Week 2: Reading Arguments
January 17, 2017
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?

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.

Dr. Louis Sullivan, Secretary of HHS
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

- Exploratory essay examining all sides of an issue
- Argument as inquiry, asking audience to think out issue with writer
- Dialogic argument seeking common ground with a resistant audience
- Classical argument aimed at a neutral or possibly skeptical audience
- One-sided argument aimed at a friendly audience (often for fund-raising or calls to action)
- Aggressive one-sided arguments
- Outright propaganda

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
“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
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

**Pros**
- Volume purchase programs possible
- Eliminate need for textbooks
- Eliminate need for expensive smart board
- Very easy to use
- Apps for almost any application
- Lightweight, no need to carry textbooks
- High because pupils love iPads
- Superb information aggregation tool
- Drawing and mind mapping hassle-free
- Battery lasts for a whole school day

**Cons**
- iPads are expensive
- Every pupil needs an iPad
- Apps need to be bought
- No multitasking
- No USB-port
- Sharing not effortless
- Potential danger: distraction
- Not very apt for content creation
- Typing is still a hassle
- Battery charging may be an issue
- Some schools may have no wifi

**Finances**
- iPads are expensive
- Every pupil needs an iPad
- Apps need to be bought

**User Friendliness**
- No multitasking
- No USB-port
- Sharing not effortless

**Engagement**
- Potential danger: distraction
- Not very apt for content creation
- Typing is still a hassle

**Content**
- Battery charging may be an issue
- Some schools may have no wifi

**Ease of Operation**
- iPads are expensive
- Every pupil needs an iPad
- Apps need to be bought

**iPads in Education**
Classroom Activity II: The Believing and Doubting Game

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
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