CENGAGE

Third Edition

HARRY PHILLIPS
PATRICIA BOSTIAN

The Purposeful Argument

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

The Purposeful Argument:
A Practical Guide

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Third Edition

Harry R. Phillips

Patricia Bostian

Central Piedmont Community College

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***The Purposeful Argument: A Practical Guide*, Third Edition**
Harry Phillips, Patricia Bostian

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Cover Image: iStock.com/A-digit

Compositor: MPS Limited

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019911091

Student Edition:
ISBN-13: 978-0-357-13866-3
ISBN-10: 0-357-13866-3

Loose-leaf Edition:
ISBN: 978-0-357-13867-0

Cengage
200 Pier 4 Boulevard
Boston, MA 02210
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Printed in the United States of America
Print Number: 01 Print Year: 2019

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PREFACE

Purpose

This third edition of *The Purposeful Argument* delivers the essentials of argumentative writing in accessible, student-friendly language. The textbook allows writers to recognize where argument fits in their lives and how it can be a practical response both to the issues in everyday life and to academic and intellectual problems encountered in the classroom. In this way, the text meets student writers on their own terms, in their own lives, and demands that they determine what they argue about. Changes to this new edition reflect the suggestions of our students and those of veteran teachers of argument, who are sensitive to what makes a textbook genuinely useful.

The philosophical center of *The Purposeful Argument* rests with John Dewey's notion that public education can best serve a democratic culture when it connects classroom with community and by thinking of the class-room as a laboratory for intelligent democratic activity. Building on this idea, those who argue competently can become the lifeblood of local action and change. Put another way, a nation, state, or community that does not engage purposefully in regular discussion and informed argument cannot fulfill itself.

Accessibility is central to the purpose of this project, and this third edition includes a streamlining of many features of the textbook. From many students' perspectives, some current argument texts are dense and filled with examples apart from their worlds. In response to these concerns, *The Purposeful Argument* relies less on discussion via traditional academic language to get across a concept and more on cogent definition, explicit example, and practical exercises that guide student writers through the process of assembling an argument. Examples of student, local, and professional writing are in many cases annotated and color-coded so as to identify elements of argument structure.

From another perspective, *The Purposeful Argument* puts in place the groundwork for student writers to create possibilities for themselves in a culture that demands more and more from its citizens. When so much of what we encounter has to do with the lure of consumption, and when so much of our national discourse is riveted to economic conditions, job security, and terror and intervention, it can be tough for freshman writers to

think of themselves as agents capable of meaningful change. But at its core, *The Purposeful Argument* argues this very position. In its purest moment, this guide enables student writers to establish rhetorical places for themselves that ideally can reinvigorate our democracy via responsible citizenship. Because communication is less local in advanced industrial nations, this project invites a return to a more traditional form of democratic participation with its attention to local engagement. And local engagement can begin with a writer's commitment to the idea that the private responsibility to argue is essential to the public good.

With this emphasis on local engagement, we have noticed stronger, more focused arguments in the past several years. In general, when students are encouraged to honor and respond to issues that matter to them, their investment becomes evident and their writing, purposeful. This kind of ownership, we believe, results from an approach that steers writers into issues originating in the larger worlds of political, economic, and social issues as well as into their own worlds and concerns. With some students, this means arguing on issues that are solidly academic and intellectual in nature; with others, it means tackling issues of immediate concern in everyday life. Thus, compelling writing has emerged on issues as varied as the U. S. Supreme Court's ruling on corporate personhood, student loan requirements, China's behavior at the climate change conference in Copenhagen, favoritism in the workplace, recent health care reform and its implications for students, social networking and employment, religious values and curriculum design in Texas, and American consumers' role in the mining of "conflict minerals" in the Republic of the Congo.

A central focus of *The Purposeful Argument* is our intention to write to our specific audience—first-year writers—and this means delivering the fundamentals of argument to many nontraditional students, to nonnative speakers of English, to parents, to students who work one or more jobs, often in excess of the traditional work week, and to students who may or may not have experience with conceptual material and its application in their academic careers. This book is structured to accommodate our students and the diverse life experience they bring to our classrooms. Following are features of *The Purposeful Argument* that, in our view, distinguish it from the many excellent argument textbooks currently on the market—textbooks that may, however, fall outside the lines of accessibility and usefulness to many college students.

Organization and Chapter Flow

Part One of this guide attends to how effective arguments work. Chapter 1 introduces readers to essential features of argument and their interrelatedness. The chapter's sections move students into thinking about argument as a practical response to both everyday and academic issues and briefly introduce them to the types of argument found in the book. In Chapter 2, the crucial

need to separate issue from topic is treated early. As a way to recognize issues and where they arise, this chapter identifies communities we belong to and some issues within these communities. The chapter offers numerous prompts and strategies for exploring an issue, such as prewriting activities that help students make a topic they might initially see as "boring" interesting to them and their readers. Audience focus, emphasized throughout the chapters, is introduced here, and students are presented with practical ways to determine appropriate audiences for their arguments. Arguing at the right time and establishing credibility fill out this chapter.

Part Two begins with the essential work of building clear context for an issue, the focus of Chapter 3. It is here that students are introduced to sources and how to access and use them. We choose to bring in the research process earlier rather than later because building a knowledge base often can enlarge the way we think about an issue, and this can influence what a writer claims and the way an argument is structured. Chapter 4 is geared toward the important work of using resources and how to read and evaluate them critically. As well, this chapter is a primer for working responsibly with borrowed material and ideas. Learning how to recognize and avoid fallacies is the center of Chapter 5. This chapter organizes fallacies—common in advertising and politics—into categories of choice, support, emotion, and inconsistency. Chapter 6 is devoted to the opposition, why it matters, how to work responsibly with it, and finding points of overlap. This chapter, we feel, adds to conventional approaches to opposing points of view.

Part Three treats the how-to of argument building. Chapter 7 helps students develop their argument strategies based on definitions, causes or consequences, comparisons, solution proposals, and evaluations, concluding with a rubric for preparing an exploratory essay. Discussion of Toulmin-based argument makes up Chapter 8. Chapter 9 introduces Rogerian argument, in addition to two less traditional approaches to argument in American classrooms: Middle Ground and Microhistory. We are enthusiastic about students learning to argue from a middle-ground perspective, as this approach insists on a close knowledge of audience and opposition. The middle-ground approach has, in the past few years, been popular among writers looking to escape either–or thinking and instead craft practical positions on complex issues. We are equally enthusiastic about a fourth kind of argument discussed in this chapter—an argument based on a microhistory—where writers work with primary documents and then forge a position apart from conventional understanding of the period in which these documents originate. Chapter 10 is about building arguments. It is example-rich and orients writers to the building blocks of argument—claims, reasons, qualifiers, support, the warrant, backing, and audience reservations. We view this chapter as one writers will use frequently during the drafting process. We elaborate in Chapter 11 on how to use support effectively, and this involves establishing writer credibility, specific appeals to audience, and a rubric for evaluating support brought to an argument.

Part Five is centered in the ideal of ownership, that is, in ways writers can make arguments distinctly their own. Chapter 12 is a discussion of how writers can vary their approaches to an audience using visuals. And Chapter 13 is devoted to writing style and editing. While material in this final chapter is typically relegated to textbooks designed for earlier writing courses, we present this material in the context of argument writing as what we feel are necessary refreshers.

All chapters in Parts One through Four begin with a narrative that describes a real-life issue and conclude with a "Keeping It Local" exercise, pointing out that argument is a practical way to negotiate purposefully issues in everyday and academic life.

Part Five is an anthology of arguments written by everyday people who have stakes in local issues and by professional writers whose commentary on a given issue can provide a larger critical frame. Arguments are followed by questions tied to argument structure, audience, comprehension, and ways to connect concerns in the local community with the broader geopolitical culture. Another level of questions prompts students to acknowledge issues in their own lives that are the same or similar to issues found in the readings.

Part Six is devoted to MLA and APA documentation systems. For each system, guidelines and examples are provided. The important work of documenting carefully material borrowed from other writers and sources is addressed in this section.

