

CS 4001: Computing, Society & Professionalism



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Week 2: Reading Arguments
January 15, 2019



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

It's Actually Possible to "Respectfully Disagree"



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.

What is an Argument?

Protect Our Kids



Stop Toxic Imports

- Looking at explicit arguments, you know right away what the argument is about and what viewpoint is; the argument is usually written out.
 - An example of this type of argument is when people argue out their views and it is usually like a debate.
- Implicit arguments are also similar to explicit arguments because they try to persuade others to take a certain point of view.
 - They don't come right out and tell what you should think, but there are hidden and underlying messages to them.

Genres of Argument

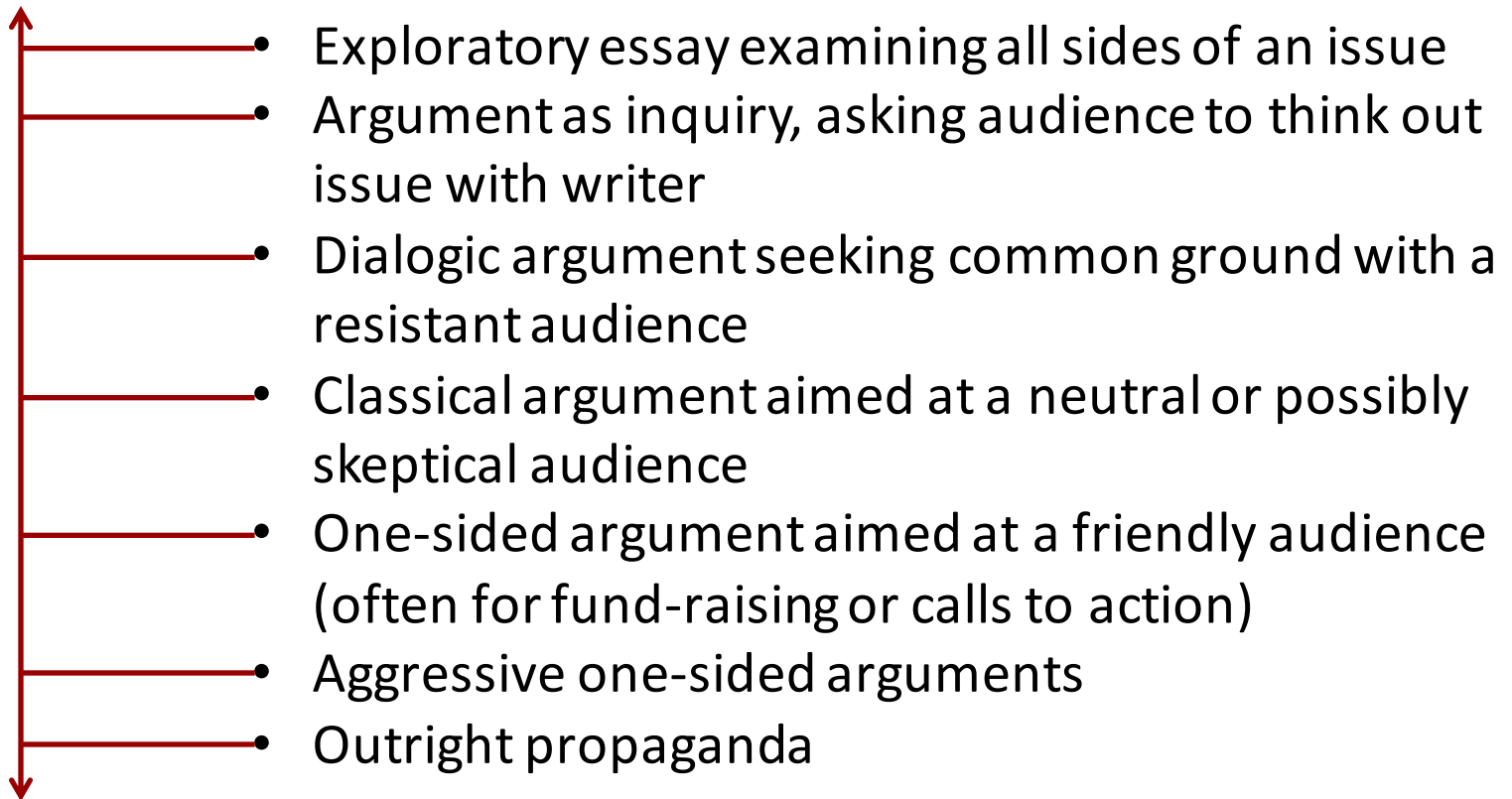
- Genre types:
 - Personal correspondence; Letter to editor; Newspaper editorial or op-ed; Magazine article; Scholarly journal (peer-reviewed); Conference proceedings; Organization white paper; Proposal; Legal briefs and court decisions; Public affairs advocacy advertisements; Advocacy websites; Blogs;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

