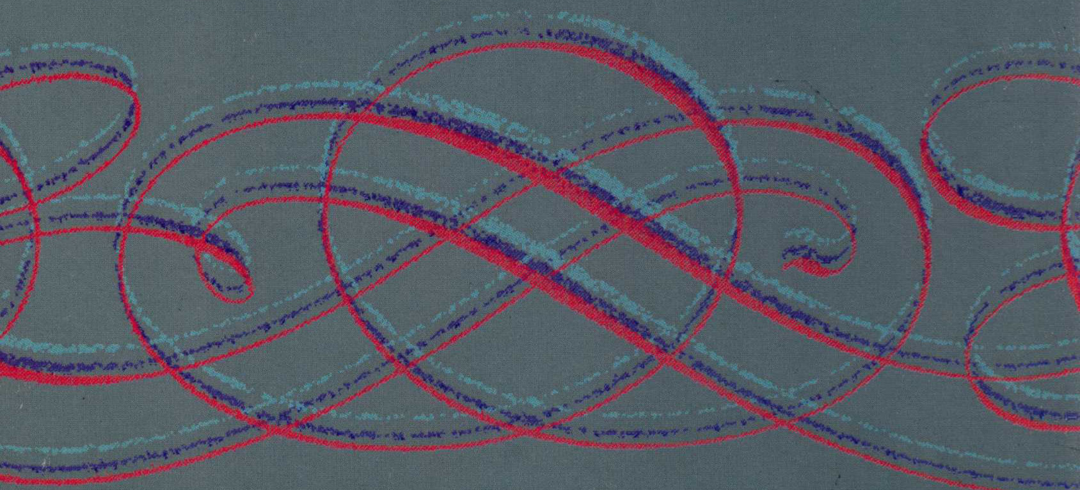

The Craft of Argument

Joseph M. Williams ◆ Gregory G. Colomb

◁ THIRD EDITION ▷

The Craft of Argument

Third Edition

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藏书章

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Teaching the Craft of Argument

Our aim in *The Craft of Argument* is to help students integrate the skills of writing, critical thinking, and arguing so that they can write arguments that are clear, sound, and persuasive. We designed the book to support a variety of writing classes, including those that emphasize academic argument, civic argument, critical thinking, or research.

We discuss argument in ways that are rooted in the rhetorical tradition that began even before Aristotle's *Rhetoric,* but we supplement that tradition with new insights not only about the nature of argument but also about how we reason, make decisions, understand matters like responsibility and causation, respond to written texts, and more. We have integrated these insights into a framework of instruction accessible to students and easy to teach without requiring any expert knowledge outside of writing studies.

In this preface, we outline our ideas about how best to use this book and then explain how this book differs from traditional approaches and current texts on argument.

How to Use This Book

We designed this book to engage students with arguments and critical thinking in multiple ways from multiple perspectives. To that end, its chapters have at least four, and in some cases six parts, each approaching its subject from a different angle.

Each chapter has two main units:

- An opening section, which discusses one aspect of written arguments. This section helps students understand the nature of arguments, their parts, their goals, and their role in shaping what we do and believe.
- A parallel Writing Process section, which revisits the earlier discussion in light of strategies, procedures, checklists, and other tools for using what students have learned. It includes units on planning, research, drafting, revising, and working collaboratively.

We regard this dual perspective as crucial. In the first section, students learn a model of argument that helps them understand its nature and analyze specific arguments, their own and others'. But students seldom write better arguments just because they can name their parts. So the Writing Process sections give students nuts-and-bolts advice about how best to use what they learn about argument to write more complete and convincing ones.

In these sections we maintain another dual perspective: arguments have predictable parts because readers ask predictable questions. Each perspective has its own value. Writers are best served by the analytic model of argument when they step back from the flow of their thinking: for planning, organizing, and outlining and then for analyzing, testing, and revising. The questions of argument serve best to guide brainstorming, reflecting, drafting, and other moments when writers benefit from getting caught up in the flow of their thinking.

We hope you will give as much attention to the Writing Process sections as to the opening discussions and that you focus students as much on the questions of argument as on the model and its parts. In our experience, students not only write better but understand argument better when they connect argument to writing on the one hand and writing to conversation on the other.