New Features

- Many new essays in the anthology, Part Five, demonstrate how contemporary writers build arguments in response to specific issues affecting the seven communities addressed in *The Purposeful Argument*: school, the workplace, family, neighborhood, social-cultural, consumer, and concerned citizen.
- Part Six, MLA and APA Documentation Systems, now contains a complete APA student essay to accompany the annotated MLA student essay.
- Classic American Arguments anthology has been moved to the e-book/MindTap.

Key Features

- Writers are encouraged to argue in response to issues in their everyday and academic environments—school, the workplace, family, neighborhood, social-cultural, consumer, and concerned citizen—and thus learn how argument can become an essential negotiating skill in their lives. This book emphasizes local and intellectual issues throughout and provides a methodology for connecting the local with global trends. Importantly, this allows writers to build a strong understanding of an issue by generating broad context.

- Argument structure is presented in practical, how-to ways, complete with exercises, charts, and real-life examples. Ways to organize an argument—Toulmin-based, Rogerian, Middle Ground, and Microhistory options—are fully defined and demonstrated.
- Simplified text format and page layout improve upon conventional argument textbook design by making information direct and accessible.
- Checklists throughout *The Purposeful Argument* provide support for writers as they craft their own arguments.
- Annotated examples of effective arguments illustrate strengths and weaknesses.
- "Your Turn" exercises consist of questions and prompts so that writers can apply argument structure to arguments they are building. "Internet Activity" prompts direct writers to online investigations that connect to the research process.
- "Tips" panels typically are clues for ways of thinking about a feature of argument during the planning process.
- Key terms are bolded throughout the text. A Glossary related to practical argument provides an alphabetized reference for these and other terms found in *The Purposeful Argument*. A term is defined with regard to its function and placement in an argument.

The Online Program

MindTap English for Phillips/Bostian, *The Purposeful Argument,* is the digital learning solution that gives you complete control of your course—to provide engaging content, challenge every individual, and build students' confidence. MindTap increases student engagement via peer modeling of critical thinking and writing practices, tutorials on four types of arguments, and immediate feedback on students' responses to auto-graded activities.

MindTap gives you complete ownership of your content and learning experience. You can add your own comments to the e-book and your own materials to the learning path. You can move, rename, and delete content to ensure that your course is exactly how you want it. An easy-to-use paper management system helps you prevent plagiarism and allows electronic submission, grading, and peer review. Visual analytics track your students' progress and engagement.

MindTap extends the instruction in the book/e-book with end-of-chapter activities, brand-new tutorials on four types of argument, videos of students working through argument assignments, and additional student and professional readings.

- **New "Argument Tutorials" on Toulmin, Rogerian, Middle-Ground, and Microhistory arguments.** The extensive tutorial on Toulmin argument includes four short video presentations of concepts, interspersed with auto-graded activities that give students step-by-step

help in applying Toulmin. Students can use the "Grade It Now" function in the auto-graded activities to get immediate feedback on their responses. Every activity includes three versions in order to give all students the opportunity to succeed. Slightly shorter tutorials on the other three types of argument follow the same pattern.

- **New "Students Working on Arguments" videos.** Nine new videos showcase reading critically, investigating the rhetorical situation, developing an argument, synthesizing diverse perspectives, revising logical fallacies, using research in argument, investigating the source of information, evaluating a format to determine if a source is "fake news," and determining the expertise of an author.
- **New "Collaborative Activities" after every chapter.** Each activity for pairs, groups, and the whole class is followed by a Reflection question that individual students can submit in order to demonstrate what they have learned.
- **Revised "Review Activities" after each chapter.** These auto-graded activities provide a comprehension check and a first opportunity to apply chapter concepts. Immediate feedback is available, and each activity includes three versions to give students the best chance to succeed.
- **New "Annotated Student Readings with Discussion Questions."** Nine student papers are annotated to demonstrate aspects of argument; they are followed by discussion questions.
- **New "Professional Readings with Discussion Questions."** To supplement the professional readings in Part 5 of the book/e-book, 18 additional readings on contemporary topics are provided. Discussion questions follow.
- **"How-to Research Video Activities."** 50 video activities on particular aspects of the research-writing process.
- **"Auto-Graded Activities."** 75+ auto-graded activities on the writing process, essay structure, documentation, grammar, and more.
- **"Just in Time Plus,"** a set of tutorials that provide extra help on 21 foundational topics. Each topic includes a video tutorial, two to four pages of textual instruction, and an auto-graded activity. A diagnostic test helps you determine who needs instruction on specific topics and which topics to discuss in class. A posttest allows you to evaluate students' progress at semester's end.
- **"Resources for Teaching"** provides support materials to help you plan and teach your course. A video demonstrates how to customize your MindTap course. In the Instructor's Manual, author Patricia Bostian shares sample syllabi, assignment rubrics, chapter-by-chapter resources, and questions to jump-start discussions. An Educator's Guide demonstrates how to use activities in MindTap to enrich your course.

Empower your students to accelerate their progress with MindTap.

- The instructor's manual provides course-specific organization tools and classroom strategies, including sample syllabi, designs for mapping the course, assignment flow, ways to utilize the book, suggestions for teaching the course online, and ways to best use electronic resources. The center of the guide is a series of rubrics and exercises that can be adapted to an instructor's work with each chapter.

In sum, *The Purposeful Argument* is a student-centered approach to argument. It is a guide that lets students determine how they can use argument in life and equips them with a concrete, how-to approach. It lets instructors play to their strengths by letting writers work with their strengths—their investment in issues that matter to them in daily and classroom life. From the beginning, the text presents argument in ways that can empower and enable writers to publicly validate what most concerns them.

The Purposeful Argument is designed to complement and not overwhelm. The language of *The Purposeful Argument* is friendly and direct. Short, concise paragraphs are the rule; paragraphs are followed immediately by real-life examples, checklists, charts, rubrics, exercises, and sample student writings.

Competent, informed argument is as important today in American life as it was during other crucial periods in our history. It was and is a way to be heard and, when conditions permit, to be granted a seat at the discussion table. While public memory has shaped the way we view extraordinary moments in our past—indigenous peoples' fate at the hands of colonizers and an aggressive government, debates over sacred and secular ideals, arguments for political independence, the rhetoric of abolition and women's rights movements, the voice of labor, and the Civil Rights Movement—it is crucial to remember that, in addition to the arguments of accomplished writers, activists, and orators associated with these moments, a turbulence of voices was audible. These were the sounds of everyday people moving the culture forward. Without their contributions, the figures we celebrate now would be footnotes only. The voice of the individual *does* matter. If we choose not to speak up, others will make decisions for us.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to the many individuals at Cengage for their help with this edition: Nancy Tran, Product Manager; Leslie Taggart, Learning Designer, Anne Alexander and Breanna Robbins, Subject Matter Experts; Kathy Sands-Boehmer, Content Manager; Lizz Anderson, Designer; Tran Pham, Product Assistant; Ann Hoffman, IP Analyst; Betsy Hathaway, IP Project Manager; Camille Beckman, Associate Market Development Manager; and Kina Lara, Marketing Manager.

The astute reviewers for the third edition helped us identify ways to improve our online program. We are grateful for their insight:

Kerry L. Beckford
Tunxis Community College

Conrad A. Davies, Sr.
University of Kentucky

Ana de La Serna
California State University, Dominguez Hills

Lisa M. Russell
Georgia Northwestern Technical College

We'd also like to thank reviewers from previous editions:

James Allen
College of DuPage

Marsha Anderson
Wharton County Jr. College

Lynnette Beers-McCormick
Santiago Canyon College

Laura Black
Volunteer State Community College

Mary Chen
Tacoma Community College

Kathleen Doherty
Middlesex Community College

Cassie Falke
East Texas Baptist University

Karen Golightly
Christian Brothers University

Nate Gordon
Kishwaukee College

Lauren Hahn
DePaul University

Betty Hart
The University of Southern Indiana

Erik Juergensmeyer
Fort Lewis College

Lindsay Lewan
Arapahoe Community College

Theodore Matula
University of San Francisco

Mandy McDougal
Volunteer State CC

Gary Montano
Tarrant County College

Elizabeth Oldfield
Southeastern Community College

M. Whitney Olsen
Arizona State University

Amy Ratto Park
University of Montana

Deborah Ruth
Owensboro Community and Technical College

Dan Sullivan
Davenport University

Robert Williams
Grossmont College

We also wish to thank members of the Advisory Review Board and more than 65 reviewers and focus group participants who contributed steadily to the first edition. Their thoughtful feedback allowed us to refine and improve a range of chapter-specific features of this textbook.