Defining Features of an Argument

- Argument requires justification of its claims
 - It is not sufficient to simply give reasons without justification
- 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

The Continuum of Truth Seeking and Persuasion

Truth Seeking

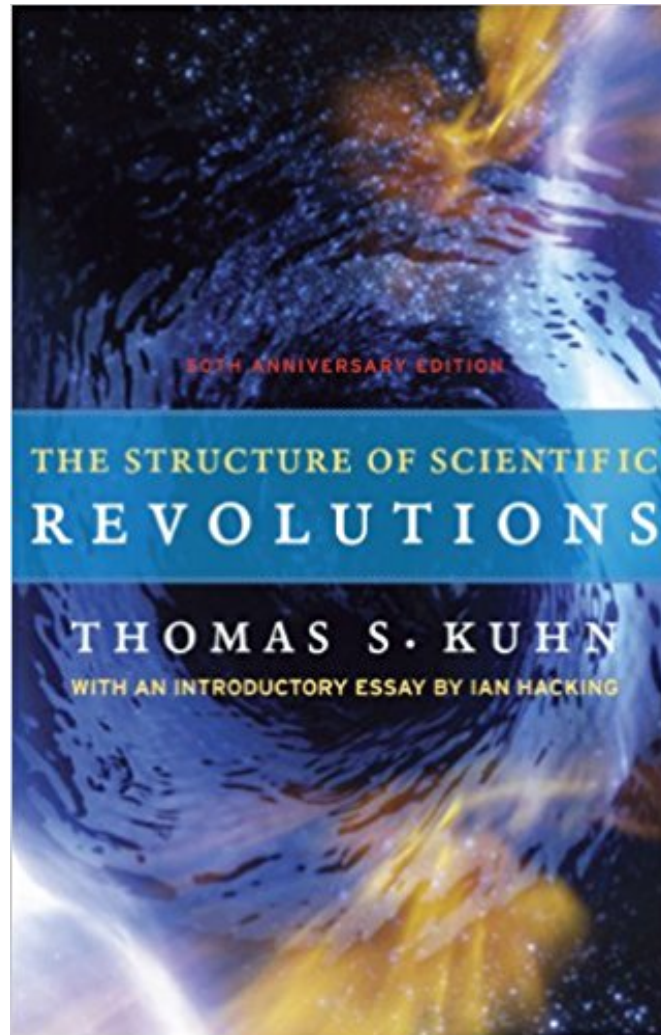


Outright Propaganda

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

Truth is negotiated



Class Activity 1a



- What conversation does this argument join?
- What is the argument's claim?
- How does the argument try to do to persuade its audience?
- How effective is this argument in making its claim? Why?

Class Activity 1b

- What conversation does this argument join?
- What is the argument's claim?
- How does the argument try to do to persuade its audience?
- How effective is this argument in making its claim? Why?

PASS THIS BILL
SO THOUSANDS MORE WON'T PASS AWAY.

CAUSE OF DEATH: PANCREATIC CANCER
COMMENTS: 181,380 Americans died in the last five years.
6% SURVIVAL RATE.
MEDICAL EXAMINER

AFTER FIVE YEARS AND OVERWHELMING BIPARTISAN SUPPORT, IT'S TIME TO PASS THE PANCREATIC CANCER RESEARCH & EDUCATION ACT (S.362/H.R.733).

A Successful Way of Argumentation

- You can argue adopting any of these angles
 - Definition issues
 - Resemblance issues
 - Cause/consequence issues
 - Evaluation issues
 - Proposal issues

Classroom Activity 2: 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” (WA: pg. 16)

Class Activity 2: Role Playing Arguments

➤ Roles

- 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
- Athletics directors interested in buying tracking technology to monitor student athletes' FB activity
- A representative of ACLU who supports students' free speech
- The Dean of Students who is concerned for the reputation of the institution and for the future well-being of students who might be embarrassed by current postings or endangered by disclosing too much personal information