Students know a lot about argument and bring to class considerable abilities in interacting with others. They will be better able to draw on those resources if you consistently lead them to connect what they are learning with their experience and intuitions. To that end, we have provided additional resources to prime their thinking.

The first resource is in the separate *Guide to Teaching the Craft of Argument*. It describes a hundred or more activities you can use to engage students' intuitions before and as they learn new ways of thinking about argument. (There are too many for any one class, so pick and choose to suit your students and your style.) These include in-class, take-home, and formal assignments that involve students in discussing issues, identifying questions and problems, generating and testing answers, and developing the elements of argument needed to support them. If students then read each chapter *after* these interactions activate their intuitive understanding of cooperative arguing, the chapter will help them organize, consolidate, and apply what they already know to the challenging new task of producing a formal written argument.

Students benefit in another way from guided classroom experience in making arguments for and with their colleagues. These interactions also help students understand the *point* of producing written arguments in the first place. Talking with one another, they discover and articulate problems or questions that potential *readers* think are worth solving or answering, and the kinds of questions *readers* are likely to ask in response to their claims, reasons, and evidence. Without such genuine interaction, students may well feel that their assigned arguments are pointless exercises in grinding out pages only to satisfy a teacher's formal requirement.

We include two more priming resources in the text itself:

- Most chapters are interlaced with examples of argument, many drawn from the readings. Some illustrate the main discussion, but most raise issues that invite students to pursue directions only hinted at in the main text.
- Each chapter has an Inquiries section that raises new questions, prompts reflection over puzzling facts or events, and suggests activities, all intended to spur further thinking.

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We include more examples and inquiries than any student can hope to complete. You can tell your students to ignore them entirely, have them pick one or two to think about, or assign some as topics for papers. A few are even worth a research paper. Some of their issues are so difficult that we expect them merely to pique interest and stimulate thinking. None of them, so far as we know, has just one right answer.

Finally, chapters include some additional resources as well:

- In each chapter, we conclude with a concise summary of both the discussion of argument and the writing process advice.
- In several early chapters, we provide either sample student essays that illustrate the uses and abuses of argument or exercises in analyzing and revising those essays.
- In Chapters 1–8, we provide writing projects, ranging from short informal assignments to formal papers.
- In Chapters 3–8, we outline a guided, staged exercise in preparing, planning, drafting, and revising a longer research paper.
- At the end of Part IV, we include a section of checklists and worksheets for planning, revising, and storyboarding papers.
- A companion Web site (www.ablongman.com/williams) includes additional activities and examples, traditional quizzes and exercises, along with other supporting materials.

With all of that variety, we hope to encourage you to use this book to support but not constrain your teaching.

Finally, we hope that this book can help you do more than show students how to write plausible academic papers based on sound critical thinking. We hope that it encourages students to think about argumentation as a subject in its own right, as something at the heart of their public experience in their neighborhoods and workplaces as well as in larger civic arenas. Since argument is central to what it means to be not just a rational individual but a rational citizen, and since irrational persuasion has never been more widely used, we believe that there are few matters students need to know more about than how to make—and judge—sound, rational arguments. We also believe that those who teach argument year in and year out perform a heroic service, especially when they teach it not as a means to get what you want but as the most demanding and valuable form of critical thinking that any of us can do.

What Distinguishes Craft *from Other Books on Argument*

This book differs from others in several ways, but most important, perhaps, is our insistence that we make arguments not just to gain our readers' agreement but to enlist them in solving a problem. The nature of the problem determines the kind of agreement we seek, which in turn determines the kind of argument

we make. So far as we know, no other book, ancient or modern, puts problem finding, framing, and solving at the heart of planning, drafting, and revising written arguments. From beginning to end, we emphasize that only after we understand the problem we address *from our readers' points of view* can we make an argument that they will take seriously.

We also help students new to academic argument overcome the special difficulties they often have with academic problems, which can seem to them merely "theoretical"—too abstract to be relevant to their perceived needs and interests. We show students the differences between *practical* problems, the kind most familiar to them, and *conceptual* problems, the kind that may be less familiar, but that most teachers will expect them to address, find, and formulate on their own. Throughout, we help students address the demands of finding academic, conceptual problems that first of all *they* can care about, but that they can also imagine their readers caring about as well.