Susan Achziger
Community College of Aurora

Kara Alexander
Baylor University

Steve Anderson
Normandale Community College

Sonja Andrus
Collin College

Joseph Antinarella
Tidewater Community College

Brad Beachy
Butler Community College

Evelyn Beck
Piedmont Technical College

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Tacoma Community College

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Keiser College, Melbourne Campus

Jennifer Courtney
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Susan Davis
Arizona State University

James Decker
Illinois Central College

Tamra DiBenedetto
Riverside Community College

Connie Duke
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Keri Dutkiewicz
Davenport University

Sarah M. Eichelman
Walters State Community College

Gareth Euridge
Tallahassee Community College

Jane Focht-Hansen
San Antonio College

MacGregor Frank
Guilford Technical Community College

Richard Gilbert
Benedictine University of Illinois

Nate Gordon
Kishwaukee College

Virginia Grant
Gaston College

Valerie Grey
Portland Community College

Annette Hale
Motlow State Community College (McMinnville Center)

Pamela Herring
Southwest Texas Junior College

Cheryl Huff
Germanna Community College

Sue Hum
University of Texas at San Antonio

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Our Lady of the Lake University

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Mt Hood Community College

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Bergen Community College

Melinda McBee
Grayson County College

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Florida Gulf Coast University

Jeanne McDonald
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McLennan Community College

Richard Middleton-Kaplan
Harper College

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Tarrant County College

Jennifer Mooney
Wharton County Junior College

Vicki Moulson
College of the Albemarle

Andrea Muldoon
University of Wisconsin-Stout

Mary Huyck Mulka
Minnesota State University Moorhead

Lana Myers
Lone Star College

Marguerite Newcomb
University of Texas–San Antonio

Troy Nordman
Butler Community College

Eden Pearson
Des Moines Area Community College

Jason Pickavance
Salt Lake Community College

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Jeff Pruchnic
Wayne State University

Esther Quantrill
Blinn College

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Arthur Rankin
Louisiana State University at Alexandria

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Lone Star College

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Roanoke College

Karin Russell
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Debbie Ruth
Owensboro Community & Technical College

Jamie Sadler
Richmond Community College

John Schaffer
Blinn College

Dixie Shaw-Tillmon
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Suba Subbarao
Oakland Community College

Daniel Sullivan
Davenport University

Susan Swanson
Owensboro Community and Technical College

Paul Van Heuklom
Lincoln Land Community College

Angie Williams-Chehmani
Davenport University

Will Zhang
Des Moines Area Community College

Traci Zimmerman
James Madison University

Harry Phillips would like to thank Aron Keesbury, formerly acquisitions editor at Thomson Publishing for his steady encouragement and insightful feedback during the early stages of this project.

Patricia K. Bostian would like to thank her wonderful family for their generous support, particularly her husband Brad for his many wonderful textbook ideas, and her children Wyndham and Rhiannon for allowing her to talk about her ideas with them.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the steady interest our students have shown in argumentative writing over the last 15 years. In truth, it was their authentic interest in the course and their recognition that argument could serve them in daily life that fueled original interest in this project. As teachers, the course inspired us to regularly refine our approaches and, mostly, to listen closely to student writers who sensed, perhaps for the first time, that their private concerns could influence public thinking and decision making. In particular, we are grateful to Linda Gonzalez, Blaine Schmidt, and Ben Szany, among other students, for their willingness to contribute arguments to this textbook.

Harry R. Phillips

Patricia Bostian

PART ONE

How to Approach Argument in Real Life

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CHAPTER 1

Argue With a Purpose

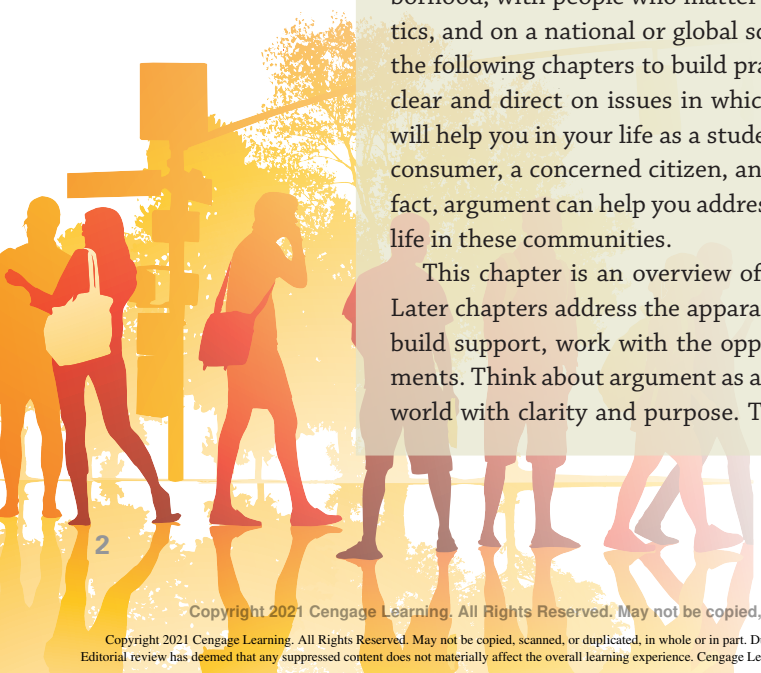
Learning Objectives

By working through this chapter, you will be able to

- define argument.
- explain the purposes of argument.
- identify context for an issue via the research process.
- identify why arguments break down.
- determine an appropriate argument type for an argument's purpose.
- form an argument about an issue that matters to you.

This text introduces you to argument and how to use it in response to everyday issues—at school, in the workplace, at home, in your neighborhood, with people who matter to you, in the swirl of community politics, and on a national or global scale. You will be able to use the tools in the following chapters to build practical arguments that make your voice clear and direct on issues in which you have a stake. Skills in argument will help you in your life as a student, a member of the local labor force, a consumer, a concerned citizen, and perhaps a parent and homeowner; in fact, argument can help you address all of the many issues associated with life in these communities.

This chapter is an overview of the nature and purpose of argument. Later chapters address the apparatus of argument—how to craft a claim, build support, work with the opposition, and build other structural elements. Think about argument as a set of tools that lets you negotiate your world with clarity and purpose. The skills you take away from this text,



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and the work required to complete a class in argument, can transfer to the real world. You may simply be responding to short-term assignments, but in doing so, you will learn to build sound arguments—a skill that will be useful long after your final class project is turned in.

