

Series Editor's Preface

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In the large and growing house of rhetoric and writing, argument and its sister persuasion share an extensive and venerable room, being built since the founding of rhetoric in ancient Greece. The core concerns of classical rhetoric are all carried out through argument: deliberation on governance and citizenry, determination of guilt and innocence, asserting rights and obligations, forging alliances and agreements, rallying action against enemies, increasing communal commitment. Core institutions of society have been formed to create structural conditions (such as procedures, criteria, and exigencies) to bring arguments to successful resolutions for communal action: courts, legislatures, religions, electoral democracy.

The great chamber of argument and persuasion has large doorways to many neighboring rooms that see themselves in different terms. Philosophy, the long-standing dialectical opponent of argument, itself structures its discussion through argument. Academic disciplines are argumentative fields, though organized as cooperative endeavors. Team deliberations on planning and choices—whether architectural, medical, or military—depend on the expression of varied views, though often elliptically framed within specialized knowledges, goals, and roles.

Argument can serve private purposes. Through argument with others an individual can work through personal beliefs, values, commitments, and life choices. Social occasions of argument provide opportunities for the individual to investigate and think through individually shaped questions in the context of contending views. Modern concepts of individual development, consciousness, conscience, and responsibility depend on an individual having access to and participating in argument to come to personal persuasions.

While some see engaged argument as an oral phenomenon, confronting the embodiment of alternative views in one's interlocutors,

writing has transformed the range and depth of arguments, the evidence available, and the structured situations within which arguments occur. Even courtroom argument has been transformed by written laws, libraries of case precedents, prepared briefs, written depositions, written rules of evidence, and other documents that have made law a bookish profession. Many spheres of literate interaction that facilitate modern society at a distance rely on argument, whether for the value of a financial investment, the most effective plan for preserving the ecology of a watershed, or the significance of volunteering in a non-profit project. Within the specific academic world of composition, arguing facilitates learning to think in an educated, intelligent, informed, disciplinary, articulate manner.

This *Reference Guide to Argument in Composition* provides access to a wide range of resources that bear on the teaching of writing. The ideas of major theorists of classical and contemporary rhetoric from Aristotle to Burke, Toulmin, and Perelman and their relevance to instruction are succinctly presented. The authors clearly sort through and state their position to related pedagogies of teaching informal fallacies and propaganda, and present the reasons for preferring an argument approach over other available approaches for the teaching of composition. The authors also identify the role of argument in pedagogies that are not overtly called argument, including pedagogies that foreground feminism, liberation, critical cultural studies, Writing Across the Curriculum, genre, service learning, technology, and visual rhetoric. The lists of further reading and the annotated bibliography provide opportunities for learning more about the approaches presented in this guide.

Much of the book self-exemplifies the value of an argumentative approach by overtly arguing for the value of taking an argumentative approach, for the value of adopting the perspectives and concepts of particular theorists over others, and for the superiority of argumentative approaches for the teaching of writing over others. In making these arguments the book challenges the readers for themselves to sort through their thoughts about the value of argument and how to best incorporate it in their pedagogy. I particularly recommend readers take seriously the arguments against ossification of argumentative systems and for always considering the specific situations within which each argument takes place.