Another difference from many other books on argument is our steady emphasis on ethos. We show students how they project an ethos through every element of their argument: by how clearly they write, how baldly they state their claim, how thoroughly they support it with evidence, how candidly they acknowledge and respond to objections. We emphasize that even when their argument fails to achieve agreement, they can still call it a success if readers think that they made it in ways that seem reasonable, thoughtful, and fair. At some point, what readers remember from the ethos of individual arguments adds up to their lasting reputation, an important force of persuasion in its own right.

A third difference is that instead of offering an elaborate account of formal deductive logic, we devote considerable attention to critical thinking based on informal reasoning. And instead of focusing on fallacies as the only way to think about sound thinking, we integrate sound critical thinking into our discussion of argument and writing in every chapter. To that end, we have not segregated advice about reasoning and arguing from advice about writing, because we believe that the skills of writing support and illuminate the skills of reasoning, and vice versa. So in the Writing Process section in each chapter, we show students how the processes of planning, drafting, and revising can help them not only generate the substance of an argument but reflect critically on the thinking it represents.

We have also tried to synthesize two aspects of argument that most books on argument keep distinct: dialectic and rhetoric. Dialectic is commonly defined as a process of two people questioning each other in a search for as-yet undiscovered truth (a claim that they can support), a topic now pursued by those calling their work "pragma-dialectical." In contrast, rhetoric traditionally focuses on one person's finding and arranging support for a known claim in order to persuade another to accept it. In our view, dialectic and rhetoric present two perspectives on the same process. Questioning and being questioned helps students both discover a claim worth making and find the support that gives them and others good reasons to accept it. It is a process students

engage in every time they have a conversation with friends about an issue they care about. We show students how they can create sound written arguments from those familiar speech genres by imagining questioning exchanges with readers or their surrogates (a thread that may remind some of the Russian literary theorist M. M. Bakhtin).

We also include some topics new to books on writing arguments:

- In the last twenty-five years, research has flourished on "cognitive biases," habits of mind that systematically undermine our reasoning, but that we can manage through the discipline imposed by careful argument. It is not enough, however, to manage our own thinking. We must also plan arguments to anticipate those same biases in the reasoning of our readers. So far as we know, no other textbook on argument calls attention to dealing with the flawed thinking in *readers*.
- Cognitive scientists have also helped us better understand how we use words to categorize and name experience and reason about cause-and-effect—kinds of thinking crucial to a soundly reasoned argument about definition and causation.
- We have only recently begun to understand how the problem that makes an argument necessary shapes how we design and write it.

As important as those insights are, few have found their way into recent books on argumentation, even though they require no expert knowledge to teach.

How Craft *Participates in the Rhetorical Tradition*

Despite those differences from current books on argument, *Craft* is rooted in the 2500-year-old tradition of rhetoric and argumentation. Our aim is to help students develop a public voice appropriate to written arguments in a variety of civic, professional, and academic forums. We believe that thoughtful readers are likely to assent to a claim only when they see good reasons and evidence, when they understand the logical connections among claims, reasons, and evidence, and when they see their own doubts and questions acknowledged and answered. We believe that at base argument is not a coercive device (though it can be), nor even a product of human rationality (though it is), but the fundamental competence by which rationality is created and shared.

***Craft*'s Roots in Aristotle**

We have been struck by how closely (though unintentionally) we tracked Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. As did he, we begin by identifying the problems that occasion different kinds of arguments. He focused on the oral arguments occasioned by civic events—trials, funerals, and political decision-making—the triad that has led to the familiar categories of forensic, epideictic, and deliberative arguments (or fact, value, and policy). We believe, however, that the

division of fact, policy, and value obscures a more basic distinction between arguments that want us to *do* something and arguments that want us to *understand* or *believe* something. We do not ignore values; in fact, we emphasize how the values of both readers and writers shape all arguments, whether the aim is action or belief.

