Argumentative Analysis and Advocacy

Introduction to the Course and Basic Concepts
Highlights from the Syllabus

- Instructor:
  - Bates

- Texts:
  - Rieke, Sillars, & Peterson, *Argumentation and Critical Decision Making*
  - Other readings as assigned
Aims

Objectives are to ...

- develop an understanding of the theory and forms of argumentation;
- experience the application of the theory and forms of argumentation in written and oral communication;
- and, demonstrate specific skills in the areas of: reasoning, organization of ideas and materials, researching a topic in depth, and the use of supporting materials in the form of “proof” for conclusions.

Via

- Lecture
- Lab
Assignments

- Balloon Debate
- Persuasive Speech
- Parliamentary-Style Debate
- Letter to the Editor
- Quizzes
- Class Participation and Activities
Reminders

- **Academic Honesty**
- **Attendance**
  - Sign only yourself in
  - 3 absence limit
  - No make-up presentations
  - No extra-credit assignments
Evaluating Your Attitudes 1
1. Add your scores on items:
   2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20

2. Add 60 to the sum obtained in step 1

3. Add your scores on items:
   1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 19

4. To compute your score, subtract the total obtained in step 3 from the total obtained in step 2.
Interpretation

- 73-100 = High in Argumentativeness
- 56-72 = Moderate in Argumentativeness
- 20-55 = Low in Argumentativeness
Argumentativeness

- Includes the ability to
  - Recognize controversial issues
  - To present and defend positions on the issues
  - To attack the positions which other people take
Argumentativeness

Social benefits
- Increases learning
- Reduces egocentric thinking
- Improves perspective-taking
- Improved quality of decision-making and problem-solving in groups
Argumentativeness

Personal benefits
- Seen as a better speaker
- Better marital and romantic relationships
- Job performance
Evaluating Your Attitudes 2
Scoring

1. Add your scores on items: 2,4,6,7,9,11,13,16,18,19
2. Add your scores on items: 1,3,5,8,10,12,14,15,17,20
3. Subtract the sum obtained in step 2 from 60
4. To compute your verbal aggressiveness score, add the total obtained in step 1 to the result obtained in step 3
Interpretation

- 59-100 = High in Verbal Aggressiveness
- 39-58 = Moderate in Verbal Aggressiveness
- 20-38 = Low in Verbal Aggressiveness
Verbal Aggression

- Is a symbolic form of physical aggression
- When we are verbally aggressive, we are saying, “Although I would like to be physically aggressive with you, I choose instead deliver this verbal punch to damage you.”
Verbal Aggression

- Character attacks
- Competency attacks
- Insults
- Maledictions
- Background Attacks
  (race, sex, gender, sexuality, age, etc.)
- Teasing
- Ridicule
- Profanity
- Threats
- Physical Appearance Attacks
- Nonverbal indicators
Verbal Aggression

- Damaged self-concepts
- Hurt feelings
- Anger
- Irritation
- Embarrassment
- Relationship deterioration
- Relationship termination
- Physical violence
Why Are People Verbally Aggressive?

- Psychopathology
- Disdain
- Social learning
- Argumentative skill deficiency
A basic definition of argument:

The practice of justifying decisions under conditions of uncertainty
5 Reasons Argument Differs from Coercion or Instruction

- bilateral
- probable
- various levels and kinds of success
- restrained partisanship
- risk
Other Essential Terms

- Claims
- Proposition
- Issue
- Support
- Criticism
Claims

... are the statement you want others to accept.

... come in three kinds
  – Factual claims
  – Value claims
  – Policy claims
Proposition

... the overarching or main claim that will organize the argument.
- The main point the arguer makes
- Helps focus the field of discussion
- Defines and limits the relevant issues.

E.g. “Congress should pass legislation to eliminate broadcast indecency.”
Issue

… the points of potential disagreement related to the proposition
  – Are relevant to the proposition
  – Include topics that support or deny the proposition

Using broadcast indecency, what are some issues?
Proposition: “Congress should pass legislation to eliminate broadcast indecency”

1. It has damaging effects on children
2. Violation of privacy in the home
3. Broadcasting is expensive
4. Distracts from the quality of the game
5. Imitation by other media of obscene behaviors
6. Undermines family and social values
7. Government censorship
8. Potential erosion of individual rights
9. Educational programming is interesting
10. Chills future free speech and expression
Support

... comes in 3 kinds

- Evidence
  - Examples
  - Statistics
  - Testimony

- Values

- Credibility
Criticism

… is not fault-finding

Is the analysis of the argument
  – Is the claim clear?
  – Are the issues relevant?
  – Is the support sufficient?
  – Is there an attempt to influence someone?
  – Is there a real disagreement?
Let’s try it

- What adherence is sought from the reader?
- Who are the appropriate decision makers? Why?
- What claims does the editorial make?
- What support is provided for these claims?
- What criticism can you make of these arguments?