What Argument Is and What Argument Is Not

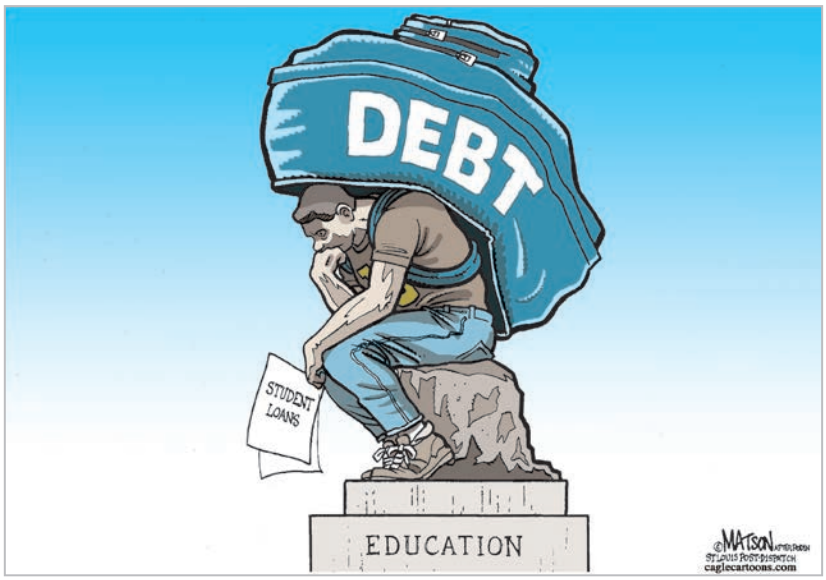
You are arguing when you claim a point of view on an issue, defend your claim with different kinds of support, and respond fairly to those with differing points of view. Argument is useful when you want to persuade others (decision-makers, fellow classmates, coworkers, a community agency or organization, a special interest group, elected representatives, business leaders, or an individual) to take seriously your point of view; when you want to find out more about something that matters to you; and when you want to establish areas of common interest among different positions. With nearly all arguments, it is essential to establish a clear context for your issue and to have a target audience.

Argument is not about putting yourself in uncomfortable, win–lose, either–or situations. It is not about fighting or trying to shame someone who holds a different point of view. Some people associate argument with anger, raised voices, and emotional outbursts. But when these people behave in competitive, angry, and overly emotional ways, communication is often sealed off and the people involved become alienated from one another. This is not the aim of argument. Argument creates a space where we can listen to each other.

The following essay by Thomas Frank is excerpted from "The Price of Admission." The full essay appears in the June 2012 issue of *Harper's*, a magazine that began publication in 1850 and today treats a wide range of issues in literature, politics, culture, finance, and the arts. In the essay, Frank includes a claim, various levels of support, and efforts to build his credibility as one taking a position on the issue of college tuition. Missing from the excerpt, but present in the longer essay, are attention to the opposition, reasons that support the claim, and a warrant, that is, attention to the values that motivate the writer to argue on this issue. The essay is accompanied by an editorial cartoon by R.J. Matson (see Figure 1.1).

Excerpt from "The Price of Admission"

by Thomas Frank



RJ Matson/Caglecartoons.com

Figure 1.1 Editorial cartoon by R.J. Matson

Massive indebtedness changes a person, maybe even more than a college education does, and it's reasonable to suspect that the politicos who have allowed the tuition disaster to take its course know this. To saddle young people with enormous, inescapable debt — total student debt is now more than one trillion dollars — is ultimately to transform them into profit-maximizing machines. I mean, working as a schoolteacher or an editorial assistant at a publishing house isn't going to help you chip away at that forty grand you owe. You can't get out of it by

bankruptcy, either. And our political leaders, lost in a fantasy of punitive individualism, certainly won't propose the bailout measures they could take to rescue the young from the crushing burden.

What will happen to the young debtors instead is that they will become *Homo economicus*, whether or not they studied that noble creature. David Graeber, the anthropologist who wrote the soon-to-be-classic *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, likens the process to a horror movie, in which the zombies or the vampires attack the humans as a kind of recruitment policy. "They turn you into one of them," as Graeber told me.

Actually, they do worse than that. Graeber relates the story of a woman he met who got a Ph.D. from Columbia University, but whose $80,000 debt load put an academic career off-limits, since adjuncts earn close to nothing. Instead, the woman wound up working as an escort for Wall Street types. "Here's someone who ought to be a professor," Graeber explains, "doing sexual services for the guys who lent her the money."

The story hit home for me, because I, too, wanted to be a professor once. I remember the waves of enlightenment that washed over me in my first few years in college, the ecstasy of finally beginning to understand what moved human affairs this way or that, the exciting sense of a generation arriving at a shared sensibility. Oh, I might have gone on doing that kind of work forever, whether or not it made me rich, if journalism had not intervened.

It's hard to find that kind of ecstasy among the current crop of college graduates. The sensibility shared by their generation seems to revolve around student debt, which has been clamped onto them like some sort of interest-bearing iron maiden. They've been screwed — that's what their moment of enlightenment has taught them.

As for my own cohort, or at least the members of it who struggled through and made it to one of the coveted positions in the knowledge factory, the new generational feeling seems to be one of disgust. Our enthusiasm for learning, which we trumpeted to the world, merely led the nation's children into debt bondage. Consider the remarks of Nicholas Mirzoeff, a professor of media at New York University, who sums up the diminishing returns of the profession on his blog: "I used to say that in academia one at least did very little harm. Now I feel like a pimp for loan sharks."

Analyze this Reading

1. What is the writer's claim, the position the writer takes in response to the issue of student debt?
2. Identify examples the writer uses to support his claim.
3. How does the writer establish his credibility; that is, how does he build trust with readers regarding his competence to take a stand on this issue?

Respond to this Reading

1. The writer contends that political leaders won't make the effort to bail out today's college students from debt. Do you favor a legislative bailout? Explain, and if you don't favor such a bailout, what claim would you make to address the student debt problem?
2. What is your relationship to education and debt? What examples would you use to demonstrate this relationship?
3. If you were to argue on this issue, at what target audience would you aim? Would your audience be officials at your college, your state legislators, your peers, or the members of your community? Explain.

Recognize Where Argument Is Appropriate in Real Life

You'll get to know this guide as a student in a class, one class among many that you need to complete as you move toward your degree, but there is another, equally important way to think about your work with argument—the set of skills you'll acquire and take with you when class is over. Make these skills serve what matters to you, in and beyond the classroom. Whether it's a small group of coworkers, the author of a scholarly article, your local parent–teacher organization, the editor of an online magazine, a car mechanic, or the billing agency for your cell phone or broadband service, you'll have a better chance of being taken seriously when you support your point of view with credible information delivered through a variety of logical, ethical, and emotional appeals.

Vital issues in our lives occur both in the academic world and in the swirl of everyday life. When you have a clear point of view (a claim) about the quality of cafeteria food at your child's school and then justify your claim with effective support, thereby establishing your credibility as a concerned parent, your audience will listen. Similarly, if a teacher in one of your classes asks you to claim a position on the status of immigration reform in your state and you respond by drafting a claim based on thorough research, your argument is likely to fare well when it is evaluated. This is especially true when you come across as well-informed and sensitive to those who might differ from you. And if conditions at work start to resemble positions that were recently outsourced, you're more likely to get the attention of your boss or coworkers when you present a balanced, fair-minded argument that takes into account those who view the issue differently.

In your life as a student, are there issues that involve tuition, lodging, the accessibility of your teachers, course policies, conflicts with your job, and loan opportunities? Are there also intellectual issues in your life as a student that you are asked to respond to, such as genetically engineered food, climate change, and representative government as practiced in our country? And outside the classroom, if your street lacks adequate storm-water facilities, if earlier public-school start times are proposed by the school board and you know

that this will affect your family's schedule, or if a family member has a contrary idea about what makes a sensible budget, a well-crafted argument allows you to move away from emotional arguments (a trap for many) and into the realm of reason, common sense, and community. An emotional argument, on the other hand, lacks the support of a rational approach to an issue and puts in jeopardy your credibility with your target audience. The exact change you want is never a guaranteed outcome of a good argument, but at the very least you will have made your voice audible before an audience that matters to you.

From another perspective, you affect and diversify the particular community you address with an argument. A well-organized argument gets you a seat at the discussion table, whether in the classroom or before your city council. This means that your position on an issue can matter in the local decision-making process (see Figure 1.2). If we say nothing, others will speak for us or make assumptions about us that conflict with who we are and what we value.

Argue About Issues That Matter to You

Argue about what matters to you as a student and in everyday life. Some people associate argument with dry, abstract issues that may or may not directly affect their lives, but this is an attitude to stay away from. Good writing, and similarly, good argument, spring from the same place—from the effort of everyday people struggling to define and solve problems. A good argument will touch the reader in many ways: logically, because you provide real-life support for your point of view; emotionally, because you touch on something that the reader cares about; and ethically, because you establish your credibility as an informed community member whom your audience can trust.