As did Aristotle, we address not just invention and arrangement, but two other matters as well: style and the psychology of belief, especially the ways that the thinking processes of readers and writers interact. (Those last two topics claim little or no space in most current books on argument.) As did he, we put aside syllogisms, focusing instead on warranted claims. And like his, our aim is relentlessly focused on "how to," on answering two pragmatic questions:

- What does an audience expect in a sound argument?
- How do we express that argument to meet their expectations?

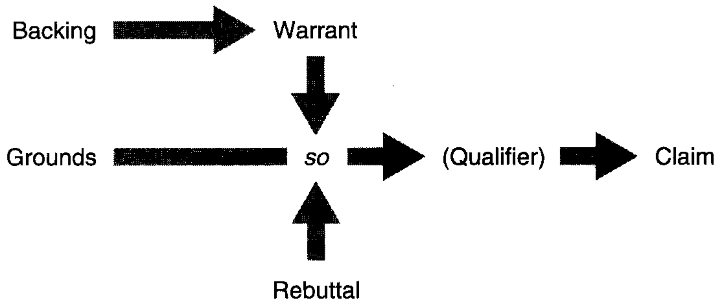
As did Aristotle, we also focus on the role of feelings, of emotions in making a sound argument. Far from rejecting emotion as an element of an argument, we emphasize its importance in framing the problem that the argument addresses and in choosing the language to express it.

Craft's Revision of Toulmin

Like many recent books on argument, we have profited from one of the most influential works on argument since Aristotle, that of Stephen Toulmin. We are especially indebted to him for these three insights:

- Arguments differ in different fields but share a family structure.
- That common structure is based on a logic of question and answer.
- We understand that structure best not in terms of formal deductive logic, but rather of the informal logic of everyday conversation.

As important as these insights are, we believe that teachers of argument who embrace Toulmin's formal layout make a pedagogical mistake. Recall that he represents an argument in a figure of six elements:



Toulmin formulated this model to support after-the-fact analysis of the logical justification for an argument. Not surprisingly, students and teachers alike have found it difficult to apply that model to the task of producing their own arguments and of analyzing the form and structure of the arguments of others. To make Toulmin's insights more useful to writers at all levels, we have modified his layout in five ways.

1. We removed the arrows.

Toulmin may have wanted to represent the movement of an argument, but what he describes seems closer to an alleged process of *reasoning,* a mental movement from one set of beliefs to another. Forms of reasoning, however, are not forms of argument, which is a written or spoken *event.* Most arguments start not with a statement of grounds but with a problem, followed by a claimed solution, followed by intertwined grounds, warrants, and rebuttals. But even as a model of reasoning, his layout is psychologically unrealistic. When we reason about a *problem,* we do not start with grounds, then think our way to a claim (its solution). We begin with the problem that motivates us to search for a solution in the first place, and find a tentative hypothesis based on the facts then available to us. We then use that hypothesis (C. S. Peirce called it a "hypothesis on probation") to find more data that we hope will confirm or disconfirm it. It's called *abductive* thinking, a kind of reasoning that Toulmin's layout cannot represent.

We do not intend our layout to represent any "real time" process—not of reasoning, drafting, reading, or analyzing an argument. It represents only the five elements required in a complete argument and some formal relationships among them. Nor do we intend the model to represent a template for what words must be put on the page. To guide thinking and drafting, we emphasize instead the questions that are the ultimate source of the parts of argument. We offer the model as a tool for understanding and analyzing arguments, most useful for planning a draft—collecting information, organizing, and outlining—and then for testing and revising.

2. We dropped "backing."

Toulmin needed backing to explain how arguments differ among different fields, but that is not our major concern. Moreover, *backing* refers to the grounds that support a warrant viewed as a claim in its own argument. We can more usefully analyze that arrangement as two distinct arguments, one embedded in the other. So backing is redundant. It is surely important to discuss the support for a warrant, but that support need not be formally represented in the layout of an argument.

3. We dropped "qualifier" as a distinct element.

Qualifications such as *probably, most,* and *may* are crucial not just to the accuracy of an argument, but to our experience of its writer's ethos. But qualifiers are not a singular element of an argument like a claim or a reason; qualifiers

color every element—claims, reasons, evidence, warrants, and rebuttals. Far from ignoring qualification, we show its crucial role in projecting a thoughtful ethos in every element of an argument.

