

# Critical Thinking, Second Edition



# Critical Thinking, Second Edition

*MHCC - WR<sub>122</sub>*

*ANDREW GUREVICH*

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# Introduction

ANDREW GUREVICH

## Critical Thinking: An Introduction

*“Never trust a brain.  
Especially your own” –  
Jesse Richardson*



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Arguing is as old as communicating. As long as people have been thinking, they have been disagreeing with the thinking of other people. We “make sense” of the world in different ways: the relational and the rational, the traditional and the innovative, the scientific and the intuitive, the individual and the communal, etc. Often these ways of seeing, believing, and acting come into direct conflict with one another. The root causes of these disagreements are the study of history, philosophy, political science, anthropology, sociology, and psychology (among others).

People argue about resources. They argue about values, morals, and cultural/religious customs. They argue about the interpretation and application of law. They argue about access, opportunity, identity, and community. They argue about important things and petty things. They argue to win. They argue to avoid losing. They argue out of ego, fear, privilege, and desperation.

People argue for many different reasons. But one underlying thread is that we usually argue over things about which we are passionate. We spend the time, energy, and resources necessary to engage in this difficult practice because we are usually invested in the outcomes. This is a good and bad thing, as we shall see going forward. For now, let us just say that passion is a mighty wind that is as likely to push us off course as it is to sustain us in turbulent seas. But we must remember that in academic argument, passion, alone, cannot get us to the destination. As the poet Alexander Pope reminds us, “On life’s great ocean, diversely we sail. Reason is the card (map), but passion is the gale (wind).”

For our purposes, in the study of *rhetoric* (the art and science of *persuasion*), often the causes of disagreement are a lack of credible information on one or more sides of the argument. Once the relevant, authoritative information is provided, the argument is settled and the sides are reconciled. At least that’s the way it used to work. Or the way it should have always worked. But today we have a different problem.

We live in an age of instant access to endless streams of information. According to a [recent study](#), social media is used by **85%** of the world's 5.27 billion mobile phone users. China, with 1,021 million users, is the country with the most social media users as of 2023. India ranks second with 755 million, and the United States comes in third with 302 million users. Since 2012, the Internet has doubled in size roughly every two years. And it is not slowing down[anytime soon](#). If you stored all of that information on old school data DVDs, and then stacked them on top of one another, the stack would reach to the moon and back nearly seventeen times (or wrap around the earth 300 times).

We now have more immediate access to more terabytes of information, across more fields of interest and study, than any other time in human history. As of 2022, there are over **2 Billion** individual websites on the Internet. And that is just the individual, active websites themselves. When we look at the actual content on those websites, the numbers jump astronomically higher. The [New York Times Article Archive](#) alone, for instance, now contains over **13 million articles** total. And that's just the content living in one of the above mentioned 2 Billion websites. And remember, this number will double over the next two years. That's roughly **25 million new websites a day** between when this OER text was written and when you are reading it. [One study](#) has the **total**

**number of books ever published** in the world to be somewhere around a paltry 210 million in comparison.

This is all happening at lighting speed, in comparison to the longer, slower historical arc of human knowledge, deliberation, and reflective wisdom. In the last 30 years, there has been a greater transfer of information across the planet than in any other time in human history *combined*. You now have *more* access to *more* knowledge in the palm of your hands than Aristotle, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Einstein, Dorothy Vaughan, Carl Sagan, Maya Angelou, or Jane Goodall could ever image having the ability to engage all at once.

Have a look at this [video clip](#) from the *Today Show* from 1994 that shows how unfamiliar the coming digital revolution was to most of us just a few decades ago.

Or [this clip](#) from 1995 where television host David Letterman clearly struggles to understand what it is that Bill Gates does for a living and how individuals would ever need or want to spend any of their time on a computer.

The point, here, is not to make fun of these television hosts or to suggest they were personally ignorant or unaware of the coming digital revolution. The point is to show how much we *ALL* were unaware of what was coming. And the current [AI revolution](#) will likely be as disruptive and transformative over the next thirty years as this transition was before it. Perhaps even more so. The point of education is to prepare people to meaningfully and productively engage their futures. But

these video clips demonstrate that just a few decades ago, most of us had no real idea what the future would look like. Think about it. People entering the education system today will be retiring around the year 2083. Nobody has any idea what the world will look like at that point. Most of us can barely comprehend what the world will look like in five years, or ten. So how are we supposed to educate people to inhabit a future we cannot, ourselves, comprehend?

The way forward may require us to first go backwards: to some fundamental principles of philosophy, ethics, and human psychology. The future will likely be a mix of the very old and the very new. The best of what our ancestors could discover about the world and the mind, combined with meaningful, emergent innovation and collaborative problem solving. As much as the world has changed, some things will forever be the same. We are still human. We are still a strange mixture of rationality, emotion, experience, and memory. We still need community to survive and thrive. We are still driven by wonder, curiosity, and awe. So that means we still need to learn how to better listen, think, argue, and compromise with one another. We have the tools. But we also have many potential pitfalls.

While there have been many opportunities and advantages to living in this emerging information economy, there have also been some serious problems. The quality, consistency, and reliability of this bottomless

ocean of information, for instance, is almost impossible to calculate. It is also almost impossible to keep up with a news cycle that never sleeps. The rivers of knowledge are often so polluted with “fake news,” conspiracy theories, partisan opinions, and other such rhetorical toxins as to render them unsafe to drink even before their waters reach our thirsty devices. This leads to a drought even in the midst of a hurricane. People feel isolated from one another, even as they are more “connected” than ever before. They spend more and more time online and [report feeling less and less satisfied](#) by the experience; leading to a deluge of bitterness, cynicism, and mistrust on the part of the general public and average citizens with regard to how they view these digital spaces, how they view one another, and ultimately even how they view themselves.

And in an age when information, not *knowledge*, is power, those who control the access, flow, and content of the data stream have a disproportionate amount of power compared to the rest of the us. It was the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche who said, “All things are subject to interpretation. Whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth.” In other words, for all of those 2 Billion websites, there are a shockingly few number of perspectives that get the most coverage, funding, attention, and spread. What is not platformed often far outweighs what is. Also, predictably, those [on the margins](#) of this new information economy

tend to suffer the most from its abuses and misfirings, as they often do in industrial economies, as well.

Even with all of this unprecedented access to information, we seem to be arguing with one another more than ever in an atmosphere of increasing hostility and distrust, with fewer spaces for genuine dialogue, mutual exploration, and collaborative problem-solving. In fact, [research shows](#) that the increased access to more volumes of information is actually forcing people to use less and less of that very information to make up their minds on the many complex problems we face. Some data shows that most people take between 7-10 seconds to make a first impression about another person or a topic, and rarely move from that initial impression once it is fully formed.

Many people are exhausted, suffering from information overload, only skimming the headlines and popular memes, instead of digging deeper into the complex layers of a given topic and giving it the time it probably deserves to fully understand before making a judgment. The echo chamber effect, where Internet algorithms are specifically tuned to show us *only* the ideas and information we already agree with, provides even more opportunities for this unchecked bias to creep in and take over our thinking. It becomes increasingly difficult to think clearly, listen empathetically, and respond authentically when everyone is talking at once and there is no clear way to sort one voice from the next.

Indeed, some interesting questions immediately arise when we consider the ways people now interact with one other within this digital “hall of mirrors” that the Information Age creates and sustains:

**How does one clearly, calmly, and confidently navigate these growing storms of data, opinion, and spin to find a stable path to greater knowledge and understanding of a given topic?**

**What is it to think methodically and critically in a world that seems to demand our immediate emotional response to every clickbait topic under the sun, well before we know enough to make a reasonable judgment?**

**With such a unending stream of uncritical information hacking away at our fraying attention through every digital device in our possession, when and how do we create the spaces for our curiosity and wonder to bloom and lead us into deeper knowledge and understanding of the world around us?**

**How can we think critically and creatively in *academic* contexts to incorporate logical, rational, cultural, and even ecological perspectives into our thinking and arguments?**

**How does we understand our own subjectivity in relation to the topics and ideas we engage and argue with others about, and use that knowledge to bolster our rhetorical strengths and minimize our blindspots and unwarranted prejudices?**

In this *Open Educational Resource* (OER) text, we will



explore these questions (and many others) and examine how our intellectual ancestors have dealt with such issues over the years. We will also explore the ways in which this modern age presents new challenges, and opportunities, to *think about our own thinking*. We will study the emerging science on where our thoughts come from, and also how rhetorical studies can equip us to discern when to trust our own brains and when to challenge ourselves, ask questions, and seek other alternatives to our own understanding. The world is often an opinionated and messy place. We need to develop the proper tools to help us navigate these increasingly complex, crowded, and confusing spaces. This text is intended to help us do exactly that. The first, and most important, of these tools is the ability to *actively* listen to one another with openness, patience, curiosity, and respect.

This text is also, at least partially, a writing textbook geared towards enhancing students' abilities in rhetoric and composition. Writing is a tool for personal, academic, and professional empowerment. The essay form, itself, is a wonderful piece of linguistic technology to use in further ***educating oneself*** about a topic, any topic. It is a process by which we first attempt to increase our own understanding of a given topic, through entering into a substantive dialogue with the ideas of others, and then sharing those ideas with the larger world. The process itself is transformative and by entering into it, we all

become both students and teachers of the world's wisdom and knowledge.

