Writing Arguments

A RHETORIC WITH READINGS

JOHN D. RAMAGE

JOHN C. BEAN

BRIEF EDITION

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Brief Edition

John D. Ramage
Arizona State University

John C. Bean
Seattle University

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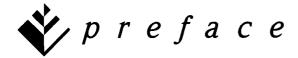
Overview

Through its first three editions, *Writing Arguments* steadily emerged as the leading college textbook on the art of writing arguments. In this fourth edition, we have revised and streamlined the book to clarify and enliven its message and to reflect our own evolving understanding of the theory and practice of argumentation. In either its regular edition, which includes an anthology of readings, or in its brief edition without the anthology, *Writing Arguments* has been used successfully at every level, from freshman writing to advanced argumentation courses.

As in previous editions, our aim is to integrate a comprehensive study of argument with a process approach to writing. The text treats arguments as a means of clarification and truth seeking as well as a means of persuading audiences. In both its treatment of argumentation and its approach to teaching writing, the text is rooted in current research and theory.

The fourth edition retains the following successful features from the third edition: The text has an extensive treatment of invention that includes use of the Toulmin system of analyzing arguments combined with use of the enthymeme as a discovery and shaping tool. To aid invention, it also has explanations of *logos, pathos,* and *ethos,* and a major section treating five categories of claims. It focuses on both the reading and the writing of arguments and also includes a copious treatment of the research paper, including two student examples—one using the MLA system and one using the APA system. Among the book's distinguishing features are numerous "For Class Discussion" exercises designed for collaborative groups, a full sequence of writing assignments, and an extensive appendix on working in groups. The fourth edition contains sixteen student essays of varied length and complexity as well as fifteen professional essays aimed at producing discussion, analysis, and debate.

Improvements in the Fourth Edition

Following the recommendations of many users of the third edition at both four-year and two-year institutions, we have substantially strengthened *Writing Arguments* through the following additions and changes.

- Larger format and new design, which allow for a more open, more readable page and invite better use of annotations.

- More consistent treatment of argument as multisided conversation rather than as pro-con debate. Throughout the text we show how issues are embedded in a context of subissues, side issues, and larger issues that resist reduction to a simple pro-con focus. To this end, we have removed the pro-con pairs from the beginning of the anthology and have organized the anthology by topic areas rather than by already formulated issues. We have also eliminated such combative terms as *opponents* or *adversaries* in order to treat argument as a truth-seeking inquiry among alternative views instead of a win-lose debate between two sides.

- Extensive rewriting of Chapter 1. New to this chapter are an explanation of the difference between implicit and explicit arguments, enriched discussion of the truth-seeking dimension of argument, and clearer explanations of the tension that arguers always feel between truth seeking and persuasion.

- More interesting and substantive examples throughout the text. For instance, a hate speech example replaces the third edition's dorm room carpets example in Chapter 3, and the provocative issue of women in combat replaces the teenage job issue used for illustration in Chapters 4–6.

- Fuller explanation of how the strategies of this text can be applied to reading arguments as well as to writing arguments.

- A greatly expanded discussion of numerical and statistical evidence incorporated into Chapter 6.

- Enriched discussions of *pathos* (derived from the Greek for *suffering*) as an appeal to the imaginative sympathies of an audience rather than more narrowly as an appeal to emotions.

- Extensive rewriting of Chapter 8 to explain how writers can vary the tone and structure of an argument to accommodate audiences along a scale of resistance from sympathetic to hostile. The third edition's extended example of the "group writing controversy" has been replaced by a range of more interesting and relevant examples to explain refutation, concession, and Rogerian argument.

- Much fuller treatment of electronic databases, computerized searches, and the Internet and World Wide Web in our discussions of research writing in Part IV.

Our Approaches to Argumentation

Our interest in argumentation grows out of our interest in the relationship between writing and thinking. In writing arguments, writers are forced to lay bare their thinking processes in an unparalleled way. In an effort to engage students in the kinds of critical thinking that argument demands, we draw on four major approaches to argumentation:

- *The enthymeme as a rhetorical and logical structure.* This concept, especially useful for beginning writers, helps students "nutshell" an argument as a claim with one or more supporting because clauses. It also helps them see how real-world arguments are rooted in probabilistic assumptions granted by the audience rather than in universal and unchanging principles.