One way to think about argument is as a practical tool for the regular challenges we face. For example, would it be helpful to know how to present your

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Figure 1.2 Speaking up in response to issues that matter to us is the heart of argument. In this photo, the figure speaking is responding to a workplace issue.

point of view to city and county politicians when repairs on your street are neglected while streets in other areas are taken care of much sooner? Might it be helpful to compose an argument in the form of a letter to a son, daughter, parent, or in-law regarding an important family matter? Do you have an idea about how certain parts of your job can be improved, and would a logical, well-researched proposal directed to a supervisor be a reasonable first step? Do parking problems and a smoking ban at school disturb you, and do you want to find out more about these issues and formulate a claim that is reinforced by careful research? If you answer "yes" to these or similar everyday issues, then this guide can be useful as a way to represent yourself with integrity.

Let's look, for example, at the issue that begins this chapter and one that nearly all college students contend with these days—increasing tuition rates. Some of us may be compelled to argue on this issue because we're forced to work more hours during the week to pay for this semester's tuition, forced to take out loans that mean years of debt after college, and disturbed that our college seems to endorse lending practices that unfairly burden students heading into the world after graduation. A carefully arranged argument gives us the chance to claim a strong position on tuition rates, conduct research on the nature and history of the problem, listen to other points of view, and then propose a way to address the problem reasonably. After choosing to argue on this issue, a reasonable first step would be to establish context and determine your target audience, tasks discussed in the next section.

Another way to think about argument is as a practical tool for the intellectual and academic work you are asked to complete as a student. The steps in developing a good argument are the same, whether you are writing for a class assignment or about an issue in daily life. In both contexts you will need to evolve a precise point of view and then defend it. Successful arguments about the origins of our national debt, same-sex marriage, interpreting constitutional amendments, health-care policy, and the federal government's relationship with the banking industry are built on the same foundations as arguments responding to the everyday issues of life.

In fact, one measure of good arguments on issues like these is their ability to connect local and global contexts. So much of what comes to us through mainstream news—issues in the fields of medicine, technology, health care, and geopolitics, for example—has its origins beyond our immediate lives and communities. You can of course apply the tools of argument to these issues, and with good success, but arguments on these issues can and should be connected to local contexts, too. The list below is a small sampling of large issues that have local impact.

- Standardized testing
- Gun laws
- LGBTQ adoption rights
- Racial equity and food systems
- Promotion practices in the nursing profession
- Bullying in schools and in the workplace
- Choice and public schools
- Taser guns in public schools

Immigration reform and local business
Big box construction and local business
Confederate monuments
Living wage proposals
High school dropout rates
Opoids
Local job outsourcing
Local transit
The elderly and nursing home care
Crowded classrooms
Eminent domain and home owners
Sex offenders in the community
Fossil fuels
Climate crisis
Sexual harassment
Photo-ID voting requirements
Campaign finance reform
Locally-grown food
Returning veterans and health-care
Energy rate hikes
Health-care and non-native speakers
Election cybersecurity
Health insurance
Gentrification and evictions
Payday lending

In today's world, we all face multiple demands as we move through our day. Combine this busyness with the sheer scale of many of the issues we face—the climate crisis, the wealth gap, health care, surveillance, data confiscation, immigration, and military intervention—and it can be tough to believe that articulating our point of view on an issue is worth the effort or makes any difference. But it *can* make a difference, and building a good argument is a way to exercise some control over your life and establish your influence in the community. When your well-planned argument articulates your view on an issue in a thorough and compelling manner, you can generate confidence in yourself and respect from your audience. A sound argument does not, of course, guarantee that your issue will be resolved or that substantial change will result, but you can define for yourself exactly where you stand. For a democracy to remain healthy, it must function in large part by individuals responding to the forces that global environments put in our way.

Well-crafted argument is a way to represent yourself publicly with dignity and in an informed, fair, and open-minded way. Learn these skills now, and you'll have them forever.

your turn 1a GET STARTED Acknowledge Issues That Matter to You

Make a list of issues that concern you today. Include issues in your personal life, your workplace, your school, your church, a group you belong to, your neighborhood, and your town or city. As you make your list, consider also national and global issues that affect your life, such as conflicts in other countries, environmental concerns, or fuel costs. As a way to narrow your focus to issues most important to you, respond to the following questions.

1. Identify a major issue in your life or a position a teacher asks you to take in response to an academic issue.
2. When did this issue begin, and why does it continue to be a problem?
3. Identify a second issue that concerns you. If in question 1 you identified an academic issue, identify a more personal issue here.
4. When did this issue begin, and why does it continue to be a problem?

Establish Local Context via the Research Process

The important work of establishing local context for an issue involves aiming your argument at an appropriate audience, conducting research so as to generate a history for your issue, and when possible, connecting your local issue to broader, even global, conditions. These essential features of building local context are described in the following section.

Determine Your Audience

Recognize a practical audience for your argument; that is, direct your argument to those you most want to inform and persuade. Once you identify your audience, make a close study of them. An audience can be as small as one person, especially appropriate for an argument in a letter format, or your audience can be as large as your community or a block of undecided voters in a statewide election. Other audiences can include the following:

- Your class or certain members of a class
- Members of your church or parents in your neighborhood or school district
- The local school board, city council, county commission, or state legislators
- Family members, friends, or a partner
- A teacher or school administrator
- A supervisor at work or coworkers
- Readers of a zine, blog, listserv, special interest newsletter, or your local or school newspaper

Your audience may or may not agree with your point of view. In addition, an audience may not be as fully aware of the issue as you are, and in these cases you'll need to inform readers in order to get your claim across. Your job is to persuade an audience to think seriously about your point of view, and this means that you must know what your readers value. It's vital that you listen closely and get a sense of *why* they feel the way they do. What is it about their histories and values that make them see the issue differently from you? While you may deviate from your audience on a given issue, your argument will be much stronger and more concrete if you take the time to

listen charitably—that is, without judgment and with an open mind—as you attempt to understand their viewpoints.

With regard to the tuition issue, one practical approach might be to target your city or town council and ask members to approve a resolution that you and other students have drawn up calling for a moratorium on tuition hikes.

Your argument will become more persuasive as you find overlapping points of view with your audience. Determine what you have in common with your audience—what values, beliefs, expectations, and fears you share. Move away from oppositional thinking, the "I'm right/you're wrong" approach. In the real world, when you work to identify common ground, you're more likely to get others to listen to you and move toward consensus.

your turn 1b GET STARTED Identify a Target Audience

Begin thinking about a practical audience for an argument by responding to the following questions.

1. Who might be interested in hearing what you have to say about the issues in your life today? Why?
2. Is there a specific person or group who could benefit from your perspective, affect an issue, or resolve it or modify it in some way? Explain.
3. How will you learn more about this target audience?
4. What tempting assumptions about this audience may prove inaccurate?

Establish Local Context for Your Issue

No man is an island! When English poet John Donne delivered this idea in a 1624 meditation, he claimed that, while isolation may be a part of living, we are all connected to the continent, to a community. We do not live separately from our communities, although sometimes it may feel as if we're living on their margins. The point is that when you decide to claim a position on an issue that matters to you, gather plenty of information so that you're fully aware of the **context**, the past and present, of your issue. An issue materializes in the swirl of local events and occurs because folks disagree—about its cause, what should be done about it, the terms that define it, whether or not it actually exists, and/or how it should be evaluated. So if you feel hemmed in by an issue, find out through research what others think and how they're responding.

You have many ways to find out where your issue originates. For an issue occurring at work, look into what created it. You may already know the answer, but asking fellow workers their understanding of the issue can fill in gaps. You may also want to gather information about your employer's past

to get a sense of how the issue evolved. If you work in a large industry, you can read up on the deeper roots of this issue and how it is handled elsewhere in the state, country, or world. If your English teacher requires that you develop an argument in response to a character's behavior in a short story or poem, or if your history teacher asks you to evaluate the term *American exceptionalism*, plan to gather online and print sources as a way to inform yourself of the context in which your issue occurs and what scholars have to say about it.