4. We divided the single element "grounds" into two, reasons and evidence.

Careful readers accept a claim about a contested issue only when they see two distinct kinds of support: reasons and the evidence on which those reasons rest. This distinction reflects a psychological and social imperative: We consider a contestable claim only when it rests on something more "solid" than the arguer's mere confidence in it; we ask for support, for reasons. But reasons provide only the logical structure of that support; evidence is the basis on which that structure of reasons rests, something brought in from "outside" the argument. An argument consisting only of a claim and reasons can seem unsubstantial, but it would seem opaque if it consisted only of a claim and raw evidence such as numbers or quotations. Readers need reasons to help them understand the logic and organization of an argument; they need evidence to understand the basis of those reasons in something they can think of as "external" reality.

5. We replaced "rebuttal" with "acknowledgment and response."

Many have noted that Toulmin's notion of rebuttals is a problem. He defines rebuttals as limits on the scope of a claim:

> Since Harry was born in Bermuda, he is a British subject, $_{\text{claim}}$ **unless he renounced his citizenship, or unless one of his parents was a diplomat, or unless . . .** $_{\text{rebuttal}}$

But in ordinary language, what we call a *rebuttal* responds to objections *of any kind*—not just to the scope of a claim but to the source or sufficiency of its support, to the soundness of logic, to the definition of a problem, to alternative solutions. Rebuttals are essential to every thoughtful argument because they acknowledge and respond to a reader's predictably different beliefs and interests. So as have some others, we expand Toulmin's *rebuttal* to refer to responses to *any* anticipated alternative, objection, or criticism. We believe, however, that the term *rebuttal* can encourage responses that are too aggressive, so we substitute something more amiable and accurate: *acknowledgment and response*. This term encompasses two actions: first we acknowledge readers' views by presenting them fairly; only then do we respond to them, and not always to refute them, since mature arguers concede the force of viable alternatives.

In addition to those five modifications, we fill two gaps in Toulmin's account. First, we explain the dual nature of evidence, which exists both inside and outside an argument. Readers are led by our prototypical image of evidence to want "external" evidence that is concrete, palpable—a smoking gun, fingerprints, bones. But writers must recognize how that differs from the representations they can offer in its stead—a *description* of a smoking gun, an *image* of fingerprints. If students learn to distinguish between the evidence

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"itself" and the reports of evidence used in arguments, they will be better prepared to read others' reports of evidence critically and, when they write, to report their own evidence so that their readers can know where and how they obtained it. No one asks where anyone found a reason; we must all ask where someone found evidence.

The second gap is in Toulmin's account of warrants. So far as we know, no book on argument has explained how a warrant that is true can nevertheless fail. For example,

> You should eat fish $_{\text{claim}}$ because it does not raise your cholesterol. $_{\text{reason}}$ As we all know, everyone should eat foods that provide roughage. $_{\text{warrant}}$

Each of those three propositions is arguably true, but the warrant fails as a guarantee of the *relevance* of the reason to the claim. We offer what we think is the first intuitively satisfying explanation of how a warrant soundly establishes the relevance of reasons and evidence to a claim, and of how it can fail.

The Design of This Book

This book has five parts and two appendixes:

- Part I surveys argument and its relationship to problem solving.
- Part II looks at the five elements of an argument in detail.
- Part III discusses reasoning, particularly about meaning and causation.
- Part IV treats the role of language in arguments.
- Part V presents a selection of readings, which include sample arguments that students can analyze and respond to with arguments of their own.

We have tried to make the use of this book as flexible as possible. After Part I, you can teach the other parts in any order. You can also teach the chapters within any part in any order, even assign different chapters to different students who need work on particular issues. So do not assume the order of the parts and of their constituent chapters must determine the structure of your class syllabus.

A Message to Students

What Is Argument?

Our aim is to help you do in writing what you do every day in conversation: Solve a problem by giving others good reason to think or act as you want them to.

You: Let's catch the Vin Diesel movie. I hear it's pretty wild.

Friend: There's a party over at Jan's. Let's go there.

You: Her parties always end up with the cops banging on the door.

Friend: We'll go just for a while. Besides that only happened twice.

You: But you said you wanted to see Vin's new movie, and so do I.

Friend: We can see it tomorrow.