In this text, we will be reading, watching, discussing, and writing about a variety of different “arguments.” We often argue about what we care the most about, what we value, what is closest to us. It is important at the very beginning for us to establish a tone of mutual respect and academic focus. We are not here to fight with one another or to attempt to convince each other to be *for* or *against* any particular position. I intend to set that tone in my interactions with you as readers, colleagues, students, and fellow critical thinkers. And I ask that you follow suit and do all you can to be decent, respectful, and kind to one another. There will be times when you disagree, and in academia, these are opportunities for all sides to expand in awareness, knowledge, and respect for the other. If ever in this digital text you feel like the tone of the material or discussions are not providing an atmosphere for fair, inclusive, integrative participation, please let me know.

Mostly in this text we will be exploring *how* to think, not *what* to think. We are exploring how we, as humans, make or discover meaning and create value in and through our complex cognitive and rhetorical processes. We will also be exploring how arguments are constructed, academically and socially, to evaluate their logic, credibility, emotional appeal, and overall strength.

By the end of this course, students will be able to meet the [OWEAC Outcomes for WR 122](#).

- [Critical Thinking, Second Edition \(Video Introduction\)](#)



# I. The Writing Process

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## The College Essay

In this chapter, we will begin our discussion of the methods of academic writing by looking at how the essay writing process itself works, with particular attention paid to the various elements of the format and stages of the process. Return here as you need for tips on all aspects of the college essay writing

experience. Remember, an essay is an attempt to understand something more deeply. When we write an essay, we are opening ourselves up to the full spectrum of human knowledge and wisdom while simultaneously reaching for new understandings of the truth and its relevance to our lives. It is a sacred, scientific, and self-



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empowering process. One that we continue to perfect as long as we are alive and curious. While no essay can be reduced to a simple series of steps or formulas, we will see that the essay format *does* provide a coherent template, an ancient and powerful structure, through which we can engage the world of ideas and communicate our discoveries in meaningful and academically productive ways. Remember this is a **process**. There is an old saying, “writing is rewriting.” We never really arrive at a perfect piece of writing, as much as we edge closer to engaging the spectacular and complex world around us with increasing clarity of thought and vision. And, hopefully, we also develop a sharpened sense of the importance of inquiry, evaluation, and synthesis as vital steps on any path towards greater understanding.

The English word “essay” originally comes from the French “*essai*,” meaning “an attempt.” An *attempt* to do what, exactly? Well, that is a question this text hopes to answer. Secondarily, this text will examine the layers of the critical and creative thinking processes to explore how they can help us better understand the nature, function, and purpose of academic argument. But before we get to that, we must return to the original question. What, exactly, is an essay “attempting” to do? Well, first, it is an attempt to understand a concept more deeply. It is an attempt to ask, and answer, a series of questions to help you get closer to the core of an idea or an

experience. Or perhaps both. And, finally, it is an attempt to explore, and communicate, the larger implications and results of our targeted curiosity to an interested audience.

The methods for creating a successful college essay are not the same for everyone. Some writers require complete silence with no distractions, while others crave noise and social interaction while they work. Some are writing in their own native language, and others in a second, or even third, language. Some of us are very political and feel comfortable challenging authority and the status quo. Others feel more comfortable trusting and respecting authorities and following instructions carefully. Many of us have little choice concerning how and when we get to write. We fit it in between life and work, marriage and children, and death and taxes. But a few questions remain, and even gain strength in this new and unpredictable world we live in: “Why bother? What practical reasons do we have for making students create these ancient documents?” The answer is both more complex and simple than we may imagine. The short answer is, because the essay writing process is one of the most effective ways for us to develop our skills in understanding, investigating, and collaborating with others on important topics and ideas. It is also one of the most potent self-education tools we have ever developed. The best way to learn more about a topic is to write an essay about it. So the purpose of the technology of

essay writing is to *learn*, more than to *teach*. To explore, more than to explain. To generate a living bridge between knowledge and experience through a focused rhetorical process of investigation and curiosity. We do not engage the process to bludgeon others with our own opinions or isolated ideas of truth. To write a good essay, we must bring our ideas into meaningful dialogue with the thoughts and ideas of others, and in the process, we learn more about both the topic under consideration and our own ways of understanding and making sense of the world. Essay writing is most effective when we are not afraid of being wrong or of being right. It works best when we see it as a process of discovery. And it works best when we bring our full selves to the exercise.

## The Process

While no guide can help you find what exact situations will work best for you, there are aspects of the process that, when basically followed, promote a cleaner, more stable final draft. These six general stages are: ***discovery & investigation, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and formatting.***



## Discovery & Investigation

The first step in writing a successful college essay requires an active engagement with your sources. Simply reading a source for basic content is not quite enough. It is about asking the right questions. But the questions should not be simply “What does this say?” or “What happened?” but rather “Why did that happen?” “What does that say about the larger themes and ideas I am exploring?” and “How does this help advance my thinking into the deeper layers of this topic?” Does it challenge your thinking in relevant ways? If so, how might you need to adjust your thinking, your research, and possibly even your thesis, to accommodate this new information?

Make notes of your thoughts, ideas, and reactions as you read (and watch and listen). Research is about following the conversation into your sources and allowing your sources to “talk to one another” as you develop your own presence in the conversation. What new questions emerge as your initial questions are answered? How do your sources relate to one another as you dive deeper into a research topic? Have you checked into enough alternative views and perspectives to make sure you are not reaching a conclusion too quickly? As you become more informed on the topic, *your voice* will begin to emerge, and even direct the conversation. But now it

will be a voice as rooted in authoritative research as it is in your own valid experience and perspective.

Once you have completed an active reading of a primary source, it will often be necessary to obtain secondary sources to back up your thesis. Peer-reviewed journals available online through the college [databases](#) will be your most commonly used secondary resources. But remember that other search engines, such as [Google Scholar](#), can yield strong results too. Also, don't forget to look to your own life, your own connections, your own family, friends, and colleagues, as potential sources on a given topic. There is more wisdom in our communities than we often realize.

## Prewriting

Prewriting is the step in which tools such as free writing, brainstorming, outlining, or clustering are used. In prewriting, no idea is too off-topic or too strange to pursue. It is these very “outlier” ideas that sometimes can lead you to an essay topic or thesis that you never would have considered otherwise. There will be time to eliminate and consolidate later. For now, cast the net as wide as you can. Let your curiosity guide and motivate you here. Again, you will have time to tailor and sculpt your prewriting ideas to fit the parameters of your given

assignment later. For now, just let your mind wander. Be open, curious, and attentive to where your questions lead you.

Though the common perception is that there is nothing that hasn't been written about before, if you allow yourself to "think outside the box," you can usually find a way of looking at an "old" topic through "new" eyes. Or a new topic through wise and measured perspectives. Perspectives that may have been misrepresented, or even not included, in previous considerations of the topic. Even if it has been covered by another writer, you will be able to bring your unique perspective and relevant experiences to the larger discussion through initially casting a wide net to pull in potential new ideas and relevant associations.

It is also during prewriting that the writer needs to make a decision about audience. Asking questions like: "Who is going to read my essay?" "What is the deeper purpose of this essay?" and "Why are they going to read my essay?" will help you set your primary audience. The simple answers to these questions are "My professor" and "Because they assigned it." But these are not the true answers. It could be that your essay needs to be geared towards peers and fellow students, participants in a seminar, colleagues at a conference, or your family and neighbors. Regardless, consideration of audience is crucial for setting tone, voice, and perspective in a developing essay. The language and tone for each of

these possible audiences would be very different. Sometimes slightly, sometimes considerably. Considering this also helps you set your relationship to the topic and to the audience in ways that will make the essay more readable and accessible to that actual or potential audience.

## Drafting

Drafting is the beginning of “writing” your essay. It is important to remember that in drafting you should already have at least a general thesis to guide your writing. Without a thesis, your writing will be prone to drift, making it harder to structure after the fact. In drafting, the writer should use materials created in the prewriting stage and any notes taken in discovery and investigation to frame and build body paragraphs. You may, however, change your thesis as you go. In the beginning, it is only advisable to have a general idea of where you are going regarding thesis. Of course, the more clarity here, the better. But don’t let an unfocused or underdeveloped thesis stop you from getting started. You can always return to it and sharpen it as you go deeper into the essay.

Many writers will tackle their body paragraphs first instead of beginning with an introduction (especially if

you are not sure of the exact direction of your paper). This is a process often called “writing from the middle.” Beginning with the body paragraphs will allow you to work through your ideas without feeling restricted by a specific thesis. You can get down the basic structure and main points you know you want to cover before you sculpt the more difficult opening and closing paragraphs. But be prepared to delete or alter paragraphs that don’t fit your eventual big idea. Also be prepared to move body paragraphs around, if necessary, to better fit your pattern of development and thesis. Afterwards, create [opening and concluding paragraphs](#) (with an appropriately revised thesis) that properly reflect the body of your essay.

