

**COM 203: Argument and Analysis**  
**Fall 2014**  
**Dr. Robert C. Swieringa**  
**Grand Valley State University**

**TEXTBOOK:**

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

**ADDITIONAL READINGS:**

Scudder, S. 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, D. J. (1977). Two concepts of argument. *Journal of the American Forensic Association, 13*, 121-128.

Brockriede, W., & Ehninger, D. (1960). Toulmin on argument: An interpretation and application. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 46*, 44-53.

Wenzel, J. 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, R. (1994). Zen in the art of writing. In *Zen in the art of writing*. Santa Barbara, CA: Joshua Odell Editions.

Weal, B. 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. define, compare and develop definitions of argument;
2. identify, describe and create claims of different kinds (fact, policy, value) and their supports;
3. distinguish weaknesses and fallacies in argument;
4. describe, compare and explore argument analysis from each of three perspectives: logical, rhetorical and dialectical;
5. critique and respond to argument positions.

## 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:

Week	Assign't	Topic	Reading
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 II: Process	Considering writing processes	Bradbury (1994)
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	--
14		The Technical Community: Argument crossing boundaries	Ch. 15-Campbell
			--
15		Discussion continued	"
	Essay 2	Closing: What to do with argument?	--
16		Final Exam	--