You: I have to work tomorrow.

Friend: OK. Maybe I'll go to Jan's later.

Conversations like that are often about trivial matters, but not always:

Friend: It's dangerous for the government to force search-engine providers to turn over records of what terms people searched and what Web sites they visited. We hardly have any privacy left.

You: I'm not worried. The government is just going after terrorists and pornographers.

Friend: Yeah, but they want millions of records, most from ordinary people. And no one knows what *else* the feds might do with them. Do you trust the government not to invade your privacy?

You: You've got a point. But they can't keep those records forever, can they?

Friend: None of the reports say they have to give them up. Besides, information is power and no government gives up power unless it's forced to.

You: They would be forced to if they started using that information to invade the privacy of ordinary citizens. They'd be voted out of office.

Friend: The kind of people who would use those records to spy on us are not elected. It's all those faceless bureaucrats who are the real danger.

You: Maybe so.

The problem can be as trivial as what clothes to wear or as profound as what church to join. Conversations like that help us conduct business, set public policy, decide what to believe, find civil ways to settle disputes, and much more. It is how people in every society spend a good part of their social, professional, and even private lives.

We call that universal activity *argument*, a word that alarms some people because it evokes images of quarreling or worse. But arguments need not be hostile; in fact, fair and amiable arguments strengthen social relationships by helping us all understand better what we believe and why we believe it.

Amiably or belligerently, we make an argument every time we

- offer a claim and grounds to support it
- to someone not inclined to accept our claim at face value
- in order to solve the problem that motivated us to make an argument in the first place

The Role of Argument in Your Classes

If you are reading this book in a first-year writing course, you might be surprised that your teachers, in this class and others, expect you to make arguments in most of your papers. And if you do not understand how they will judge those arguments, you may be more surprised by their comments—and disappointed with your grades. We know, of course, that some of you do have experience making academic arguments and others have written arguments in your workplace. But we also know that of the thousands of first-year students the two of us have taught, few have understood the role of argument in their studies—why teachers value it so, how academic argument differs from other kinds, how you can build on your everyday experience of argument in learning to make written ones.

To gain that perspective, you have to distinguish argument from two other kinds of writing that you have probably been assigned most often, summary and personal opinion.

- In a summary, you report what others have written without adding information, especially not your own ideas.

Most first-year students remember summary and its first-cousin, the research report, from high school. In those papers, they did what's called "knowledge telling," reporting back what they read or heard in class. Many come to college expecting to do more of the same, only about more complicated topics. In fact,

college teachers will expect you to do something different. You will be asked to write for many reasons, but rarely just to repeat what you have learned. Most teachers, most of the time, will expect you to make an argument, to develop and support not *their* position but *yours*, to make a claim that *you* believe, and to explain *why* you believe it and they should too. They won't demand that your claim be unique, only that you reached it yourself after thinking through its supporting reasons and evidence and the alternative views of others. Although your argument may include some summary of others' ideas, you will be expected not to parrot them but to develop your own.

- In an opinion paper, you merely state what you think, not why others should think so too.

When pressed to support their position on an issue, many writers new to college object, *That's my opinion, and I'm entitled to it. Why do I have to defend it? I have my opinion and you have yours: Isn't that enough?* In one sense, they are right: We are all entitled to have whatever opinion we want, about any subject, for any reason, or, for that matter, for no reason at all. But once you join a community of learning, you are expected to treat your opinions and those of others not as entitlements but as claims subject to testing through questioning. That means you must be ready to not only answer the hard questions of others, but to ask them of yourself. You will be expected to make arguments in cooperation with others, in a spirit not of antagonistic confrontation, but of civil inquiry searching for good solutions to hard problems. It's how academic communities—and most others—work.

Your teachers will also want your claim to *accomplish* something. You might be asked to find and support a solution that corrects a practical, real-world problem such as how to recruit student volunteers for Habitat for Humanity or how to relieve overcrowding in the library. But more often, you will be asked to find and support an answer to a question not to show what you know or to change the world, but to help readers understand something better.