## Revising

There are three different lenses of revision: **global**, **regional**, and **local**.

**Global revision** involves looking for issues like cohesion of your main idea(s) and the overall progression of your essay. If your essay has paragraphs that do not flow into each other, but rather change topics abruptly only to return to a previous thought later, your essay has poor cohesion. If your thesis is too generic or is not sufficiently developed and supported in the body of the essay, you need to explore this level of revision. If your topics

change too drastically from paragraph to paragraph, it is necessary to consider altering the order of your paragraphs and/or revising your writing by either adding to existing paragraphs or creating new ones that explain your change in topic. An essay with a logical flow and smooth transitions is significantly easier to read and understand. These are the *bones* of the essay.

**Regional revision** involves reworking or reshaping the connections and transitions of the essay. This second level of revising means that you're satisfied with *what* you are saying (or trying to say), but not with *how* you've said it. Working on "how" tends to mean thinking more about readers: thinking about how your thoughts will be read or understood by people other than yourself. Thus, feedback from readers is particularly useful for this level of revising. One of the most common kinds of reworking is to improve clarity. Perhaps you realize you need to change the order you present things in; or you need a stronger introduction, conclusion, and transitions; or you've implied ideas or suggested attitudes that you don't want there. Most common of all, you simply need to leave out parts that may be OK in themselves (or even precious to you) but that don't quite belong now that you've finally figured out what the piece of writing is really saying. These passages clog the flow of your essay, reduce clarity, and ultimately will distract your readers. These are the *muscles* of the essay

**Local revision** involves looking for clarity in sentences, ensuring coherence within your body paragraphs, and addressing grammar, spelling, punctuation, syntax, and formatting issues. This should be done after you are comfortable with the larger issues addressed in global and regional revision. This is akin to copyediting the essay and is the *skin* of the essay.

A great trick avoid having to fix too many local issues is to use varied sentence structure, and to avoid using the same words repeatedly. Repeating the same sentence structure can make your paper feel mechanical and make an interesting topic feel boring. Also, if you can, have someone else read a draft of your essay to help catch the many small mistakes our eyes can miss when looking at the same essay for too long. Reading your essay out loud, slowly, to yourself may also be helpful at this stage.

## Final Editing

The final stage in writing a strong college essay requires a review of what you have written. In this last read of your essay, you should look for any grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors that have slipped through the cracks during the revising stage, or that were introduced in your revisions.

Reading your essay aloud, or asking a friend to read your essay back to you, are good ways to catch errors. Often if you read your own essay, especially out loud, you can catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation that can be missed in a silent reading. Though this step seems minor within the process of writing, it is an easy way to prevent the loss of points over simple mistakes.

## Formatting, In-text citation, and Works Cited

The formatting required for your paper will change depending on the field of study and academic discipline. Generally, the sciences and business and economics use APA or CSE formatting. English and other humanities will use MLA, and History uses Chicago. The appearance of the first page of the essay, in-text citations, and the Works Cited page will all be affected by these different formats.

Consult your syllabus or ask your professor to learn what format you should use. Guides for MLA are available later in this guide. Guides for APA, Chicago, CSE and ASA are available [here](#).



# The Format

As we have already seen, the college essay process is a matter of answering a series of questions, of following a sequence of steps, towards creating a coherent written document that explores a topic for greater insight and understanding. It is a time-tested rhetorical technology meant to focus the writer's inquisitive and curious mind towards an engaging, rational, and academically-sound discussion.

Now, we will also explore the six basic elements of this very specific, yet adaptive, *format*:

- [Thesis driven](#)
- [Primary pattern of development](#)
- [Coherent, unified paragraphs](#)
- [Strong, clear introductions and conclusions](#)
- [Proper use of relevant, authoritative sources](#)
- [Properly formatted \(MLA format\)](#)

## Thesis-Driven Essays

- A strong thesis does not just state your topic, but your perspective or feeling on the topic as well. And it does so in a single, focused sentence. Two at the most.

- A strong, clear thesis tells the reader clearly what the essay is all about and engages them in the big idea of the entire essay.
- Consult this link to the [OWL thesis statements](#) discussion.

**BEST:** A thesis is strongest when the writer uses knowledge of the specific topic, their educated opinion on it, and their own experiences to present a detailed and clear main point.

- Thesis statements are usually found at the end of the introduction. Seasoned authors may play with this structure, but it is often better to learn the form before deviating from it.
- Thesis statements are almost always a single sentence long, two tops.
- Thesis statements often reveal the primary pattern of development of the essay.
- **Watch** this video on writing a [“Killer” Thesis Statement](#)
- **Watch** this video on writing an effective [Academic Thesis Statement](#)

## Primary Pattern of Development

- Many college essays follow a primary pattern of development for laying out their ideas and expressing their primary thesis.
- A pattern of development is the way the essay is organized, from one paragraph to the next, in order to present its main point and support for it.
- Your reader will be experiencing your essay in time. That is, they will read it starting in paragraph one and then two, three, four, five, six... This may seem obvious but we need to consider how the reader will experience the essay in time and in relation to our thesis statement. Thus, we will need to organize the essay into a coherent pattern which allows the reader to easily follow our logic through the essay and fully relate it back to our central theme(s).
- Some essays use a combination of patterns to communicate their ideas but usually a primary pattern is established to present the overall structure of the essay.
- Patterns, or modes as they are sometimes called, are only one way to organize an essay. **Genre** is another common organizational structure that emphasizes audience over the relationship between thesis and topic that is emphasized in the *patterns* structure. Common genres are: essay, blog post, open letter,

fiction, creative nonfiction, Op/Ed, Summary/  
Response, etc.)

**BEST:** Patterns of Development work best when they are used consistently and in conjunction with the structure and theme of the primary thesis statement.

- Patterns include:
  - Narration & Description
  - Exemplification
  - Cause & Effect
  - Comparison & Contrast
- There are several more variations of patterns of development but these are the most common and the ones we will be exploring this term.
- Consult [this chapter](#) from a different OER text on how to construct and use patterns of development in your own writing process.

## Coherent, Unified Paragraphs

- Strong essays are built with solid, coherent, and unified paragraphs. They should be digestible units of thought that have similar structure to the essay itself: a topic sentence, a body of support, and a concluding or transitional statement to help the

reader move through the essay with clarity and focus; building from, and towards, your big idea.

- Body paragraphs need to be arranged according to your primary pattern of development.

**BEST:** When the writer uses paragraphs to present a single, coherent, and well-developed thought in support of their overall thesis.

- A body paragraph is a developed, single thought that is laid out according to a specific logical structure.
- A body paragraph should begin with a strong, clear topic sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph (which will likely be a sub-point that is helping you to develop and explore your thesis).
- A strong, clear body paragraph will include several (two-four) sentences of development and support of your topic sentence: including quotes, summaries, and paraphrases of your relevant sources and substantive responses to the source material.
- A strong paragraph will have a closing sentence of summary and transition into the next paragraph (unless it is the end of a section or the conclusion of the essay).
- Consult [this chapter](#) from another OER on how to construct coherent, engaging, and unified paragraphs or click on this link to the [OWL Website](#).
- **Watch** this video on [Writing Effective Paragraphs](#)

## Strong, Clear Introductions and Conclusions

- The beginning and the ending of any communication event, studies show, provide the best opportunities to speak to any audience when their attention is the highest and most focused on the communication. Something about our species pays special attention to the way things start and the way they end. We should use this to our advantage as writers.
- Consult [this chapter](#) from a different OER on how to most effectively construct engaging introductions and conclusions.
- The introduction should grab your reader's attention, focus it on your general topic, and move towards your specific, engaging thesis.
- The conclusion should provide a restatement of your main idea, provide a sense of finality or closure, and possibly challenge the reader with a “so what?” moment.
- In communication theory, there is a saying, “Tell them what you are going to tell them (introduction), tell them (body), then tell them what you just told them (conclusion).” While this seems a redundant structure, it is useful to be reminded of the need to build a logical and self-supporting flow into your academic writing. Clear intent and focus helps your

reader concentrate on the major ideas you are trying to communicate and it helps you be disciplined and calculated in how you structure the essay to establish, highlight, and support those very ideas.

**BEST:** When the writer uses both the introduction and the conclusion to grab and focus the reader's attention on the main point of their essay.

- Both should clearly state the main point of the essay (thesis).
- Both should grab and focus the reader's attention on the greater topic and larger significance of the thesis.
- Both should provide a sense of momentum for the reader to move through the essay with clarity, confidence, and full awareness of the essay's main point.
- **Watch** this video on writing [effective introductions and conclusions](#)
- **Here's another** video on [Effective Introductions and Conclusions](#)

## Proper Use of Relevant, Authoritative Sources

The discovery, analysis, and integration of relevant source material into an essay or research project can be referred to as a “research methodology.” This can be a daunting, frustrating, and sometimes scary process. It takes a lot of discipline and courage to boldly go into the world of a given topic to check our ideas against those of authoritative, current, and reliable source material. It can also expose us to the reality that most topics are far more complicated than they originally appear. This is an essential component of college writing. It is important to get our thoughts and ideas down on paper in clear, disciplined, confident, and understandable ways. But it is equally important to verify, challenge, and expand those ideas by juxtaposing them with the most reliable information we can find on our chosen topic. We do not research just to verify what we already believe about a topic, but to sometimes challenge our previously held ideas and, hopefully, move beyond the echo chamber of our own thoughts into a meaningful, substantive dialogue with others who have relevant experience and expertise on the topic. Doing this will help us to generate a depth of knowledge that goes beyond the superficial and into the real mechanics of knowing. The result will be an essay, and a way of life, that is engaging, grounded, and



integrative. It will yield a life of dialogue, curiosity, and wisdom.

