

# CS 4001: Computing, Society & Professionalism



Munmun De Choudhury | Assistant Professor | School of Interactive Computing

## Week 2: Reading Arguments

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# What is an Argument?

- Argument is not a fight or a quarrel
  - It can be a pleasurable experience
- Argument is not pro-con debate
  - Think of it as a group of reasonable persons seeking the best solution to a problem

# What is an Argument?

- According to Richard Fulkerson:
  - “An argument is any set of two or more assertions in which one (or more) is claimed to offer support for another.”
- This means arguments are made up of propositions (assertions or claims)

# What is an Argument?

## Protect Our Kids



## Stop Toxic Imports

- Arguments can be explicit or implicit, so that it influences audience's stance on an issue
  - Psychological, cognitive impact, emotional response
- An explicit argument states directly controversial claims and supports them with reason and evidence
- An implicit argument doesn't look like an argument
  - It might be a song, poem, story, etc.

# Class Discussion



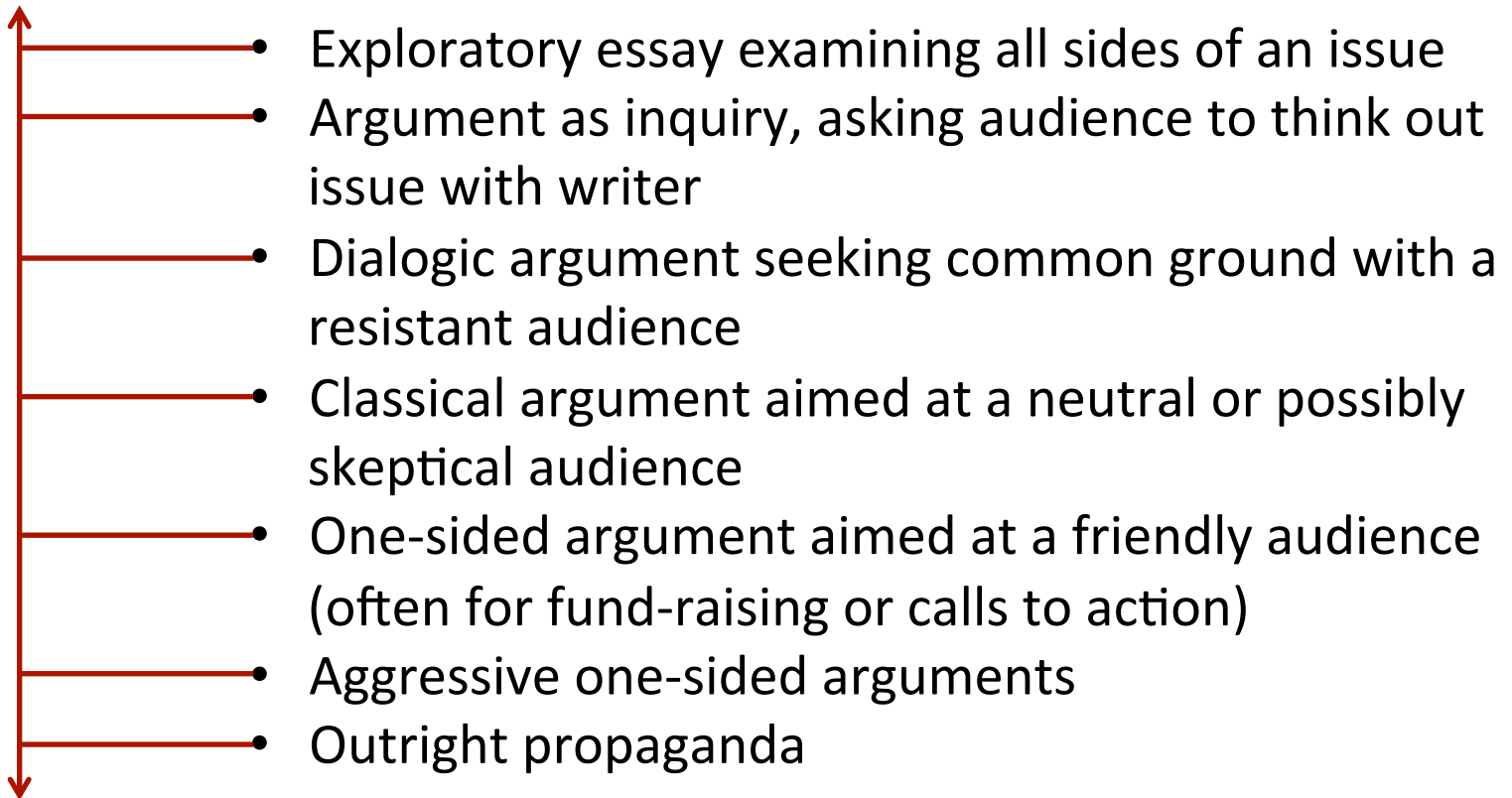
- What conversation does this argument join?
- What is the argument's claim?
- What is an opposing view?
- How does the argument try to do its work on the audience?

# Defining Features of an Argument

- Argument requires justification of its claims
  - It is not sufficient to simply give reasons without justification
  - Example of an argument between a teenager and a parent
- Argument is both a process and product
  - It is a “living” entity that changes the participants
- Argument combines truth seeking and persuasion
  - This is a continuum that we the participants must balance
  - A student’s argument on the topic “Is American Sign Language a foreign language for the purposes of meeting a university’s foreign language requirement?”

