

ELEMENTS OF  
**ARGUMENT**

A Text and Reader

FOURTH EDITION



ANNETTE T. ROTTENBERG

*FOURTH EDITION*

# **ELEMENTS OF ARGUMENT**

**A Text and Reader**

***Annette T. Rottenberg***

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# Preface for Instructors

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## 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 teachers 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."<sup>1</sup> The challenge has been to find a method of teaching argument

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

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."<sup>2</sup> 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, persuasion 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.

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

## ORGANIZATION

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In Part One, after an introductory overview, a chapter each is devoted to the chief elements of argument—the claims that students make in their arguments (Chapter 2), the definitions and support they must supply for their claims (Chapters 3 and 4), the warrants that underlie their arguments (Chapter 5), the language that they use (Chapter 6). Popular fallacies, as well as induction and deduction, are treated in Chapter 7; because fallacies represent errors of the reasoning process, a knowledge of induction and deduction can make clear how and why fallacies occur. Each chapter ends with an advertisement illustrating the element of argument treated in that chapter. In all, Part One contains twenty-eight readings and eight advertisements, accompanied by critical thinking exercises and writing suggestions.

I have tried to provide examples, readings, discussion questions, and writing suggestions that are both practical and stimulating. With the exception of several student dialogues, the examples 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; in each chapter, one or more essays have been analyzed to emphasize the chapter's principles of argument. 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 read about and live in. Third, some of the essays are obviously flawed and thus enable students to identify the kinds of weaknesses they should avoid in their own essays.

Part Two takes up the process of writing and researching. Chapter 8 explains how to find a topic, define the issues that it embraces, organize the information, and draft and revise an argument. Chapter 9 introduces students to the business of finding sources, in the field and in the library, including information from computer catalogs, and using these sources effectively in research papers. The chapter concludes with two annotated student research papers, one of which represents research in the social and natural sciences and uses a modified American Psychological Association (APA) documentation style, the other of which employs the materials of literature and the Modern Language Association (MLA) documentation system.

Part Three, "Opposing Viewpoints," exhibits arguers in action, using informal and formal language, debating head-on. The subjects—abortion, animal rights, children's rights, endangered species, euthanasia, freedom of speech, gay and lesbian rights, multicultural studies, and sex education—capture headlines every day. Despite their immediacy,

these subjects 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 their competing views.

Finally, Part Four, "Classic Arguments," reprints nine selections that have stood the tests of both time and the classroom. Drawn from the works of Plato, Andrew Marvell, Jonathan Swift, Mary Wollstonecraft, Henry David Thoreau, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, and Martin Luther King, Jr., they are among the arguments that teachers find invaluable in any composition course.

The editor's notes provide additional suggestions for using the book, as well as for finding and using the enormous variety of materials available 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.

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## NEW TO THIS EDITION

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Revising a successful textbook — the publisher says that *Elements of Argument* is the bestselling book of its kind — presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to avoid undoing features that have been well received in the earlier edition. The opportunity is to tap into the experiences of instructors and students who have used the earlier editions and to make use of their insights to improve what needs improvement. This is how we have approached this revision, and it accounts for all that we have done, and not done, in preparing the new edition.

The principles and concerns of the book have not changed. Rather, I have included a greater breadth of material to increase the book's usefulness as a teaching tool. Instructors who requested more explanations in Part One of warrants, induction, and deduction will find an expanded discussion, including new analyses of the different ways in which warrants operate. A reference chart with additional examples of the three main kinds of warrants appears on the endpapers of the book. In Part Two, library and field research is now covered in more detail in Chapter 9, with a brief introduction to computer catalogs and a list of some of the principal databases. This chapter also includes *two* annotated student research papers. In addition to the one that appeared in the earlier editions using the APA documentation style, I have added "When a Fairy Tale Is Not Just a Fairy Tale," an example of research in the humanities and the use of the MLA documentation system. In Part Three, the number of "Opposing Viewpoints" remains the same, but five of the topics are new, reflecting the most recent public controversies. Four popular topics from the third edition have been retained — Abor-

tion, Animal Rights, Euthanasia, Freedom of Speech — and brought up to date with fresh material from many sources. The five new topics, which should appeal strongly to students, are: Children's Rights, Endangered Species, Gay and Lesbian Rights, Multicultural Studies, and Sex Education. As further proof of the wide range of arguments in the print media, each chapter of "Opposing Viewpoints" ends with a cartoon that treats the topic with humor and irony. In Part Four, the anthology of classic arguments, students can encounter still another genre as a vehicle of argument in Andrew Marvell's poem, "To His Coy Mistress."

The number of selections in the fourth edition has grown to 122, the majority of them new, with a corresponding increase in the number of debatable issues and teaching options. Taken as a whole, the changes in the fourth edition should further enhance the versatility of the book, deepen students' awareness of how pervasive argument is, and increase their ability to think critically and communicate persuasively.

This book has profited from the critiques and suggestions of Patricia Bizzell, College of the Holy Cross; Richard Fulkerson, East Texas State University; William Hayes, California State College — Stanislaus; Marcia MacLennan, Kansas Wesleyan University; Lester Faigley, University of Texas at Austin; Cheryl W. Ruggiero, Virginia Polytechnic Institute; Michael Havens, University of California at Davis; Judith Kirscht, University of Michigan; Richard Katula, University of Rhode Island; Carolyn R. Miller, North Carolina State University at Raleigh; A. Leslie Harris, Georgia State University; Richard S. Hootman, University of Iowa; Donald McQuade, University of California at Berkeley; David L. Wagner; Ron Severson, Salt Lake Community College; Paul Knoke, East Carolina University; and Robert H. Bentley, Lansing Community College. The editor's notes are the better for the contributions of Gail Stygall of the University of Washington.

Many instructors helped improve the book by responding to a questionnaire. I appreciate the thoughtful consideration given by: Timothy C. Alderman, Yvonne Alexander, John V. Andersen, William Arfin, Karen Arnold, David B. Axelrod, Peter Banland, Carol A. Barnes, Marci Bartolotta, Dr. Bonnie C. Bedford, Frank Beesley, Don Beggs, Martine Bellen, Scott Bentley, Don Black, Kathleen Black, Stanley S. Blair, Laurel Boyd, Dianne Brehmer, Alan Brown, Paul L. Brown, Bill Buck, W. K. Buckley, Alison A. Bulsterbaum, Clarence Bussinger, Gary T. Cage, Ruth A. Cameron, Barbara R. Carlson, Gail Chapman, Roland Christian, Dr. Thomas S. Costello, David J. Cranmer, Edward Crothers, Mimi Dane, Judy Davidson, Philip E. Davis, Stephanie Demma, Julia Dietrich, Marcia B. Dinnech, Jane T. Dodge, L. Leon Duke, P. Dunsmore, Bernard Earley, Carolyn L. Engdahl, David Estes, Kristina Faber, B. R. Fein, Delia Fisher, Evelyn Flores, David D. Fong, Donald Forand, Mary A. Fortner, Leslye Friedberg, Sondra Frisch, Maureen Furniss, Diane Gabbard, Frieda Gardner, Gail Garloch, Darcey Garretson, Victoria Gaydosik, E. R. Gelber-Beechler, Scott Giantralley, Michael Patrick Gillespie, Paula Gil-



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