- The “essay” format itself is intended to get the writer to explore a topic by beginning with a question or idea and then going out into the world and finding relevant, authoritative sources to help develop, test, and explore that idea.
- Authoritative sources do more than just back up the ideas we have. They challenge us to dive deep into the topic we are exploring to get their full complexity and broad application.
- Consult [this chapter](#) from another OER for assistance on how to best find, analyze, and integrate relevant sources into your essay writing process.

**BEST:** When the writer uses relevant, authoritative sources to enhance a dialogue with the audience and themselves around the significant issues the essay addresses. Most effective when they are blended carefully and properly into an honest and focused exploration of the topic that is lead by the writer, but also open to where the relevant source material can take the discussion.

- A strong essay will include enough relevant, authoritative, and reliable sources to help develop

and explore the topic and thesis. This level of what is “enough” will largely depend on the weight and scope of the thesis and the particulars of a given topic or assignment.

- A strong essay will comment effectively on sources by integrating them into the larger topic, making them “talk to one another” and commenting on them in ways that stay true to their original intent and blend them into the writer’s main point and primary pattern of development.
- A strong essay will include a variety of sources from various academic, professional, and popular institutions to provide a wide array of perspectives on the topic and thesis under discussion.
- Consult the [Library Databases](#) and our [WR 122 Library Guide](#) for help in finding and using relevant, authoritative sources.
- **Watch** this video on [Searching the Databases](#)
- **Watch** this video on [Evaluating Sources](#)

## Properly Formatted (MLA)

- Essays in Humanities classes are formatted according to Modern Language Association (MLA) format.
- Formatting can be a frustrating and time-consuming

process so we will work on it in sections throughout the term. Stay calm and focused and learn how to use the tools that will assist you in proper MLA formatting.

**BEST:** When an essay is properly crafted and formatted, the reader is able to clearly and easily follow the ideas and trace outside information to its original sources.

MLA involves three primary components when getting your essay into proper format:

1. Formatting of the first page of your essay
  2. Proper use of “in-text” citations (citing sources you use in the body of the text of your essay)
  3. Properly formatted “Works Cited” or “Works Consulted” page.
- Consult the [MLA Style Guides](#) on the [MHCC Library Website](#). Note that on the MLA Style Guides site there is a section called “Citation Builders” which will help put sources into proper format for you. Note also that in most newer versions of Microsoft Word there is an MLA template you can select to automatically put your document in MLA format. Lastly, sources taken from the MHCC Library databases will already be listed at the bottom of the article in MLA format. Simple copy and paste the citation from the database entry to your Works

Cited page (making sure to the entry is: in proper alphabetical position, double-spaced and in proper “hanging” format”).

- **Watch** the following video on how to use [MLA Format \(9th Edition\)](#)
- **Watch** the following video: [How to Use MLA Style](#)
- **Watch** the following video: [Creating the Works Cited Page in MLA 9th Edition](#)

There are many other websites, nonprofits, and academic institutions who have published readily available materials on the academic writing process. Students and faculty should feel free to explore the options available to them and employ the ones that resonate the most. Here you can find most, if not all, of the technical material you will need to write competent, engaging college-level essays. But the content of your writing will be determined by the particular class or assignment, the special areas of interest that make you the person you are, and the ideas that contribute to the personal, social, vocational, and transformative nature of your education.

[The Purdue University Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#), for instance, is one of the oldest and most reputable college writing websites available to anyone with an internet connection. Our own [MHCC Tutoring Center](#) also has a number of great resources available. The point is not to follow one specific “Golden Road” to success in college writing. Rather, we hope to become aware of the purpose

and relevant structures of the model and apply them to our own critical and creative thinking processes in ways that make writing assignments more productive, engaging, and fun. This will translate to your reader, improve the substance of your writing, and inevitably elevate your grades along the way.

Please return to this page throughout the term for assistance with any of the elements of writing the successful college essay. Remember, writing is a process of self-discovery. It is a means by which we can educate ourselves about any topic and learn more about each other along the way. Embrace it, be patient, disciplined, and focused and it can help open the world to you.

**NOTE:** As needed, this ebook will be updated with new materials and relevant links as the author continues to curate the collection.

# What is Critical Thinking?

ANDREW GUREVICH

## Critical Thinking is Critical

Thinking that is productive, focused, and intentional is at the center of all effective learning. By applying a sequence of carefully articulated thinking skills, students can develop an

increasingly sophisticated understanding of the cognitive processes they can use whenever they encounter complex problems, unfamiliar information, and new ideas. In addition, familiarity with the growing body of knowledge about how the brain works (and continuously animates the practice of effective critical



*"Think About Things Differently"*  
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and creative thinking strategies) can increase students' motivation for, and management of, their own learning. They become more confident and autonomous problem-solvers and critical thinkers.

Through careful analysis of language and the study of the techniques of persuasion, this text emphasizes the power of words and ideas to shape opinions, attitudes, and behavior. Students develop the critical thinking skills necessary to recognize logical fallacies and manipulative communication through the analysis of political rhetoric, commercial media, and other relevant materials. Students also create arguments based on well-reasoned analyses and supported by sufficient and relevant evidence, logic, and references.

But critical thinking DOES NOT mean being *critical* of another person or their ideas, necessarily. IT DOES mean that we are careful to evaluate our own thinking, and the thinking of others, to make sure we are not going beyond what the evidence suggests.

- **Consult** the document: [Developing a Critical Mindset](#)
- **Consult** the document: [Critical Thinking Checklist](#)
- **View** the video: [Why is Critical Thinking Important?](#)
- **View** the video: [What is Critical Thinking?](#)
- **View** the video: [Critical Thinking](#)

## 2. Critical and Creative Thinking

ANDREW GUREVICH

### Critical and Creative Thinking

In this chapter, students will continue to develop their rhetorical capabilities as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, seek possibilities, consider alternatives, and solve problems. These capabilities combine the

use of two types of specialized intellectual activity: **critical and creative thinking**. Though the two are not interchangeable, they are strongly linked, bringing



*“Creative Photo of Person Holding Glass Mason Jar Under A Starry Sky” by Rakicevic Nenad is licensed under CC BY 4.0*



complementary dimensions to thinking and learning. Both critical and creative thinking involve students in: thinking broadly and deeply about a topic, developing precise analytical, research, and listening skills, and enhancing academic behaviors and dispositions such as using reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination, and innovation in all learning areas, both within the college experience and beyond.

**Critical thinking** is at the core of most intellectual activity that involves students learning to recognize, analyze, or develop an argument. We use critical thinking to establish evidence in support of, or in opposition to, a given proposition. We also use it to draw reasonable conclusions and to clarify confusing information. Examples of critical thinking skills are interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, explaining, sequencing, reasoning, comparing, questioning, inferring, hypothesizing, appraising, testing, and generalizing.

**Creative thinking** involves students learning to generate and apply new ideas in specific contexts, seeing existing situations in new ways, identifying alternative explanations, and seeing or making new links or connections that generate iterative and meaningful outcomes. This includes combining various, often conflicting, parts to form something original, sifting and refining ideas to discover new possibilities, constructing and analyzing theories and objects, and using critical thinking skills to collaborate with others to solve

problems. What is essential, in any case, is that the process encourages us to use our thinking to explore wide-ranging possibilities, engage otherness, consider alternative options, and synthesize new information.

It is essential, as we begin our discussion, to clarify how each mode of thinking is distinct from the other, but also how they work together to help us make sense of the world around us. Responding to the challenges of the modern world – with its complex environmental, social, psychological, political, and economic pressures – requires people to be creative, innovative, enterprising, and adaptable, with the motivation, confidence, and skills to use critical and creative thinking purposefully.

Concept formation is the mental activity that helps us compare, contrast, and classify ideas, objects, and events. Concept learning can be concrete or abstract and is closely allied with **metacognition**: the ability to think about one's own thinking. Dispositions such as inquisitiveness, reasonableness, intellectual flexibility, open- and fair-mindedness, a readiness to try new ways of doing things and consider alternatives, and persistence promote, and are enhanced by, the use of critical and creative thinking skills.

Next, let us examine some of the latest research on our critical and creative thinking capacities and how the brain uses these techniques to make sense of the world. We will eventually apply what we are learning to your own assignments in the course.

# TED Talks on Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, and the Brain

- **View** the TED Talk: [How Schools Kill Creativity](#)
- **View** the TED Talk: [How to Think, Not What to Think](#)
- **View** the TED Talk: [My Stroke of Insight](#)
- **View** the TED Talk: [The Divided Brain](#)
- **View** the TED Talk: [The Empathic Civilization](#)

**NOTE:** Please make sure to watch all of these videos and take notes. Refer back to them in the coming weeks as these videos will serve as part of the basis for the research you will do for your major essays.