When you argue in response to an issue on local or neighborhood politics, access the archives of your local newspaper and study the history of your issue. Newspapers often are available for free via online databases. For issues involving a family member and a health problem, for example, there are a number of databases available that house articles and essays on healthcare issues, and your school may subscribe to these databases. Building local context can also involve interviews with knowledgeable professionals or those who have been invested in the issue over time. You can also design and administer a survey that will add to your information base.

Returning to the tuition issue, this problem has a significant and well-documented local and national history. Scores of students, faculty, and social justice activists have responded to regular tuition hikes since they began. From the perspective of your school's administration, funding priorities may prevent immediate action, but during an interview you may learn a great deal from a school official who defends the hikes but is sympathetic with your desire to succeed with your education. And often you can count on there being a knowledgeable reporter in local media who can provide a larger frame for this issue as well as links to factual information. These are resources that can help you build local context for this issue.

Facundo Arrizabalaga/EPA/Newscom

Figure 1.3 Protestors respond to tuition hikes and other issues important to their local context.

Creating this kind of context does two important things for your final argument: It lets you argue with a strong sense of local history, and it sends a direct message to your readers that you've done your homework, that you've thought deeply about your issue, and most importantly, that you should be taken seriously.

internet activity 1a Exploring

Conduct an informal Internet search to look for general background information on an issue, perhaps one that you identified in the Your Turn 1a activity. Begin by accessing the online archives of your local newspaper; continue by using the academic databases your school provides and other online sites that your teacher recommends. Answer the following questions:

1. Has your search produced answers to some of your questions? Explain.
2. What kind of additional information do you want to gather?
3. As you begin to gather information, is your perspective changing; that is, does learning more about your issue let you see the issue in different and perhaps broader terms? Explain.

Connect Local and Global Contexts

When you write specifically about a local issue, like tuition hikes, plan to connect the issue with a context beyond your community. This makes a positive impression on readers because it shows that you're able to frame your issue in broad terms. It reveals that through your research you recognize that your issue is influenced by trends in regional, national, or global cultures. This will also allow your audience to think more critically about the issue, and it will likely make your argument more persuasive.

For example, escalating tuition rates in this country, Canada, and England, among other countries, reflect economic realities and corporate decision-making outside our communities (see Figure 1.4). When you argue about having to pay more for your education, you must bring to your argument a broad context for tuition hikes so as to orient readers to the origins of this issue. Similarly, when the outsourcing of certain jobs—like those in manufacturing, web design, accounting, and customer support—affects the local economy, trace this outsourcing to the global economic climate in order to form a larger picture for your audience. In addition, issues associated

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Figure 1.4 Editorial cartoon by Rob Rogers

Richard Levine/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 1.5 Connecting a local issue to a broader context can be powerful.

with food in local markets—the conditions in which it's produced and harvested, transportation, health concerns, pricing, and availability of certain items—typically lead to issues in another part of the country or world. Standardized testing, according to some researchers, can be traced to the presence of a business model in many of our public schools; learning about this aspect of the issue—and about the values and motives for this kind of testing—can fill in important background for this arguable issue. If you are motivated to write on local environmental matters like air and water quality, you'll want to read up on the influence of local development and regional energy production to get a sense of what causes these problems.

Whether the local issue that concerns you is in the area of health care, education, politics, work, family, or a retail industry, there likely are larger, often global, forces shaping the issue. When it's a trend you can trace beyond our national borders, we might use the term **glocal** to connect local and global contexts. When you look at what sustains us—air, water, food, transportation, education, and electronic communication—it won't be difficult to connect local issues with broader contexts. And when you look at what we desire materially—dwellings, cars, fashion, and so on—and begin examining American consumer culture, you should be able to make some revealing connections that will enlighten readers and move your argument along.

The key to connecting local and global contexts is found both in your own good sense of how things work and in your ability to research thoroughly in order to familiarize yourself with the history surrounding an issue. Your research process is vital to the success of your argument.

your turn 1c GET STARTED Connect the Local and Global

Answer the following questions to get a sense of how local issues can have global effects.

1. Identify a single *glocal* issue that concerns you, and describe its local effects.
2. How do these effects have an impact on your life and the lives of others?
3. In general terms, explain how economic and political ripples from a global or national issue may spread and affect the lives of others across your region, state, and community.

Recognize Why Arguments Break Down

Arguments can succeed when a writer has something to say, knows to whom it should be said, and knows how to present supporting information in persuasive ways. But arguments can also fail, especially when the essential steps needed to build good arguments are not given thorough treatment. Following are some of the major reasons why arguments don't succeed.

Arguments Break Down When They Do Not Persuade an Audience

Sometimes writers summarize and explain rather than argue. This can occur when a discernable issue is not separated from the larger topic. For example, by deciding you want to write on problems in your workplace, you've identified a good *topic* but not an arguable *issue*. There are numerous issues under this big topic—hiring practices, the politics of promotion, compensation, environmental impact, benefits, working within a hierarchy, discrimination, communication, and so forth—and it is vital that you choose a single issue on which to argue. When you fail to narrow and instead stay with the big topic, your writing lapses into summary and general statements, and this is death to persuasive writing. By focusing on the big topic, problems in your workplace, you'd be treating important issues only superficially. Each of these sub-issues is worthy of a full argument. Narrow your topic to a single issue that affects you, and you will be able to dig deeply and avoid spreading out generally.

Arguments Break Down When There Is a Lack of Balance in the Support

By loading body paragraphs with facts and logical appeals only, your argument will lack a cooperative, humanizing feel. The idea is to place ethical appeals (in which you establish your credibility through personal experience and the testimony of experts) and emotional appeals (in which you touch readers with emotionally charged examples) in balance with logical support. When you tilt too much in the direction on one kind of appeal, readers lose interest. After all, we're complex beings, and we want to be convinced in a variety of ways. Experts tell us that logical appeals should dominate in most arguments, comprising some 60 to 70 percent of an argument's support. When you focus your arguments in this way, you earn the opportunity to address your readers ethically and emotionally. They must know that you've done your research and that you write from experience; then, you can broaden your argument with different types of appeals.

Arguments Break Down When the Audience Is Poorly Defined

Nearly 2,500 years ago, Aristotle explained that a target audience is essential to competent argument. Early in the writing process, you should decide precisely whom you want to persuade. This will allow you to focus closely

tip 1a

Embrace the Glocal!
Remember that you are a local resident *and* a global citizen. Things are so interconnected today that it's hard to define ourselves and the conditions we live in without recognizing forces—economic, political, and environmental—that originate beyond our communities.

on an audience whose values you understand. Knowing these values lets you build a bridge to the audience, which is necessary if you are to persuade them. This is what warrant and backing are about. You can design a good argument when you know what an audience expects, what touches it, and what kinds of appeals are likely to be effective. For example, if you want to argue for a moratorium on tuition hikes in your school or in all public colleges in your state, consider your target audience. To rally immediate support, your audience might be students, but to work toward real change, your target audience might be state lawmakers who have the decision-making capacity to enact legislation.

Arguments Break Down When They Contain Fallacies

Fallacies, often found in an argument's claims and reasons, weaken an argument because there are mistakes in logic and can involve unfair treatment of others. Fallacies are common in the many advertisements we take in every day. For example, ads for a certain brand of car, clothing, food, or medication, may promise that if we purchase the product, prestige, attractiveness, taste satisfaction, and health will be ours. These ads contain fallacies because the promise cannot be kept. In an argument, fallacies are statements that mislead due to poor or deceptive reasoning. For example, if you claim that third parties are the only way to restore true democracy to our political system, you have committed a fallacy based on a hasty generalization. Some readers of your argument may agree that third parties are needed to restore democracy, but some may claim that campaign finance reform, term limits, and citizen activism are also needed. The hasty generalization backs you into a corner.

