

CS 4001: Computing, Society & Professionalism

Munmun De Choudhury | Assistant Professor | School of Interactive Computing

Week 6: Core and Logical Structure of Arguments

February 14, 2017

Elements of an Argument

An **argument** states a **claim** and supports it with reasons and evidence from sources.

Arguing your side makes you the **proponent**.

Elements of an Argument

Counterargument/Counterclaim

An argument that stands in opposition to your argument/claim. The counterargument is your **opponent's** (the other side's) argument that tries to explain why you are wrong.



ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

The argumentative essay
is a genre of writing that requires
you to:

1. investigate a topic;
2. collect, generate, and evaluate evidence; and
3. establish a position on the topic in a concise manner.

Persuasion vs. Argumentation

Persuasion: The action or fact of persuading someone or of being persuaded to do or believe something.

Argumentation: The process of **establishing** a claim and then **proving** it with the use of logical reasoning, examples, and research.

Difference between Persuasive and Argumentative Essay

A persuasive essay

- May make a claim based on opinion
- May not take opposing ideas into account
- Persuades by appealing to the audience's emotion or by relying on the character or credentials of the writer
- Emotion-based

An argumentative essay

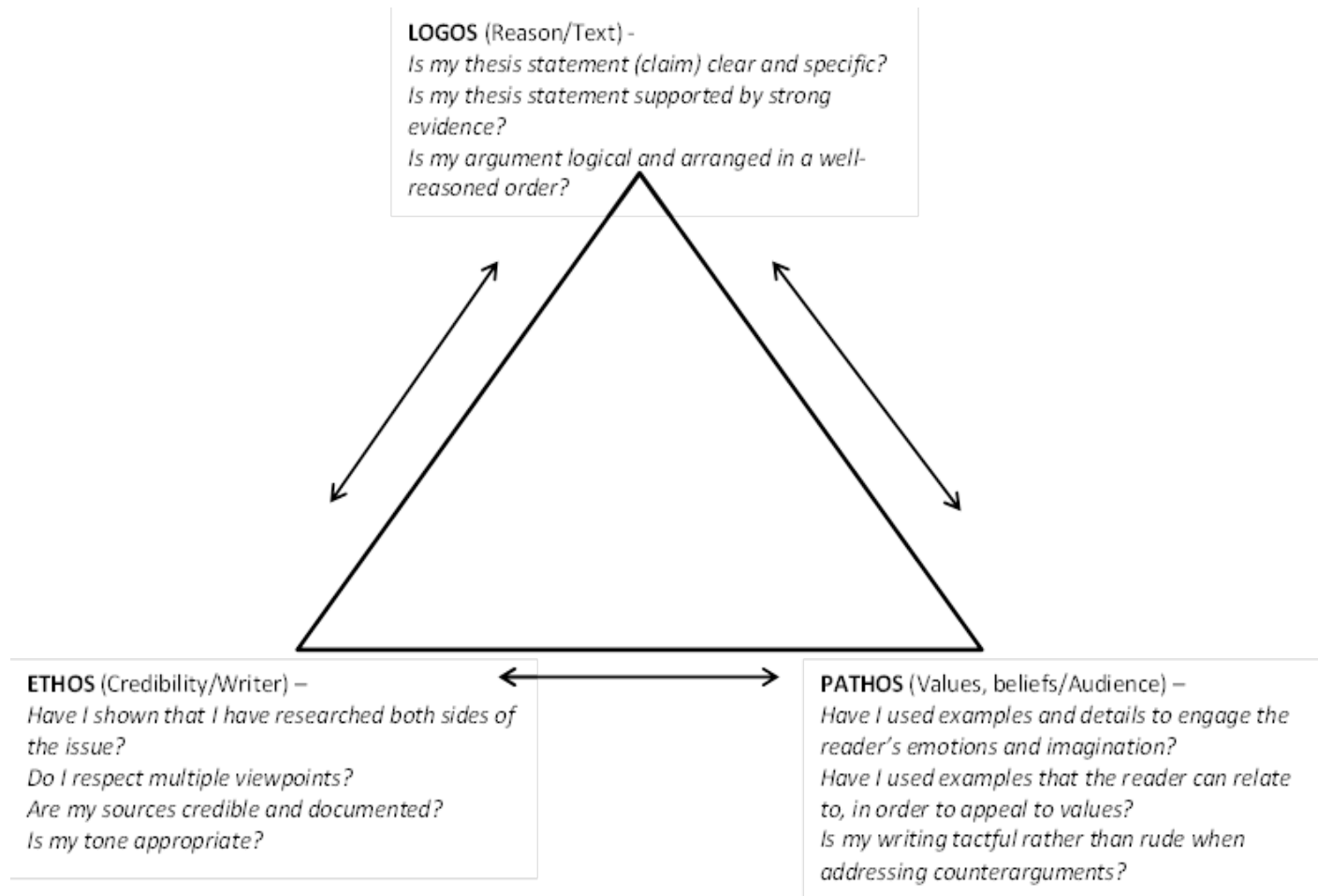
- Makes claims based on factual evidence (research)
- Makes counterclaims – takes opposing views into account.
- Neutralizes or “defeats” serious opposing ideas
- Convinces audience through the merit and rationality of the claim and proofs offered
- Logic-based