# 3. The Purpose of Argument (How to Be Wrong)

ANDREW GUREVICH

## The Importance of Being Wrong

*“Nothing is so firmly believed as that which we least know.”*

–Michel de Montaigne,  
*The Complete Essays*

*“He must be very ignorant, for he answers every question he is asked.”*

–Voltaire

Why do we argue with one another? What is the intention? How do we know when we have “won” or “lost” an argument? What



*“Brain inscription on container on head of faceless woman” by SHVETS production is licensed under CC BY 4.0*

happens then? In this chapter, we explore the *functions* and *purposes* of argument to reveal the deeper reasons we engage in this complex, frequently stressful, rhetorical activity and what we can gain by having an enhanced perspective on it. We will read some articles and watch a few videos that explore the science and logic of why we argue, and why being wrong is not something we should try to avoid at all costs or view as “losing.”

Clarification of ideas and meaningful collaboration are the highest pursuits of argumentative communication. Thus, when we are proven wrong, we are given the opportunity to learn, to grow, and to enhance our understanding of the complex and vibrant world we inhabit. We can also embrace the opportunities that arise when we allow ourselves to be distanced enough from our beliefs and opinions to create the necessary space for doubt, investigation, growth, and, eventually, increased knowledge and awareness. When we believe we are right about everything all of the time, we miss the opportunities to learn from one another and from each new perspective we encounter.

- **View** the video: [For Argument's Sake](#) (Imperfect but useful **transcript** available [here](#).)
- **View** the video: [On Being Wrong](#) (Imperfect but useful **transcript** available [here](#).)

Both of these talks (above) address the dangers of being too close to our own ideas, values, opinions, and beliefs. They offer examples and insights that show what can go wrong when we would rather “feel” right than “be” right. They show us how we can get stuck in ego or fear-based approaches to conversation that turn constructive dialogue into a war to be won at all costs. We miss the opportunities to expand when we stay tied to closed ways of thinking. They also remind us of the importance of being humble, active, and engaged listeners.

Because people don’t always agree on what is right or reasonable, appropriately constructed argument can help us arrive at what is more fair or more true for more of us. The process is used to settle disputes and discover new truth. Instructors assign argumentative writing so students can learn to examine their own (and other’s) ideas in careful, engaged, and methodical ways. Argument teaches us how to evaluate conflicting claims and judge evidence through various methods of investigation. Argument helps us learn to clarify our thoughts and articulate them honestly and accurately and to consider the ideas of others in a respectful and critical manner. Often, we find more areas of agreement with the other than we first thought existed. Other times we find evidence that encourages us to change our minds in small, or not so small, ways. And still other times we find reliable, authoritative information that validates something we already thought or believed. The following

articles addresses the scientific basis for what embracing being “wrong” can actually offer our individual and collective ways of knowing:

- **Read** the following article: [The Key to Science \(and Life\) is Being Wrong](#) (Word Version [here](#))
- **Read** the following article: [Intellectual Humility](#) (PDF[here](#))
- **Consult** the Web resource: [Intellectual Humility](#)

It may be surprising to think about the value of *losing* an argument. But it is even more shocking to learn that winning and losing, or the “argument as war” model, is only one of many possible motivations for engaging in a meaningful argument. There are several other important purposes for engaging in argument, beyond simply trying to “beat” the opponent. Believe it or not, sometimes arguments are constructed simply to *entertain*. Other times they are constructed to *convince*. And still others are constructed to help *clarify* concepts and facilitate meaningful *collaboration* with those who have different ideas. Not all arguments are about winning and losing. And some, if you can believe it, are structured specifically to help us *lose*, and thus *learn*. Argument is not, in itself, an *end* or a *purpose* of communication. It is rather a means of *discourse*: a way of developing what we have to say. We can identify **four primary aims** or purposes that argument helps us accomplish:

- Inquiry
  - Conviction
  - Persuasion
  - Negotiation
- 
- **View** the Powerpoint: [The Four Aims of Argument](#)

**Arguing to Inquire:** *Forming our opinions or questioning those we already have.*

The ancient Greeks used the word *dialectic* to identify an argument as inquiry; a more common term might be dialogue or conversation. Arguing to inquire helps us accomplish the following:

- to form opinions
- to question opinions
- to reason our way through conflicts or contradictions

It requires an attitude of patient questioning under non-threatening circumstances, usually done alone or among trusted friends and associates. The primary purpose is a search for the truth. The primary audience is often the writer and fellow inquirers concerned with the same issues.

Examples: Classroom discussions; journal writing; exploratory essays; letters; late-night bull sessions in a dorm.



**Arguing to Convince:** *Gaining assent from others through case-making.*

While some inquiry may be never-ending, the goal of most inquiry is to reach a conclusion, a conviction. We seek an earned opinion, achieved through careful thought, research, and discussion. And then we usually want others to share this conviction, to secure the assent of an audience by means of reason rather than by force.

- Arguing to inquire centers on asking questions: we want to first expose and examine what we think.
- Arguing to convince requires us to make a case, to get others to agree with what we think. While inquiry is a cooperative use of argument, convincing is competitive. We put our case against the case of others in an effort to win the assent of readers.
- Examples: a lawyer's brief; newspaper editorials; case studies; most academic writing

**Arguing to Persuade:** *Moving others to action through rational, emotional, personal, and stylistic appeals.*

While arguing to convince seeks to earn the assent of readers or listeners, arguing to persuade attempts to influence their behavior, to move them to act upon the conviction. Persuasion aims to close the gap between assent and action. To convince focuses on the logic of an argument; to persuade will often rely on the personal appeal of the writer (what Aristotle called *ethos*) and

involve an appeal to an audience's emotions (pathos). In addition to these personal and emotional appeals, persuasion exploits the resources of language more fully than convincing does.

- In general, the more academic the audience or the more purely intellectual the issue, the more likely that the writing task involves an argument to convince rather than to persuade. In most philosophy or science assignments, for example, the writer would usually focus on conviction rather than persuasion, confining the argument primarily to thesis, reasons, and evidence. But when you are working with public issues, with matters of policy or questions of right and wrong, persuasion's fuller range of appeal is usually appropriate.
- Persuasion begins with difference and, when it works, ends with identity. We expect that before reading our argument, readers will differ from us in beliefs, attitudes, and/or desires. A successful persuasive argument brings readers and writer together, creating a sense of connection between parties.
- Examples: Political speeches, sermons, advertising

**Arguing to Negotiate:** *Exploring differences of opinion in the hope of reaching agreement and/or cooperation.*

If efforts to convince and/or persuade the audience

have failed, the participants must often turn to negotiation, resolving the conflict in order to maintain a satisfactory working relationship.

- Each side must listen closely to understand the other side's case and the emotional commitments and values that support that case. The aim of negotiation is to build consensus, usually by making and asking for concessions. Dialogue plays a key role, bringing us full circle back to argument as inquiry. Negotiation often depends on collaborative problem-solving.
- Examples: Diplomatic negotiations, labor relations, documents in organizational decision-making; essays seeking resolution of conflict between competing parties; also frequent in private life when dealing with disagreements among friends and family members.

# 4. Logos (Evidence, Support)

ANDREW GUREVICH

## Arguing from Reason (*Logos*)

In this chapter, we begin to study the methods of academic argument analysis, starting with the foundational element of the three-fold Greek approach: **Logos** (Logic, Support, Data)

For most of us, arguments are things we try to avoid. When we do engage them, often our emotions and opinions get the better of us and the discussion quickly becomes a competition, with everyone clamoring to be the “winner.” But in academic argument,



*“Unrecognizable girl solving mathematical problems near chalkboard” by Monstera is licensed under CC BY 4.0*

we must learn to set our opinions and emotions aside and develop ways to use critical thinking skills to evaluate arguments according to objective, authoritative principles of critique and analysis. We must let the “evidence” speak for itself whenever possible. A valid argument requires thoughtful, coherent, and relevant reasons for its own existence. A strong argument is only as good as the support it offers in defense of itself. Thoughtful speculation and conjecture is an important part of academic thinking because creative thinking and collaborative problem-solving often require us to go beyond the status quo and make new connections and explore new possibilities. But we must always be clear what part of our argument is supported by clear, reliable, relevant, and authoritative evidence and what part is based in well-reasoned speculation. And we must always be willing to go where a “good faith” reading of the evidence takes us.

***Remember, not all arguments require the same kind of support, but all arguments do require some kind of support.*** The proper ways in which we determine if an argument is well supported start with asking questions about what *kind* of argument is being made, what is the size or relative importance of the overall claim, what are the stakes and for whom are the risks and rewards of accepting or rejecting this idea/argument, and what other evidence is present (or absent) that would help further substantiate the claim? Different kinds of

arguments will require different kinds of support. Some arguments will require more factual evidence and hard data, others can be driven by anecdotes, personal accounts, interviews, and stories. Often, we will need a variety of support to properly develop a complex claim. Keep this in mind as you move forward in the materials.