Unfortunately, many students see the questions they are asked to address as mere puzzles, with no connection to any problem in the real world: *Can chimps count? Where did weaving originate in the ancient world? How did the social structure of the South contribute to causes of the Civil War?* If these questions seem no more than puzzles, their answers will seem useless speculation—which they can be, if you do not know how to turn those questions into academic *problems*. That's why we discuss in detail what we call "conceptual problems," the kind you will be expected to find, pose, and solve as you travel through your academic career.

You will not understand how the academic world works until you understand academic argument—why such questions are important to your teachers and why they expect you to support your answers with sound reasons and evidence. In addition, we hope you will understand some other things important to your academic success:

- how and why arguments differ in different fields
- how you can use what you learn about making arguments to understand those you read
- how your arguments shape your *ethos,* your reputation as a thinker

You can use this book as a kind of primer to academic thinking that you may not get elsewhere.

What Experienced Writers Know About Making Arguments

To achieve all that, we will explain how experienced writers think about and make written arguments.

- They know that the point of an argument is not to win but to address a problem that can be solved only with the agreement of others.
- They know they cannot coerce others into agreement, but must consider their questions and objections and respond to them fairly. And if those others are not there to ask questions, experienced writers know that they must imagine those questions on their readers' behalf.
- They know that good arguments and sound thinking go hand-in-hand, that the harder they work on drafting and revising their argument, the better they think about its logic and substance, and vice versa.
- They know they cannot invent a new form of argument every time they write, that readers expect to see familiar forms, and that they can use those forms not just to organize their arguments but to guide their thinking in researching and planning them.
- Finally, they know that even when they do not "win" an argument, they can still gain something almost as important. If they can write arguments that seem reasonable and thoughtful, they earn the reputation of someone with those qualities. And that means readers who know their reputation will take their next argument more seriously.

When we show you how experienced writers put together their arguments, we will give you charts, diagrams, and what look like formulas to follow. But we will also explain the thinking behind the formula. We present our advice in that way because that is what works for most of the writers we have worked with, both experienced and not. Some of you may fear that the charts and formulas will stifle your creativity and make your writing mechanical: *I want my writing to be mine, not the product of your formulas.* Others will think *Great! Just tell me what to do and I'll do it.* We trust that you will discover both that our advice enables rather than limits your creativity and that you cannot follow it mindlessly, even if you want to.

We hope that you will learn to use our models when you need to and to put them aside as soon as you can. You have already done that if you have

learned a sport such as golf or tennis or a performance art such as dance or music. You didn't practice a whole skill all at once, but a part at a time: Plant your feet this way, hold your hand that way, move like this. When you first put the parts together, you seem to move by the numbers, more clunky than creative. But once you learn the parts well enough to forget them, there comes a moment when you can go with the flow, assembling the moves into a seamless performance.

At first, you may feel that you are writing arguments by the numbers, especially if you have some experience making good ones. But as you master the parts, the formulas will disappear into the flow of drafting, you will focus on the conversation you are having with your imagined readers, and your arguments will seem more natural and organic. It is then that you can be as creative as you wish. With rare exceptions, creative people start working within boundaries and forms that they first master and then *knowingly* adapt or even break. Shakespeare was the most creative writer in English, but he started working within the dramatic and poetic conventions of his time; he became creative when he broke them knowingly.

We hope you learn the forms of argument well enough to use them creatively. But when you struggle because time is short or the issue complex, formulas give you something that you can fall back on, to help you find and assemble the parts of an argument in a way that puts your ideas—and you—in the best light.

How to Use This Book

We planned this book so that you can adapt it to your own unique needs. While we hope you will find our ideas so interesting and useful that you'll read every page, we also know that everyone is busy and days are short. So on the chance that you don't find argument as fascinating as we do, we have tried to make this book easy to use when you search for particular information or advice. To help you do that, we have organized this book into five parts:

- In Part I, we present an overview of the nature of argument. Try to work through these chapters quickly, because they will help you write complete arguments from the start.
- In Part II, we discuss the five elements of an argument in detail. Your teacher may ask you to work through these chapters in sequence, or to look at individual ones as specific issues arise in your writing.
- In Part III, we focus on reasoning about meaning and causation, two issues that almost every argument has to address. These are the most demanding chapters in the book.
- In Part IV, we show you how to write clearly and vividly and how to use language in deliberately persuasive ways.

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