Arguments and Pseudo-arguments

- Rational arguments degenerate to pseudo-arguments when there is no possibility for listening, learning, growth, or change
- Pseudo-arguments – committed believers and fanatical skeptics
- Lack of shared assumptions
 - The problem of ideology
 - The problem of personal opinions

The Rhetorical Triangle

Don't forget to incorporate elements of ethos, pathos, and logos.



IMPORTANT POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- Effective arguments consider all three points on this triangle. They are interrelated - they help each other.
- All three of the corners of the Rhetorical Triangle overlap. You can do one or all of them in a single paragraph.

Class Exercise I

- Which one of the following statements will lead to reasonable arguments?
- A: Are the Star Wars films good science fiction?
- B: Is it ethically justifiable to capture dolphins and train them for human entertainment?



Why is Organization Important in Argument Writing?

- Guides an audience through your reasoning process
- Offers a clear explanation of each argued point
- Demonstrates the credibility of the writer

Terms to know...

- **Claim:** statement to be justified/proven/upheld
- **Reason:** the reasons, support, and evidence to support your claim
- **Warrant:** a stated or unstated belief, rule, or principle that underlies an argument
 - Audience must accept the warrant

Remember...

- Claims are supported with reasons. You can usually state a reason as a “because” clause attached to a claim statement.
- A “because” clause attached to a claim is an incomplete logical structure called an **enthymeme**. To complete the logical structure, the unstated assumptions (warrants) must be articulated.
- To serve as an effective starting point for the argument, this unstated assumption should be a belief, value, or principle that the audience grants or allows (warrant).

Enthymeme

- *After-school jobs are bad for teenagers because they take away study time.*
- Includes a claim with a reason expressed as a “because” clause. To render this enthymeme logically complete, you must supply an unstated assumption or a **warrant**.



CLAIM:

After-school jobs are bad
for teenagers.

REASON:

Because they take away
study time

WARRANT:

Loss of study time is bad.

After-school jobs are good for teenagers because they teach responsibility and time management.

CLAIM: After-school jobs are good for teenagers

REASON: Because they teach time responsibility and time management

WARRANT: Learning responsibility and time management is good.

Terms to know...

- **Claim:** statement to be justified/proven/upheld
- **Reason:** the reasons, support, and evidence to support your claim
- **Warrant:** a stated or unstated belief, rule, or principle that underlies an argument
 - Audience must accept the warrant
- To give body and weight to our arguments, we need:
 - **Grounds:** a statement, supporting evidence, facts, data that is established before an argument is begun
 - **Backing:** argument that supports the warrant

Grounds

- Grounds are the supporting evidence—data, facts, statistics, testimony, or examples—that cause you to make your claim. They are collectively all the evidence you use to support a reason.
- Grounds answers the question “How do you know?”

Backing

- Backing is the argument that supports the warrant, or underlying assumption.
- In some cases, successful arguments require just three components: a claim, a reason, and grounds. However, if the audience questions or doubts the warrant, the writer needs to provide support for that argument.

After-school jobs are bad for teenagers because they take away study time.