Furthermore, many arguments will not be settled simply by finding the “right” evidence. Many will disagree as to what is the most reliable information to support a given argument. Others will rightly point out that some arguments are based in moral reasoning, tradition, and ethical considerations and not simply by consulting “the experts.” Indeed, in many cases, improper appeals to “the evidence” can be used to silence dissent and marginalize opposing voices, rather than calling them in and considering what they may have to offer. When gathering and using evidence, we should always try to avoid these rhetorical mistakes. Strong evidence can and should speak for itself, but we must always be willing to consider alternative points of view and the testimony and experience of those who live outside of our own recognized bubbles of authority.

First, let’s have a brief look at **all three** components of the ancient Greek model of rhetorical appeals and persuasion:

- **Consult** the **Purdue OWL** link: [Aristotle’s Rhetorical Situation](#)

- **Here** is a handout about **all three** of the ancient Greek forms of persuasion: [Ethos \\_ Logos \\_ Pathos](#)
- **View** the Powerpoint: [Logos, Pathos & Ethos](#)
- **View** the short video: [Ethos, Pathos, and Logos – Rhetoric](#)
- **View** the short video: [Structuring an Argument](#)
- **View** the short video: [How to Craft an Argument](#)

## Logos

The word **Logos** means “logic” or “support” or “evidence.”

- When someone asks, “What is your argument based on?” They are asking for logical support.
- When you offer relevant evidence, expert testimony, facts, and other rational “support” for your argument, you are using **Logos**.
- Proper use of **Logos** in an argument will offer support that is: sufficient, relevant, and representative of the best available evidence.
- But rational support of an argument is much more complex than it may seem at first (as we will see when we examine all of the **logical fallacies**, for instance). We need to be disciplined and not make up our minds too soon.
- **View** the handout: [Logos](#)

- **View** the following video: [What is Reason \(Logos\)?](#)
- **View** the following video: [How to Use Reason and Logic in Persuasion](#)



# 5. Ethos (Character, Credibility)

ANDREW GUREVICH

## Credibility in Argument (*Ethos*)

In rhetoric and rhetorical studies, **ethos** represents credibility, or an ethical appeal, which

involves persuasion by the character involved.

The term has its roots in

Aristotle's "ingredients of

persuasion," or "appeals." He divides means of persuasion into three distinct categories: **Ethos**, **Pathos**, and **Logos**.

He says in his treatise *On Rhetoric*:

"Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. [...] Persuasion



*"Hands of people reaching to each other" by lil artsy is licensed under CC BY 4.0*

is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him *credible*."

Ethos employs a means of convincing others of the character or credibility of the *argument* by convincing us of the credibility of the *arguer*. It is natural for us to accept the credibility of people whom we hold in reverence. And it is natural for us to more easily accept the arguments of those we find credible or for whom we have great respect.

In an argument, it is of utmost value for a speaker or a writer to impress upon listeners and readers the idea that they are worth listening to. In other words, the credibility of a speaker or a writer relies on their authority on the subject matter, as well as on how much they are liked, trusted, and deemed worthy of respect by the "audience."

**Ethos** can be established by:

- Using a tone and style that shows the writer/speaker holds the subject and the reader/listener in high regard. In other words, treating the reader and the subject with respect.
- Using authoritative, reliable, and credible sources to support the premises in the argument.
- Providing enough space to fairly consider alternative points of view.
- Speaking/writing to the audience with openness

and authenticity and allowing them to make up their own minds about the topic.

- Having a background in the material that builds confidence in the reader/listener that the speaker/writer has enough experience, training and expertise to speak with authority on the subject.

But like with the other rhetorical appeals, this can be, and often is, manipulated by politicians, corporations, marketers, and other bad actors to trick us into accepting the credibility of some voices and dismissing that of others. Often without giving them a fair hearing. We must constantly ask ourselves who it is we are pressured to accept (by the cultural, political, or religious status quo) as credible and trustworthy, and who it is we are encouraged to fear, hate, dismiss, and/or reject in an argumentative context. Blind spots and unchecked biases slips in here all the time. Sometimes intentionally, other times not. It is true that establishing proper ethos with an audience is *critical* for getting them to understand, and possibly even accept, your argument. But falling into one or more of the unjust algorithms through which we have collectively decided to trust certain voices over others, without proper and relevant reasons, can be fatal for co-creating safe, respectful, and meaningful argumentative spaces. It can also do irreparable damage to our own credibility. If we are too quick to accept the ethos of those who agree with our own unchecked biases and

assumptions, while dismissing that of those who would challenge us to expand and grow, we can short circuit the very channels to true collaboration which valid argument opens for us. Trust, like evidence, should be used to build a bigger tent, a bigger table, for honest and transformative dialogue. Not as a weapon to keep certain voices always and forever ahead of (and above) others for less than credible reasons.

**Ethos** (sometimes called an appeal to ethics), then, is used as a means of convincing an audience via the authority or credibility of the persuader, be it a notable or experienced figure in the field, an elder or experienced member of the community, or even a popular celebrity. We determine ethos by looking at the tone, style and credibility of the speaker, the sources, and the publication. We also determine it by establishing the authority and credibility of the argument and the arguer.

- When someone asks, “What right do you have to speak on this issue?” or “What are your qualifications to speak on this matter?” They are asking for character and credibility, or **Ethos**.
- When you offer credentials, experience, appeals to shared beliefs and values or other appeals to emotion as “support” in an argument, you are using **Ethos**.
- Proper use of **Ethos** in an argument will offer valid appeals to emotions, values, and beliefs that:

- are shared with the readers/audience,
- do NOT hide or obscure the fact that the argument has little to no logical support,
- and do not unfairly promote hatred or fear without sufficient cause.
- **View** the handout: [Ethos](#)
- **View** the following video: [Purdue OWL, An Introduction to Ethos](#)
- **View** the following video: [What is Character \(Ethos\)?](#)

# 6. Pathos (Emotions, Values)

ANDREW GUREVICH

## The Art and Science of Emotional Arguments (*Pathos*)



*“Mujer Hombre Resumen Amor”*  
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**Pathos** is a quality of an experience in life, or a work of art, that stirs up emotions of pity, sympathy, and sorrow. Pathos can be expressed through words, pictures, or even with gestures of the body. Pathos is an important tool of persuasion in arguments because it is a method of convincing people with an argument drawn out through an emotional response. Analyzing examples of pathos, one would come to the conclusion that it differs from the other rhetorical appeals of persuasion, namely ethos and logos, in several significant ways. Ethos means convincing others through the credibility of a persuader or of the

argument itself, while logos is a method to convince others by employing reliable, sufficient logic and reason. But only pathos is employed to specifically trigger the emotional states of the readers and listeners and thus, is an incredibly powerful, but also incredibly manipulative, method of appeal.

Using **Pathos** also requires us to quantify subjective, emotional, and values-based assumptions in our quest to understand and evaluate academic arguments. The use of Pathos is called a “pathetic appeal.” Note that this is very different from our usual understanding of the word “pathetic.” “Pathos” is used to describe the rhetor’s attempt to appeal to an audience’s sense of identity, their self-interest, and their emotions. If the rhetor can create a common sense of identity with their audience, then the rhetor is using a pathetic appeal. But Pathos most often refers to an attempt to engage an audience’s emotions. Think about the different emotions people are capable of feeling: they include love, pity, sorrow, affection, anger, fear, greed, lust, and hatred. If a rhetor tries to make an audience feel emotions in response to what is being said or written, then they are using pathos. Like the other rhetorical appeals, it can be used in both appropriate and manipulative ways in arguments.

# Common Examples of Pathos

For a better understanding of the subject, let us examine a few pathos examples from daily conversations:

- “The terrorists want to kill our children.” – This statement evokes emotions of fear and anger. Whether or not there is any truth to it, the statement seeks to motivate the audience primarily through fear.
- The “Made in America” label on various products sold in America tries to enhance sales by appealing to customers’ sense of patriotism.
- Ads encouraging charitable donations show small children living in pathetic conditions, to evoke pity in people.
- Referring to a country as “the motherland” stirs up patriotic feelings in individuals living in that country or state.
- A soft, instrumental symphony may arouse people emotionally during funerals, graduations, or other sentimental rituals or events.



# Resources for Studying and Using Pathos in Arguments

- **View** the Vidcast: [Purdue OWL-Introduction to Pathos](#)
- **View** the video: [What is Pathos?](#)
- **View** the video: [Pathos – The Most Emotional Rhetorical Appeal](#)

## Using Pathos Correctly

Whether we are making arguments or analyzing them, it is important that we use Pathos carefully. Often, our emotions can get in the way of clear and critical thinking on an issue. Pathos can and should be used to clarify how a well-supported position relates to our values and beliefs but should never be used to manipulate, confuse or inflate an issue beyond what the evidence is capable of supporting.

- **View** the handout: [Persuasion-Emotion](#)
- **View** the handout : [Using Ethos, Logos, and Pathos](#)

# The Science of Emotions

The following three TED Talks each address the science and growing body of research that explores the biological origins of our emotional states and what we can learn about ourselves from carefully studying our feelings. While not addressing the techniques of argument analysis and critical thinking directly, we can learn a great deal from these talks about the way Pathos is used to influence our choices, our perceptions, our thoughts, values, and beliefs by understanding how emotions work and how, possibly, to better control them.