- *The three classical types of appeal*—logos, ethos, *and* pathos. These concepts help students place their arguments in a rhetorical context focusing on audience-based appeals; they also help students create an effective voice and style.

- *Toulmin's system of analyzing arguments.* Toulmin's system helps students see the complete, implicit structure that underlies an enthymeme and develop appropriate grounds and backing to support the claim. It also highlights the rhetorical, social, and dialectical nature of argument.

- *Stasis theory on categories of claims.* This approach stresses the heuristic value of learning different patterns of support for different categories of claims and often leads students to make surprisingly rich and full arguments.

Throughout the text these approaches are integrated and synthesized into generative tools for both producing and analyzing arguments.

Structure of the Text

The text has four main parts plus two appendixes. Part I gives an overview of argumentation. These first three chapters present our philosophy of argument, showing how argument helps writers clarify their own thinking. Throughout we link the process of arguing—articulating issue questions, formulating propositions, examining alternative points of view, and creating structures of supporting reasons and evidence—with the processes of reading and writing.

Part II examines the principles of argument. Chapters 4 through 6 show that the core of an argument is a claim with reasons. These reasons are often stated as enthymemes, the unstated premise of which must sometimes be brought to the surface and supported. Discussion of Toulmin logic shows students how to discover both the stated and unstated premises of their arguments and to provide structures of reasons and evidence to support them. Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the rhetorical context of arguments. These chapters discuss the writer's relationship with an audience, particularly with finding audience-based reasons; with using *pathos* and *ethos* effectively and responsibly; and with accommodating arguments to different kinds of audiences, from sympathetic to neutral to hostile.

Part III discusses five different categories of argument: definitional arguments, causal arguments, resemblance arguments, evaluation arguments, and proposal arguments. These chapters introduce students to two recurring strategies of argument that cut across the different category types: *criteria-match arguing,*

in which the writer establishes criteria for making a judgment and argues whether a specific case does or does not meet those criteria; and *causal arguing*, in which the writer shows that one event or phenomenon can be linked to others in a causal chain. The last chapter of Part III deals with the special complexities of moral arguments.

Part IV shows students how to incorporate research into their arguments. It explains how writers use sources, with a special focus on the skills of summary, paraphrase, and judicious quotation. Unlike standard treatments of the research paper, our discussion explains to students how the writer's meaning and purpose control the selection and shaping of source materials. Part IV explains both the MLA and the APA documentation system, which are illustrated by two student examples of researched arguments. Throughout Chapters 16 and 17, we incorporate new discussions of electronic searching and uses of the Internet.

The appendixes provide important supplemental information useful for courses in argument. Appendix 1 gives an overview of informal fallacies, and Appendix 2 shows students how to get the most out of collaborative groups in an argument class. Appendix 2 also provides a sequence of collaborative tasks that will help students learn to peer-critique their classmates' arguments in progress. The numerous "For Class Discussion" exercises within the text provide additional tasks for group collaboration.

Writing Assignments

The text provides a variety of sequenced writing assignments, including expressive tasks for discovering and exploring arguments, "microthemes" for practicing basic argumentative moves (for example, supporting a reason with statistical evidence), cases, and numerous other assignments calling for complete arguments. Thus, the text provides instructors with a wealth of options for writing assignments on which to build a coherent course.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would also like to thank our editor Eben Ludlow, whose unflagging good humor and faith in our approach to both composition and argument have kept us writing and revising for the better part of twelve years. Eben called forth this book and kept it going. For that we are grateful. Additional thanks go to Daniel Anderson of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Daniel Anderson contributed the chapter on electronic writing and research in our 1997 text *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing,* and we have again drawn on his expertise to bring Chapters 16 and 17 up to the minute in these important areas.

Finally, we would like to thank our families. John Bean: Thanks to Kit, Matthew, Andrew, Stephen, and Sarah for their love, support, good humor, rich conversation, and willingness to discuss argument in any context at any time. John Ramage: Thanks to my siblings for their extended support—brother Steve and sisters Carol Flinders, Wendy Hawkins, and Mary Beth Smith—and to my parents Gib and Jeanne Ramage for a lifelong dialectic. May the final synthesis never be achieved.

John D. Ramage
John C. Bean

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