Arguing in Communities

GARY LAYNE HATCH

SECOND EDITION

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Preface

OUR CULTURE HAS TAUGHT US to view arguing as something negative, the equivalent of quarreling or fighting, a view which—unfortunately—closely reflects the quality of arguing we are most familiar with. Despite the efforts of those who teach argumentation and critical thinking, much of the arguing in our communities is simply contentious bickering. Often, people think they are arguing productively when they are really just contradicting one another or expressing their opinions forcefully without supporting those opinions with thoughtful reasons. Even many so-called experts have never advanced beyond the strategies we learn as small children to get what we want.

Arguing productively, however, should be an important part of living in any community. Without effective arguing, a community has difficulty making decisions, coming to consensus, living with and negotiating difference, and simply getting things done. And when arguing breaks down, people must usually resort to some sort of force to accomplish their goals, whether it's physical violence or the force of law. Rather than using the power of language to live with one another, it seems as though many people would rather fight out their differences, either in the streets or in the courts.

I'm not certain that a class in argumentative writing can actually make communities more productive at resolving their differences, but this book is my attempt. I found, as a teacher, that many of my students saw no connection between the kind of arguing I was teaching in class and the arguing they practiced every day outside of class. Of course, some students would begin to identify a few logical fallacies or go around tormenting their classmates and families by forcing them to define their terms, state their assumptions, and back up their beliefs. Still, for most students, arguing was still an academic game rather than a way of living. I realized that I was partly to blame for my students' inability to

make connections between my class and their lives. I had often displayed arguments as though they were zoological specimens: neatly dissected, arranged, and analyzed, but so removed from their native habitats that they no longer had any connection to the real world.

This book, then, is an attempt to take students where arguments live, to their habitats, so to speak, the communities where we live and argue every day. My central premise is that arguing is an essential part of living with others; my central goal is to improve arguing and, with luck, to improve communities in the process.

I have divided the book into three parts. The first emphasizes arguing as a means of rational persuasion within communities. I describe the means of persuasion from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the structure of arguments based on a model adapted from Franz van Eemeren's social theories of argumentation, a model that is essentially a simplified form of Stephen Toulmin's model for reasoning as it is usually taught in writing courses. Although I have not relied on Toulmin's terms exclusively in this text, I have included them at appropriate points for those instructors and students who may be familiar with them. In this first part, I also teach students to identify the communities in which they live and to record, analyze, and evaluate the conversations that take place in their communities so that they can begin to make useful contributions to these conversations.

The second part of the book focuses on arguing different kinds of claims: claims about existence, causality, language, values, and actions. This second part is an adaptation of classical stasis theory. Stasis theory involves asking a set of standard questions in order to identify what is at issue in a particular debate or disagreement, what kind of claims are being made, and how one can evaluate and respond to these claims. In addition to the examples and readings I have provided, I encourage students, throughout the book, to identify and evaluate examples from the conversations that surround them so that they can productively join these conversations and make a difference in the life of their communities.

Part Three is an anthology of readings, a collection of arguments providing differing viewpoints on a range of controversial social issues.

IMPORTANT FEATURES

This text includes the following features to help students understand how arguing works in communities.

- *An easily understood model of the structure of arguments,* based on the classical enthymeme, Toulmin's model of reasoning, and Franz van Eemeren's theories of social argumentation. Through this model, I present arguing as part of a social process, a conversation that takes place within communities. This model of argumentation will help students identify, record, and evaluate such conversations. In Part One, students learn how to identify and

evaluate claims, reasons, and assumptions. In Part Two, students learn how to critically analyze different types of claims: claims about existence, causality, language, values, and actions.

- *An emphasis on studying arguments where they live.* I use the classical principle of *kairos* to explain how arguments occur at particularly appropriate times and places. Students then learn how to identify and reconstruct the contexts in which arguments occur. This approach stresses that different communities have different customs, conventions, and potential fallacies when arguing. Understanding these community differences helps students to think contextually and read and write arguments more effectively.
- *A description of how ethos and pathos are integrated with logical appeals* with particular advice on how to use these appeals effectively and ethically. As a social process, arguing cannot be reduced to "logic." In particular, I acknowledge the logic within emotion—that psycho-physiological phenomenon that is usually discredited as "illogical" or "irrational." To move people to action, arguing must include appropriate ethical and emotional appeals, but students must also learn how these appeals may be misused.
- *Advice on how to adapt arguments to the needs of different audiences.* I describe how to analyze an audience and provide several models for organizing arguments in addition to the "classical" form most frequently used in academic writing. These other models include delayed thesis, conciliatory argument, Rogerian argument, "option three," and motivated sequence.
- *An overview of research both in the library and beyond.* While much research is the process of recording conversations in academic communities, the academic community is only one among the many communities students belong to, and academic writing is only one form of arguing that students participate in (and certainly not the most common form). Students will learn not only an efficient process for finding source material in the library, but also ways of finding useful information on the Internet.
- *Sample student essays using both MLA and APA documentation* for a variety of sources.
- *Examples of MLA and APA documentation* for a variety of sources, including current citation forms for online material.
- *Readings that provide contrasting points of view.* The readings not only present models of argumentative writing or topics for student discussion, but also relate to the issues discussed in each chapter. Each chapter offers at least two and usually three or more readings of differing views on the same topic to encourage students to think beyond simply taking a position "for" or "against" an issue. The same is true for the issues-related readings in Part Three.
- *An extensive discussion of fallacies of reasoning.* Often called "logical fallacies" or "informal fallacies," the 18 fallacies of reasoning presented in Chapter 5 weaken or invalidate arguments in both student writing and public discourse. In this chapter, I explain how these fallacies work and how they can be revised into more legitimate arguments.

- *An abundance of collaborative activities.* Consistent with the emphasis in this book on community, I have tried to provide several activities for each chapter that engage students as individuals and groups with the communities they live in.

WHAT'S NEW IN THE SECOND EDITION

Instructors who have used the previous edition of this text will recognize several new features.

- *Additional readings in new Part Three,* a collection of arguments about important social issues. This anthology will provide instructors with models for analysis as well as topics for class discussion and for research.
- *The addition of eleven new readings to Parts One and Two.*
- *"Explorations" at the end of each chapter.* These activities (usually collaborative) invite students to try out the concepts they have learned in each chapter and to interact with the communities they live in.
- *More and improved visuals.* Several sections of the text now begin with visuals illustrating the nature of the concepts taught in these sections. In addition, some diagrams have been redrawn, and one new diagram has been added illustrating an additional principle for understanding causality.
- *Expanded coverage of ethics.* The discussion of ethics, moved to Chapter 11, now includes medical ethics along with ethics in business and law.
- *Expanded coverage of local issues in the national context.* The case of the Utah Wilderness Debate in Chapter 2 now addresses the national government's involvement through the formation of the Grand Staircase–Escalante National Monument. This case now invites students to consider the relationship between local and national issues.
- *More thorough discussion of electronic communities.* The importance of the Internet has grown considerably since the first edition of this text appeared, and the second edition reflects that increased importance with an expanded discussion of electronic communities, not just as a separate chapter (new Chapter 7), but also integrated throughout the text.

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