- **View** the video: [Why What We Feel Matters More Than What We Think](#)
- **View** the video: [Why You Feel What You Feel](#)
- **View** the video: [The Science of Emotions](#)

These TED Talks give us a great deal of information on the science of emotions and how we can use that data to better understand and work with our feelings. They can also help explain how advertisers, politicians, and others can develop pretty effective methods to use our emotions against us in ways that are often harmful, manipulative, and deceptive. Some things to consider in summary:

- Humans are very complex emotional creatures who use their feelings as much as, or even more than, their thoughts to make decisions in the world.
- Even though scientists have graphed several thousand distinct emotions, most people only feel 8-10 of them with any regularity.
- Of those top 10, the overwhelming majority of people make most of their decisions based on just three: love, hatred, and fear.
- We make, on average, around 33,000 individual choices a day. If the data is correct, most of those decisions are governed, at least in part, by our reactions to our internal states of love, hatred and/or fear.
- So if we are not aware of (and at least somewhat in control of) how we process these emotions, anyone who wishes to manipulate us (politicians, advertisers, abusive partners, incompetent writing professors, etc.) can misuse **Pathos** in manipulative ways to trigger states of love, hatred, or fear in us to make us more susceptible to accepting or rejecting a given argument without fully considering the merits of its evidence.
- Conversely, when understood correctly and used in conjunction with the other rhetorical appeals, Pathos can be an effective way to show an audience the “face” of an otherwise abstract problem or argument.

# 7. Rhetorical Fallacies

ANDREW GUREVICH

## Fallacies of Argument

In this chapter, we continue our exploration of the three-fold structure of argument analysis articulated by the ancient



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Greeks. **Pathos** (emotion, values) & **Ethos** (character, credibility) present their own unique characteristics when misused or manipulated in an argument, but the fallacies of **Logos** (logic) are so common and so debilitating, they require their own consideration. In the study of what we call “informal” logic, there are several places where corruptions or distortions can enter the equation. Sometimes this is deliberate, other times it is not. These corruptions are also commonly referred to as “rhetorical fallacies” because, as we shall see, although they are often primarily distortions in logic, they also

infect or distort the credibility and emotional appeals within the improper construction of arguments.

Regardless, we need to develop our skills in recognizing logical fallacies in our work and the work of others and correcting them with clear, fair, and well-supported reasons. This chapter is intended to help you explore and develop these very skills.

A **rhetorical fallacy** is a flaw in reasoning. Rhetorical fallacies are like tricks or illusions of thought, and they're often very sneakily used by politicians and the media to fool people. They are not always easy to spot and frequently we commit them accidentally. Spotting them in our own arguments and in the arguments of others is a superpower that can help you strengthen your analytical tool kit.

Rhetorical fallacies, or fallacies of argument, don't allow for the open, two-way exchange of ideas upon which meaningful arguments depend. Instead, they distract the reader with various distortions of thought instead of clarifying ideas using sound reasoning. They can be divided into three basic categories:

1. **Emotional fallacies** unfairly appeal to the audience's emotions.
2. **Ethical fallacies** unreasonably advance the arguer's own authority or character, or unfairly dismiss that of the opponent.
3. **Logical fallacies** depend upon faulty logic or

reasoning.

Keep in mind that rhetorical fallacies often overlap. Regardless, we need to develop our skills in recognizing rhetorical fallacies in our work and the work of others and correcting them with clear, fair and well-supported reasons. This unit is intended to help you explore and develop these very skills. Don't worry so much about trying to memorize the individual names of all of the various rhetorical fallacies. Spend your time and energy, rather, learning to identify when someone (yourself included) is using them in an argument, how and where to find the materials to identify them, and how best to correct them and keep the discussion on track.

- **View** the video: [Introduction to Logical Fallacies](#)
  - **View** the video: [Top Ten Logical Fallacies](#)
  - **View** the video: [Five Fallacies in Ads](#)
- 
- **View** the handout: [Rhetorical Fallacies #1](#)
  - **View** the handout: [Rhetorical Fallacies #2](#)
  - **View** the handout: [Rhetorical Fallacies #3](#)
- 
- **View** the outside link: [Your Logical Fallacy Is?](#)
  - **View** the outside link: [Fallacies UNC](#)

Our use of logical support in arguments is subject to several possible corruptions along the way to a sound argument. Sometimes an arguer will commit these fallacies on purpose with the intent of fooling or manipulating the audience. But more often, we make these mistake accidentally, with the best of intentions. Regardless, if we are to evaluate and make sound arguments, we need to be able to spot the presence of logical fallacies, in our own arguments and in the arguments of others. The presence of a logical fallacy does not mean the entire argument is invalid, just that the particular reasoning is flawed or lacking in this one place. Finding and correcting logical fallacies can actually lead to making an argument stronger and easier to accept. We have not abandoned the use of **Logos**, **Pathos** and **Ethos** in our evaluation of arguments, but rather now added the concept of **rhetorical fallacies** to the mix. As we go forward together, try to continue to use all of the tools we are exploring in your analysis and creation of arguments.

# 8. Toulmin Analysis (Claims and Data)

ANDREW GUREVICH

## Toulmin Model: Claims & Data



This unit explores a method of argument analysis, developed by philosopher Stephen E.

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Toulmin, that analyzes arguments by exploring their **underlying assumptions**.

Stephen Toulmin was a British philosopher, author, and educator. Influenced by Ludwig Wittgenstein, Toulmin devoted his works to the analysis of moral reasoning. Throughout his writings, he sought to develop practical arguments which can be used effectively in evaluating the ethics behind moral issues. His works were later found useful in the field of rhetoric for analyzing rhetorical arguments. The Toulmin Model of Argumentation, a diagram containing six interrelated components used for



analyzing arguments, was considered his most influential work, particularly in the field of rhetoric and communication, and in computer science.

The Toulmin method is a style of argumentation that breaks arguments down into six component parts: **claim**, **grounds**, **warrant**, **qualifier**, **rebuttal**, and **backing**. However, in Toulmin's method, every argument *begins* with three fundamental parts: the claim, the grounds, and the warrant.

A **claim** is the assertion that authors would like to prove to their audience. It is, in other words, the main argument.

The **grounds** (or data) of an argument are the reasons, evidence, and facts that help support the claim.

Finally, the **warrant**, which is either implied or stated explicitly, is the assumption that links the grounds to the claim.

In this chapter, we will mostly be addressing **claims** and **grounds/data**.

## The Toulmin Model – for creating and structuring arguments

**Claim:** the position or claim being argued for; the conclusion of the argument.

**Data/Grounds:** reasons or supporting evidence that bolster the claim.

**Warrant:** the principle, provision or chain of reasoning that connects the grounds/reason to the claim

**Backing:** support, justification, reasons to back up the warrant.

**Rebuttal/Reservation:** exceptions to the claim; description and rebuttal of counter-examples and counter-arguments.

**Qualification:** specification of limits to claim, warrant and backing. The degree of conditionality asserted.

## Toulmin Analysis Model – for reading and analyzing an argument

The Toulmin model can also be used when you read an argument essay so that you can better analyze the author's writing. Here are questions you can ask as you are reading:

- **Claim:** The author wants me to believe? When looking for the **claim**, ask yourself the question: “What is the main idea of central claim of this argument?”
- **Grounds/Support:** I should believe this

because? When looking for the **data/grounds**, ask yourself the question, “What are the reasons given to support the claim?”

- **Warrants:** Why is this claim important to the author? What are the assumptions and/or values the author holds? When looking for the **warrant**, ask yourself the question, “Why does the arguer believe this data proves this claim?”
- **Backing for Warrants:** What evidence does the author give to remind me of warrants and make me want to accept them?
- **Rebuttal:** Are other positions shown? Are they refuted or discussed?
- **Qualifier:** Is there anything which suggests the claim might be limited (sometimes, probably, possibly, if)?

## Claims

There are FOUR basic types of claims:

1. Claims of **Fact** (Claims that assert their main idea as a matter of fact, supported by relevant, sufficient and reliable grounds.)

2. Claims of **Value** (Claims that assert their main idea as a matter of morals, values, or beliefs, supported by appeals to the shared beliefs and values of the audience.)
3. Claims of **Policy** (Claims that assert their main idea as a matter of changing policy, supported by relevant, sufficient and reliable grounds AND appeals to the values of the audience.)
4. Claims of **Definition** (Claims that assert their main idea as a matter of defining a concept or term, supported by relevant, sufficient and reliable grounds that justify and fortify the proposed definition.)

## Grounds/Data

The actual truth of the data of a given argument may be less than 100%, as much data are ultimately based on perception. We assume what we measure is true, but there may be problems in this measurement, ranging from a faulty measurement instrument to biased sampling. It is critical to the argument that the grounds are not challenged because, if they are, they may become a claim, which you will need to prove with even deeper information and further argument.