Arguments Break Down When They Do Not Fairly Represent Opposing Views

The rebuttals and differing views you bring to your argument should not be brief and superficial: They should attend to what the opposition claims, how it supports a position, and what it values. This easily can require several full paragraphs in an argument. When you respond to a rebuttal after having treated the other side fairly, you are in a position to thoroughly counter or build on another view. When full treatment of another view is neglected, however, writers tend to profile and stereotype, and this can offend perceptive members of an audience.

Match Argument with Purpose

After you decide what you want to accomplish with an argument, you can choose the kind of argument that fits your purpose. This guide helps you choose from four kinds of argument, all of which are treated in detail in Chapter 8,

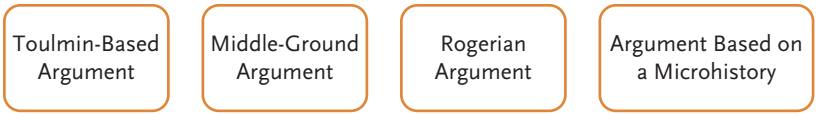


Figure 1.6 Four kinds of arguments

"Consider Toulmin-Based Argument" and Chapter 9, "Consider Middle-Ground Argument, Rogerian Argument, and Argument Based on a Microhistory."

For example, an issue that received a lot of attention in North Carolina a few years ago concerned the attorney general's recommendation that children of illegal immigrants be barred from pursuing degrees in the state's community colleges, a recommendation that the president of the community college system chose to follow. The issue generated much discussion across the state based on the news media's regular attention to it. A writer's decision to argue in response to this issue would require choosing the kind of argument practical to the arguer's goals with a specific target audience.

The following paragraphs describe how different kinds of arguments might be applied to the issue of barring children of illegal immigrants from attending the state's community colleges. These paragraphs provide an overview of four kinds of arguments (see Figure 1.6). Think about how these approaches to argument can fit with issues you plan to address in argument.

Toulmin-Based Argument

Using a Toulmin-based approach, a writer would focus closely on his audience—in this case, the State Board of Community Colleges—and what it values. He knows that individuals on this board are committed to workforce training, economic development, and service to local communities. With this in mind, the writer can develop convincing support by using many examples of children of illegal immigrants succeeding in community colleges and going on to hold good jobs and contribute to their communities. Examples can include statistics, scholars analyzing the community college as a resource for the children of illegal immigrants, and firsthand student accounts. This varied support will honor values held by the board. Additionally, the writer can elaborate on why training, business, and service are important to the state's quality of life. And because the board is charged with carrying out the policies of the state's community colleges, the writer could craft a problem-based claim and ask that the board permit children of illegal immigrants to pursue degrees. Rebuttals brought to the argument would focus on the opposition's concerns with legality and citizenship. Central statements in the argument, such as the claim and reasons, would include qualifiers that keep writers away from making absolute, and unrealistic, points.

Middle-Ground Argument

A middle-ground argument on this issue would view the "for" and "against" positions as extreme and argue instead for a practical position in the middle. Each extreme position would be analyzed in terms of why it fails to offer a practical perspective. Based on the reasons listed previously, those who favor barring children of illegal immigrants from seeking degrees could be analyzed as extreme because this position fails to note the many contributions immigrants make to their communities, the taxes they pay, the contributions they make to the workforce, and the long delays they endure with regard to immigrant legislation. Those on the other side of this issue could be considered impractical because they lump all immigrants together and thus do not take into account the very different experiences of the various immigrant groups living in the United States. For example, the immigrant group often getting the most attention today is from Mexico, and its experience in American culture is in some ways quite different from that of groups from various Asian, Caribbean, and Latin American countries. Over-generalizing about diverse groups plays to a limited understanding of the varying immigrant experiences in the United States, and arguments built on such over-generalization can be considered impractical for this reason.

Several middle-ground positions are possible with this issue, and each has been argued over the course of the debate. One such position argues that the "for" and "against" reasoning described previously ignores the reason that many immigrants move to the United States—jobs—and that until local businesses enter the debate (because of their practice of hiring illegal workers), nothing will change. Another position argues that this issue should be moved into the courts and that in the meantime community colleges should remain open-door institutions, admitting all who apply regardless of citizenship status. While those holding these positions may consider them moderate and middle ground, each position must be proven to be a practical and logical choice between two extreme positions.

Rogerian Argument

In a Rogerian argument, the writer would aim to create a space for positive back-and-forth discussion between his view and one or more different views. To do this, the writer would need to present other views with respect and accuracy, emphasizing the values embedded in these views. Having established this respectful tone, the writer is now in a position to introduce his view by looking for areas where values on all sides overlap. This is the common ground that makes Rogerian argument a practical choice when parties are far apart on an issue.

If the writer opposes barring immigrant students from attending community college, he would pay close attention to the opposition and focus

on its values and reasons for supporting the regulation. The writer notices strong emphasis on values of citizenship, employment, education, and rights. While the writer may differ in how these values can be extended to the children of illegal immigrants, he shares with the opposition a deep commitment to these values and their importance in community life. This is the common ground that the writer would hope to create. On the surface, the views are far apart, but underneath the sides share strongly held values. There is of course no guarantee that the writer of this argument and his opposition will now or in the future see eye to eye on this controversial issue, but the writer has made the effort to listen to and honor the opposition. Because an audience may acknowledge his objectivity and sense of fair play, he is in a position to earn some measure of credibility, a necessary condition to the success of any argument that seeks to create common ground.

Argument Based on a Microhistory

An argument based on a microhistory can be a practical approach to this issue because an arguer could provide specific history relevant to the recommendation to bar children of illegal immigrants from community colleges and then offer a claim. This kind of argument could be used to look closely at one feature of this issue—for example, the reaction of a student, parent, teacher, or concerned citizen. Studying the response of a prospective community-college student affected by the recommendation could bring in from the margins of this issue a voice that media and the general public do not hear, an aim of the microhistory. Primary materials needed to prepare such a microhistory could include interviews with the prospective student or something the student has written. The center of the microhistory would be the ways in which the student's life will be affected by having the opportunity to attend college withdrawn and how this student's experience reveals something about our culture and what it values. Additionally, the arguer will need to provide context for the student's experience, and this must include an overview of this issue in the state, region, and country. Having provided extensive information about the student and the history of the issue, the arguer is then in a position to offer a claim that an audience may view as credible based on the arguer's extensive research. Arguments based on microhistory focus an argument in the commonplace and everyday, perspectives that many mainstream and conventional approaches to history often neglect.

Reflect and Apply

Directions: The following questions ask you to step back and reflect on the concepts delivered in this chapter. You should think about the questions that conclude each chapter and apply them to your own writing. We encourage you to think about how the various pieces of an argument fit together and why they're all necessary.

1. In your own words describe what an effective argument does. Include in your description how you think about argument now contrasted with how you thought about argument before reading this chapter.
2. Early sections of this chapter encourage you to use skills associated with argument both inside and outside the classroom. Explain how these skills would be of value in everyday life.
3. Clarify why a target audience is essential to a good argument. Include in your response what an argument would look like with a vague or unspecified audience.
4. Define the term *context*. Describe its place in an argument in terms of your credibility as an arguer.
5. Identify the reasons why arguments break down. Which of these reasons will you need to pay close attention to so that your arguments don't break down?