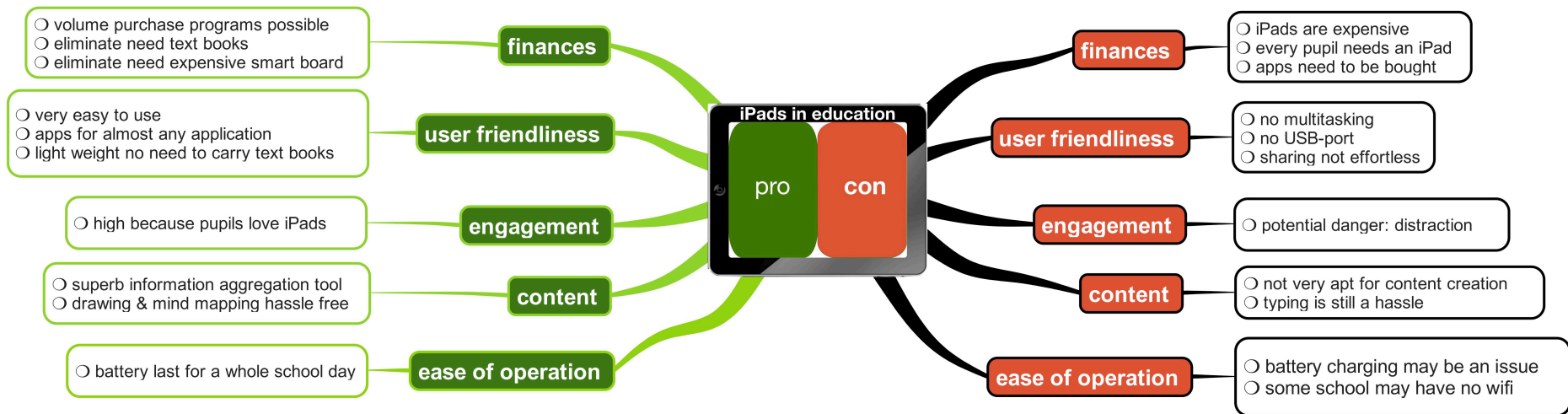
Argument As Inquiry

- Finding Issues to Explore
 - Do some initial brainstorming
 - Be open to the issues around you
- Explore ideas by:
 - Freewriting
 - Idea Mapping (pg. 29)
 - Playing the Believing and Doubting Game (pg. 29)

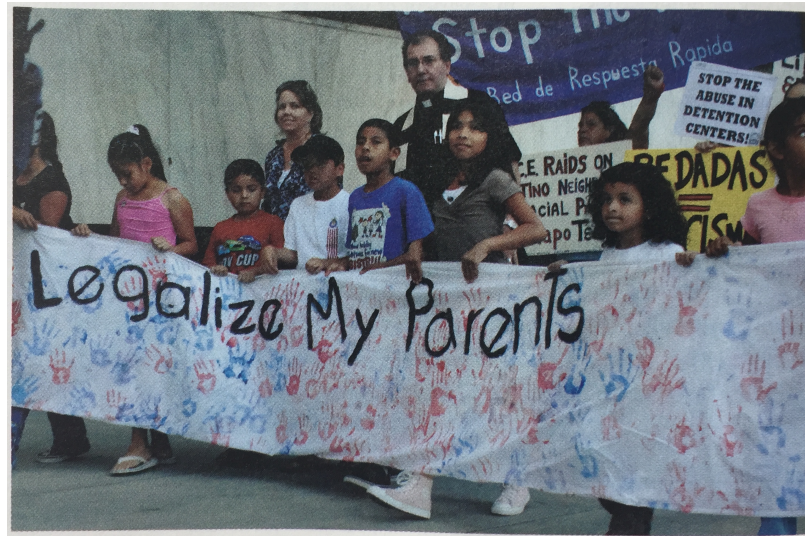
Brainstorming for developing an argument

- Make an inventory of the communities that are relevant to the issue
- Identify controversies within those communities
- Narrow your list to a handful of problematic issues for which you don't have a position; share it with others
- Brainstorm a network of related issues

iPads in Education – Pros and Cons



Class Activity 3: Brainstorming arguments



The Believing and Doubting Game

- Reading as a **believer**
 - Always a good idea with research literature
 - Tearing something apart is trivial
- Practice “empathic listening” (see the world through the author’s eyes).
 - requires putting aside your own viewpoint for the moment

The Believing and Doubting Game

- Reading as a **doubter**
 - Express skepticism
 - Look for what is NOT there as well as what is
 - Don't assume information sources/citations are fool proof
 - What does the cited item really say?
 - What are the credentials of people cited?
 - What bias is being brought forward?
 - Are alternatives ignored?

Class Activity 4: The Believing and Doubting Game

➤ How Facebook Makes Us Unhappy:

➤ <http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/how-facebook-makes-us-unhappy>

Make sense of an argument

- Placing arguments 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

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

Consider Alternative Views and Analyze Sources of Disagreement

- Because an argument involves two or more conflicting assertions, be sure to consider the important disagreements.
- Disagreements may be about facts or reality.
 - “Facts” are often not the empirical facts of science, but are often contested.
- Disagreements may be about values, beliefs, or assumptions.
 - For example, sometimes these disagreements may manifest themselves as disagreements about definitions (e.g., what is pornography or what is a minority).

Using Disagreement Productively to Prompt Further Investigation

- Both a strategy for reading arguments and a bridge towards constructing your own arguments.
 - Identify sources of facts and more complete versions of alternative (and the current) views.
 - Determine what values are at stake in the issue and articulate your own values.
 - Consider ways to synthesize alternative views.