# The Continuum of Truth Seeking and Persuasion

Truth Seeking



Outright Propaganda

# What is the Purpose?

- The blend of truth seeking and persuasion asks the question, what are we trying to do?
  - Are we trying to get the best solution?
  - Or “win” the argument?
- Argument and the problem of truth
  - Sophists and Socrates – discover Truth through reasonable inquiry
  - There are multifaceted, competing perspectives or visions to truth
  - Truth needs to be negotiated; observe all available evidence



# Classroom Activity I: Role Playing Arguments

- “Social networking sites such as Facebook (FB) create conflicts between free speech and the reputations of people and institutions in the public domain” (pg. 16)
  - A student athlete who has been warned to remove FB photo showing partying/drinking alcohol
  - General students concerned about institutionally imposed restrictions on FB use
  - A faculty who has been libeled on a student’s FB page
  - A basketball coach who prevents their team from sharing personal information online
  - Athletics directors interested in buying tracking technology to monitor student athletes’ FB activity
  - A representative of ACLU who supports students’ free speech

# A Successful Way of Argumentation

- The well functioning committee
  - Dialog can lead to clarification in thinking
- Example – student seeking math course waiver (pg. 17)
- Definition issues
- Resemblance issues
- Cause/consequence issues
- Evaluation issues
- Proposal issues

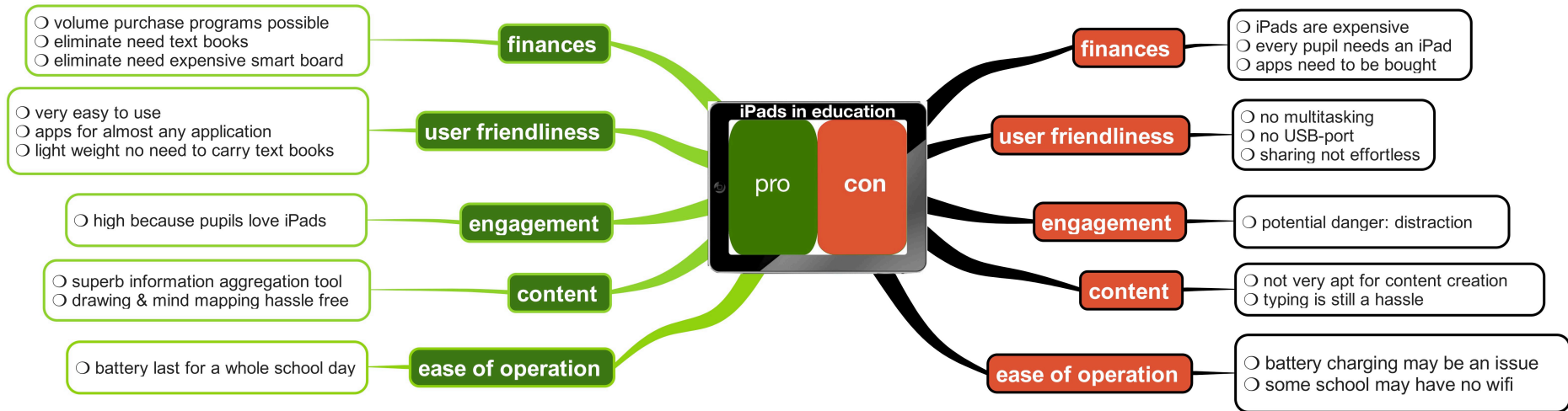
# Argument As Inquiry

- Finding Issues to Explore
  - Do some initial brainstorming (pg. 25)
  - Be open to the issues around you
- Explore ideas by:
  - Freewriting
  - Idea Mapping (pg. 29)
  - Playing the Believing and Doubting Game (pg. 29)
- Placing texts in a rhetorical context
  - Genres of argument
  - Cultural contexts – who writes the arguments and why, who is the audience, what is the motivation, what is the author's purpose, what is the source, writer's angle of vision

# The Believing and Doubting Game

- Reading as a believer
  - Always a good idea with research literature
  - Tearing something apart is trivial
- Reading as a doubter
  - Express skepticism
  - Look for what is NOT there as well as what is
  - Don't assume information sources/citations are proof
    - What does the cited item really say?
    - What are the credentials of people cited?

# iPads in Education – Pros and Cons



# Classroom Activity II: The Believing and Doubting Game

- How Facebook Makes Us Unhappy:
  - <http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/how-facebook-makes-us-unhappy>

# Genres of Argument

- Genre types:
  - Personal correspondence; Letter to editor; Newspaper editorial or op-ed; Magazine article; Scholarly journal (peer-reviewed); Conference proceedings; Organization white paper; Proposal; Legal briefs and court decisions; Public affairs advocacy advertisements; Advocacy websites; Blogs; Visual arguments; Speeches; Powerpoint presentations; Books; Documentary films
- Understand status of work in relation to genre
  - Understand stylistic features of each genre

# Dialectical Thinking

- Thinking dialectically – actively seek out alternate views
- Questions:
  - What would writer A say to writer B?
  - To what extent do writer A and writer B disagree about facts and interpretation of facts?
  - To what extent do they disagree about underlying beliefs and assumptions and values?
  - Can I find areas of agreement between them?
  - What new, significant questions does the text post for me?
  - After assimilating these information, what are my current views?
- Ways:
  - Effective discussion
  - Reading Logs
  - A formal exploratory essay – introduction, views/sources, conclusion