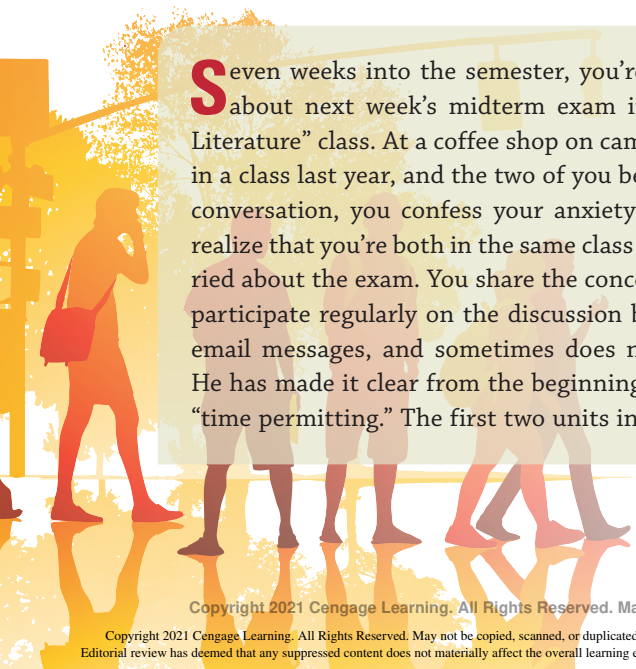
CHAPTER 2

Explore an Issue That Matters to You

Learning Objectives

By working through this chapter, you will be able to

- identify the communities of which you are a part.
- identify issues associated with each community.
- examine issues within topics on which you may want to write an argument.
- identify your audience for a specific argument.
- use reasons and evidence to support your claim.
- demonstrate an argument that considers cultural, social, and historical context.
- deliver your argument at a time when it is most likely to be taken seriously.
- respond to practical prompts to brainstorm ideas for your argument.



Seven weeks into the semester, you're between worried and anxious about next week's midterm exam in your online "Early American Literature" class. At a coffee shop on campus, you run into a pal you met in a class last year, and the two of you begin talking. A minute into your conversation, you confess your anxiety about the exam and suddenly realize that you're both in the same class and that your friend is also worried about the exam. You share the concern that the instructor does not participate regularly on the discussion board, takes too long to answer email messages, and sometimes does not respond to messages at all. He has made it clear from the beginning that he'll respond to messages "time permitting." The first two units in the course include much tough

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COMMUNITY

School-Academic

Workplace

Family-Household

Neighborhood

Social-Cultural

Consumer

Concerned Citizen

TOPIC: Life in the Online Classroom

ISSUE: Teacher–Student Interaction

AUDIENCE: Director of Distance Learning

CLAIM: Clear standards for teachers' commitment to interacting regularly with students should be stated in the introductions to online English courses.

reading, and there have been times when you wanted honest and prompt feedback, especially as to your comprehension of the challenging readings. The instructor has informed the class that the exam will include a section on analyzing passages, and this makes you even more anxious. The two of you gather yourselves and decide to meet for a study session over the weekend.

An argument is a practical response to a pressing question, problem, or concern that generates differing points of view, such as the issue described above. An argument works best when you are invested in an issue, like online instructor response time, and when you feel that what you want to achieve is being hampered. For example, if you feel you're being paid unfairly at work in comparison with other workers of similar experience and seniority, you have an arguable issue. Or, if you feel strongly about stem cell research, about credit card marketing campaigns targeted at you and other college students, about accusations of racial profiling by local law enforcement, about the quality of food at your child's school, or about toxic coal ash, you can construct an effective argument that fully represents your point of view, your claim, on such an issue. But first you must assess current issues in your life and determine those that genuinely matter to you. This is the vital first step in the argument process. This chapter guides you through the process of choosing issues for argument.

Determine What Matters to You and Why

All of us belong to many different communities—school, workplace, family neighborhood, social–cultural, consumer, and concerned citizen—and our individual worlds are defined, at least in part, by the issues we encounter in each of our communities. Some of these issues are the results of external forces acting on our lives (a directive from a supervisor at work, a public ordinance that permits one kind of gathering but not another, an assignment from a teacher) while other kinds of issues are of our own choosing (who we vote for in an election, our decision to become active in response to a community or national issue, decisions we make about parenting). And the issues you choose to write about, whether you argue for something to change or simply want your audience to reflect on your point of view, should originate with what is most important to you. Your arguments become compelling to readers when you write in an informed way about something that deeply concerns you. So, while you will learn how to build arguments in structured, logical ways, *what* you argue on should begin with issues that stir your emotions and that motivate you to speak out, as in the case of the mother speaking in Figure 2.1. Consider the communities you belong to and some, but not all, of the topics that can affect each community.

A **community** is a group of individuals that share common experiences, interests, needs, and expectations. Students in your classes, the general college community, people you work with, your neighbors, and citizens with a stake in local politics are examples of communities. Review the following communities and some of the issues associated with each community.

AP Images/The Laramie Boomerang, Barbara J. Perenic

Figure 2.1 Compelling arguments become possible when individuals argue about what matters most to them. In this photo, a mother speaks to a group of University of Wyoming students about her son, and seven other students, who were killed in a car crash caused by a drunk driver, the man to her right in the yellow shirt.

School/Academic

As a member of your academic community, what issues affect your goals of acquiring knowledge, learning new skills, and earning a degree so that you can move on to the next phase of your life? Consider some of the following topics that affect your life as a student.

Loan repayment
Degree requirements
Life in the real-time classroom
Teacher attitudes
Time management
Free speech
Diversity and tolerance
Student services
Curriculum design
Life in the online classroom
Issues in your field of study
Personal responsibility
Academic integrity
Privacy and surveillance
Campus safety
Transportation
Blogging
Fairness
Plagiarism
Grade inflation
Extra credit

Workplace

At many points during our working lives, we face conditions that affect our motivation, engagement, and sense of fair play. Other times the workplace offers opportunities that are welcome challenges. What are your conditions at work? By what are you challenged? Consider the following list of topics as a way to identify issues that most matter to you.

Job expectations
Balancing work and life
Bureaucracy and red tape
Pay scale
Benefits
Commuting and telecommuting
Gender bias
Organizing and negotiation
Dispute resolution
Training
Bullying and harassment
Corporate social responsibility
Daily conditions
Stress
Downsizing and layoffs
Unions
Privacy and surveillance
Advancement
Discrimination
Leadership
Favoritism
Job security
Rankism
Team building
Office politics

Family/Household

This community refers both to a traditional family unit—parents (or parent) and children—and to any group of individuals sharing a home and its responsibilities. Issues can spring from relationships within and across generations, from economic and purchasing concerns, and from household maintenance arrangements, among many others.

Toy safety
Financial planning
Landscaping and grounds maintenance
Children and online safety
Home buying and mortgages
Home owners associations
Food safety
Diet/food consumption
Health-care planning
Home improvement
Furniture and appliances
Product safety
Neighbors
Parenting
Same-sex marriage
Pet care
Senior care
Wills and trusts

Neighborhood

Neighborhoods are distinct geographical areas. Some neighborhoods comprise a three- or four-block square within a city or urban area. Other neighborhoods comprise only a single block or even a single complex of dwellings. People living in a neighborhood frequently are affected by residential and commercial development, by local government decisions, and by activities such as local parades or events, school closings, or rezoning.

- Street improvement
- Rezoning ordinances
- Graffiti
- Erosion
- Yard maintenance
- Neighbors with special needs
- The digital divide
- Storm drains
- Sidewalks
- Economic development and housing
- Water and sewage
- Waste collection
- Parking
- Property alterations and additions
- Safety
- Gangs
- Noise
- Traffic
- Crime

Social/Cultural

Some communities link us to people we'll never meet, yet we share with them features that are central to our self-concept. Based on your religious, sexual, and political preferences, are there issues before you? And based on the racial or ethnic group you identify with, the virtual environments you spend time in, or the friendships and loyalties you keep, are there concerns that might motivate you to argue?

- Profiling and stereotyping
- Sex and sexuality
- Public space
- Political preference
- Virtual environments
- Class status
- Relationships
- Local government and the individual
- Racial and ethnic identity
- Training and opportunity
- Friendship
- Loyalty
- Gender
- Education
- Economics
- Fake news
- Religion

Consumer

We live in a consumer-oriented society, one in which advertisements from competing companies and producers rain down on us every day. We regularly make decisions about what we eat and wear, how we transport ourselves, how we stay warm, what we purchase for our children, and how we entertain ourselves. Are there issues important to you as a consumer that fall under these and other topics?