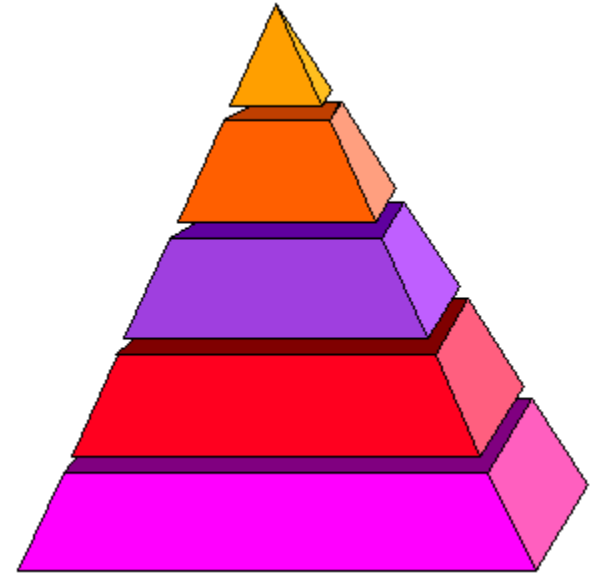
- **Grounds:** (jobs take away study time) data/evidence showing that after-school jobs take away study time (e.g., of teenagers who work late and don't study, statistics showing that teenagers with jobs study less than those without jobs, testimony from teachers that working students study less than those with jobs)

Backing for the warrant

- Argument showing why loss of study time is bad (it leads to lower grades, to inadequate preparation for college, to less enjoyment of school, to lower self-image as a student, etc.)

Organizing Your Argument

- Title
- Introduction
 - Thesis statement
- Body Paragraphs
 - Constructing Topic Sentences
 - Building Main Points
 - Countering the Opposition
- Conclusion





Title: Why You Need One

- Introduces the topic of discussion to the audience
- Generates reader interest in the argument



Creating a Title

- Try to grab attention by:
 - offering a provocative image
 - picking up on words or examples offered in the body or conclusion of the paper
 - asking a question
- Avoid titles that are too general or lack character



What is an Introduction?

- Acquaints the reader with the topic and purpose of the paper
- Generates the audience's interest in the topic
- Offers a plan for the ensuing argument:
 - Introduction:** Tell them what you're going to tell them
 - Body:** Tell them
 - Conclusion:** Tell them what you told them



Methods for Constructing an Introduction

- personal anecdote
- example-real or hypothetical
- question
- quotation
- shocking statistics
- striking image



What is a Thesis Statement?

- The MOST IMPORTANT SENTENCE in your paper
- Lets the reader know the main idea of the paper
- Answers the question: “What am I trying to prove?”
- Not a factual statement, but a claim that has to be proven throughout the paper



Body Paragraphs and Topic Sentences

- Body paragraphs build upon the claims made in the introductory paragraph(s).
- Organize with the use of topic sentences that illustrate the main idea of each paragraph.
- Offering a brief explanation of the history or recent developments of topic within the early body paragraphs can help the audience to become familiarized with your topic and the complexity of the issue.



Body Paragraphs

- Paragraphs may be ordered in several ways, depending upon the topic and purpose of your argument:
 - General to specific information
 - Most important point to least important point
 - Weakest claim to strongest claim



Offering a Counterargument

- Addressing the claims of the opposition is an important component in building a convincing argument.
- It demonstrates your credibility as a writer – you have researched multiple sides of the argument and have come to an informed decision.
- It shows you have considered other points of view – that other points of view are valid and reasonable.



Effective Counterarguments

- Consider your audience when you address the counterargument.
- Conceding to some of your opposition's concerns can demonstrate respect for their opinions.
- Remain tactful yet firm.
 - Using rude or deprecating language can cause your audience to reject your position without carefully considering your claims.



Placement of a Counterargument

- Counterarguments may be located at various locations within your body paragraphs.
- You may choose to:
 - build each of your main points as a contrast to oppositional claims.
 - offer a counterargument after you have articulated your main claims.



Research in Body Paragraphs

- Researched material can aid you in proving the claims of your argument and disproving oppositional claims.
- Be sure to use your research to support the claims made in your topic sentences – make your research work to prove your argument.



Conclusion

- Your conclusion should reemphasize the main points made in your paper.
- You may choose to reiterate a call to action or speculate on the future of your topic, when appropriate.
- Avoid raising new claims in your conclusion.

Introduction: Tell them what you're going to tell them

Body: Tell them

Conclusion: Tell them what you told them