

COM 203: Argument and Analysis  
Fall 2018  
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Grand Valley State University

TEXTBOOK:

Trapp, Robert & Schuetz, Janice. (Eds.). (1990). *Perspectives on argumentation: Essays in honor of Wayne Brockriede*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

ADDITIONAL READINGS (not including activities):

- Scudder, Samuel H. (2004). In the laboratory with Agassiz. Lee Archie & John G. Archie, (Eds.), *Reading for philosophical inquiry: A brief introduction to philosophical thinking, ver. 0.21*.
- O'Keefe, Daniel J. (1977). Two concepts of argument. *Journal of the American Forensic Association, 13*, 121-128.
- Brockriede, Wayne & Ehninger, Douglas. (1960). Toulmin on argument: An interpretation and application. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 46*, 44-53.
- Wenzel, Joseph W. (1987). The rhetorical perspective on argument. In Frans H. van Eemeren, et al. (Eds.), *Argumentation: Across the lines of discipline* (pp. 101-109). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Foris Publications.
- Bradbury, Ray. (1994). Zen in the art of writing. In *Zen in the art of writing*. Santa Barbara, CA: Joshua Odell Editions.
- Weal, Bruce W. (1985). The force of narrative in the public sphere of argument. *Journal of the American Forensic Association, 22*, 104-114.

COURSE PURPOSE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this course is to develop understandings in methods for analysis of argument (in various forms), to strengthen skills in analyzing and evaluating argument, and to improve skills in presenting arguments. Specifically, we will develop understanding of three perspectives toward argument analysis: *logical*, *rhetorical* and *dialectical*. As we do, we will develop basic criteria for judging “good” arguments from those that are weak and/or manipulative. With successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. distinguish, contrast and develop definitions of argument;
2. identify, describe and explain elements associated with argument structure;
3. demonstrate, explain and create written situated arguments of different kinds (fact, value, policy) with their relevant supports;
4. compare, apply and evaluate analyses of argument structure drawing on logical, rhetorical and dialectical perspectives on argument.

## NCA – LEARNING OUTCOMES IN COMMUNICATION:

### **LOC #2: Employ communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts**

- Explain communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts
- Apply communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts

### **LOC #3: Engage in communication inquiry**

- Apply communication scholarship
- Differentiate between various approaches to the study of communication

### **LOC #4: Create message appropriate to the audience, purpose and context**

- Locate and use information relevant to the goals, audiences, purposes, and contexts
- Adapt messages to the diverse needs of individuals, groups and contexts
- Critically reflect on one's own messages after the communication event

### **LOC #5: Critically analyze messages**

- Identify meanings embedded in messages
- Recognize the influence of messages

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. **Two Examinations.** The Midterm will emphasize material since the start of the course; the Final will emphasize material since the Midterm and presume familiarity with relevant material from our previous topics. Exams will draw upon short answer and essay-response questions. Midterm is 20% of course grade; Final is 15%.
2. **Two Formal Essays.** Each of these assignments will ask you to further investigate argumentation via analysis or production involving a particular perspective. First essay is worth 15%; second is 20%.
3. **Argument Scrapbook.** You will be asked to create a short “scrapbook” of descriptions/analyses of four arguments you locate this term. Each is to illustrate one aspect, concept, element, or feature related to argument for future students. 20%.
4. **In-class Activities and Participation.** This category includes involvement in short informal oral and/or written activities and in routine class discussion. 10%.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

| <b>Week</b> | <b>Assign't</b>            | <b>Topic</b>   | <b>Reading</b>                   |
|-------------|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1           |                            | Course introduction  |                                  |
|             | Short Writing I: Observing | I. Conceptualizing Argument: Argument defined                          | Ch. 1-Brockriede; Scudder (2004) |
|             |                            |  |                                  |
| 2           |                            | And defining argument again  | O'Keefe (1977)                   |
|             |                            | "  | --                               |
|             |                            |  |                                  |
| 3           |                            | II. Perspectives on Argument: Three perspectives for argument analysis | Ch. 2-Wenzel                     |
|             |                            | "  | --                               |
|             |                            |  |                                  |
| 4           |                            | Logical perspective: Basics of a logical approach                      | Brockriede & Ehninger (1960)     |
|             |                            | Toulmin's diagrams   | --                               |
|             |                            |  |                                  |
| 5           |                            | Common fallacies   | Ch. 9-Blair                      |
|             |                            | Rhetorical perspective: Rhetorical situations                          | Wenzel (1987)                    |
|             |                            |  |                                  |
| 6           | Essay 1 draft              | Features of a rhetorical approach                                      | --                               |
|             |                            | "  | --                               |
|             |                            |  |                                  |
| 7           |                            | Midterm Exam   |                                  |
|             | Short Writing              | Considering writing processes  | Bradbury (1994)                  |

|    |                  |   |                         |
|----|------------------|---|-------------------------|
|    | II: Process      |   |                         |
|    |                  |   |                         |
| 8  |                  | Dialectical perspective: Argument as "procedure"                                      | --                      |
|    | Essay 1 revision | Discussion continued/Practice   | --                      |
|    |                  |   |                         |
| 9  |                  | III. Argument Communities: Argument within personal, social and technical communities | Ch. 3-McKerrow          |
|    |                  | The Social Community: Example: Values and language                                    | Ch. 10-Walker & Sillars |
|    |                  |   |                         |
| 10 |                  | Example: Media and politics   | Ch. 12-Blankenship      |
|    |                  | Discussion continued  | --                      |
|    |                  |   |                         |
| 11 |                  | Argument in other forms: Narrative as argument: <i>Dr. Strangelove</i>                | Weal (1985)             |
|    |                  | Finish film/discussion  | --                      |
|    |                  |   |                         |
| 12 |                  | Aesthetics and argument   | Ch. 19-Chase            |
|    |                  | The Personal Community: A model of argument   | Ch. 5-Benoit & Benoit   |
|    |                  |   |                         |
| 13 | Scrapbook        | In married relationships  | Ch. 6-Canary            |
|    |                  | Discussion continued  | --                      |
|    |                  |   |                         |

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|----|---------|--|-----------------|
| 14 |         | The Technical Community:<br>Argument crossing boundaries | Ch. 15-Campbell |
|    |         |  | --              |
|    |         |  |                 |
| 15 |         | Discussion continued                                     | "               |
|    | Essay 2 | Closing: What to do with argument?                       | --              |
|    |         |  |                 |
| 16 |         | Final Exam   | --              |