Information is usually a very powerful element of

persuasion, although it does affect people differently. Those who are dogmatic, logical, or rational are more likely to be persuaded by factual data. Those who argue emotionally and who are highly invested in their own position will challenge it or otherwise try to ignore it. It is often a useful test to give something factual to the other person that disproves their argument, and watch how they handle it. Some will accept it without question. Some will dismiss it out of hand. Others will dig deeper, requiring more explanation. This is where the warrant comes into its own (discussed in the next chapter).

When considering the support offered to justify a given claim, there are several things to consider:

1. Is the support offered in defense of the claim sufficient, relevant, reliable, and authoritative? How can it be improved?
2. Does the support offered in defense of the claim match the *kind* of claim being argued? In other words, if it is a claim of fact, value, policy, or definition, does the arguer provide the right kind of support to defend that particular kind of claim?
3. Are alternative points of view considered and given fair treatment?
4. Is there anything essential that should be added to the data/grounds that would help to further support or challenge the assertion of the main claim?

- **View** the short video: [Toulmin Analysis](#)
- **View** the Powerpoint Presentation: [Toulmin Model](#)
- **Review** the document: [Toulmin Worksheet](#)
- **Review** the document: [Toulmin Argument Structure Worksheet](#)
- **Review** the webpage: [Purdue OWL on the Toulmin Model](#)

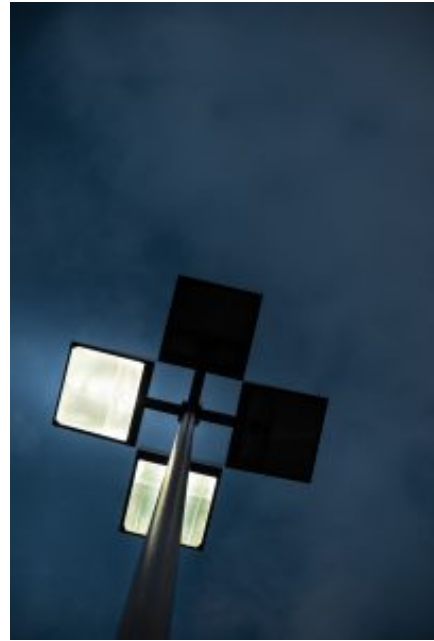
# 9. Toulmin Analysis (Warrants)

ANDREW GUREVICH

## Toulmin Model: Warrants

In this chapter, we continue to explore the method of argument analysis developed by the British logician Stephen Toulmin. The method analyzes arguments by exploring their underlying assumptions and implicit rhetorical structures. This week we will address:

**Warrant** (The underlying assumption that connects the claim to the data). A warrant links data and other grounds to a claim, legitimizing the claim by showing the grounds to be relevant. The warrant may be explicit or unspoken



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and implicit. It answers the question ‘Why does that data mean your claim is true?’

Warrants may be based on *logos*, *ethos*, or *pathos*, or values that are assumed to be shared with the listener. In many arguments, warrants are often implicit and hence unstated. This gives space for the other person to question and expose the warrant, perhaps to show it is weak or unfounded. If no warrant can be made between the data and claim, then you are presenting unrelated ideas and cannot make an argument out of them.

## Warrants/General Strategies of Argument

Warrants are chains of reasoning that connect the claim and evidence/grounds. Warrants operate at a higher level of generality than a claim or reason, and they are not normally explicit. They rely on shared *assumptions* between the one(s) making the argument and those receiving it. If these assumptions are not shared, or not properly understood, then the argument will not be as effective.

- **Example:** “Needle exchange programs should be abolished [claim] because they only cause more people to use drugs [reason/data].” The unstated warrant is: “when you make risky behavior



safer you encourage more people to engage in it.”

- **Example:** “We should outlaw same-sex marriage [claim] because the Bible says it is morally wrong [reason/data].” The unstated warrant is: “we should base laws on what the Bible says.”

If the audience/readers share the warrant (the underlying assumption that connects the data to the claim) they will likely find the argument valid. If they do not, they will likely not. There are THREE main types of warrants:

- **Substantive Warrants** (based in Logos)
- **Authoritative Warrants** (based in Ethos)
- **Motivational Warrants** (based in Pathos)

## More on Warrants:

Warrants are the logic or assumptions that connect your evidence to the claim. They demonstrate how your evidence logically and justifiably supports your claim. Warrants are often left unstated and commonly take one of the following six forms:

**Warrant Based Generalization:** What is true of the sample is likely true of the whole. A very common form of reasoning. It assumes that what is true of a well chosen

sample is likely to hold for a larger group or population, or that certain things consistent with the sample can be inferred of the group/population.

**Warrant Based on Analogy:** What is true of one situation is likely true of another, so long as they share key characteristics. Extrapolating from one situation or event based on the nature and outcome of a similar situation or event. Has links to 'case-based' and precedent-based reasoning used in legal discourse. What is important here is the extent to which relevant similarities can be established between two contexts. Are there sufficient, typical, accurate, relevant similarities?

**Warrant Based on Sign:** One thing indicates the presence or outcome of something else. For example, we can diagnose an illness or disease by its symptoms. People who own expensive things likely have a lot of money. The notion that certain types of evidence are symptomatic of some wider principle or outcome. For example, smoke is often considered a sign for fire. Some people think high SAT scores are a sign a person is smart and will do well in college.

**Warrant Based on Causality:** One thing causes another. For example, eating too much sugar is the cause of numerous health conditions. Arguing that a given occurrence or event is the result of, or is effected by, factor X. Causal reasoning is the most complex of the different forms of warrant. The big dangers with it are:

1. Mixing up correlation with causation
2. Falling into the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* trap.

Closely related to confusing correlation and causation, this involves inferring ‘after the fact, therefore because of the fact’.

**Warrant Based on Authority:** An indication that something is true because an authority or group of authorities affirms it. For example, nearly all of the planet’s esteemed scientists say that climate change is real. Does person X or text X constitute an authoritative source on the issue in question? What political, ideological or economic interests does the authority have? Is this the sort of issue in which a significant number of authorities are likely to agree on?

**Warrant Based on Principle:** An agreed-upon value or rule applied to a specific scenario. For example, *parents should love their children* is a widely-shared value. Backing (or refuting) that this value should apply to a specific parent in question might be the goal of an attorney in a criminal trial. Locating a principle that is widely regarded as valid and showing that a situation exists in which this principle applies. Evaluation: Is the principle widely accepted? Does it accurately apply to the situation in question? Are there commonly agreed on exceptions? Are there ‘rival’ principles that lead to a different claim? Are the practical consequences of following the principle sufficiently desirable?

Warrants are important because if your audience does not accept your warrant, they are not likely to accept your argument. Warrants can be questioned, which is why they often require backing.

- **View** the Video: [Understanding Warrants](#)
- **View** the Video: [Assumptions & Warrants](#)
- **View** the Video: [Warrants in an Argument](#)
- **View** the Handout: [Toulmin Worksheet](#) (use it to help diagram the various elements of any argument you wish to analyze).

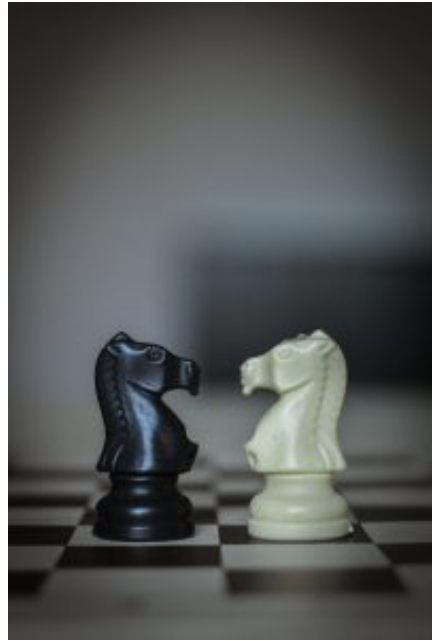
# 10. Visual Arguments, Media and Advertising

ANDREW GUREVICH

## Visual Arguments

In this chapter, we will be exploring the use of visuals (images, charts, graphs, etc.) in the presentation of arguments. Like any other piece of support, images and other visuals are compelling when used correctly. They also can be used in ways that

contribute to all of the flaws, fallacies, and faulty reasoning we have been exploring all along. Images can support written or spoken arguments or become the arguments *themselves*. They hold great power in



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advertising, journalism, politics, academia, and many other areas of our media-managed perceptions of the world around us. As such they deserve our attention here as we continue our discussion of the analysis and construction of valid arguments.

When we say “argument,” we usually think of either spoken or written arguments. However, arguments can be made in all forms, including visual arguments. **Visual arguments** rely on images to persuade a viewer to believe or do something. Advertisements in magazines are often types of visual arguments. But there are many other examples to consider, each with their own particular set of parameters to evaluate in pursuit of analyzing and constructing valid arguments.

Basically, a visual argument is a supporting (or rebuttal) statement. It utilizes various images to intensify the effect on the audience. It is undoubtedly true that pictures or other visual art pieces help engage a wider range of people. In addition, images sometimes may reflect the values and beliefs of the culture. Thus, visuals arguments are more appealing to the public than verbal ones.

Exploring the usage of the images as a way of conveying the message requires substantial research. That is why visual rhetoric should be examined. The desire to watch a movie, streaming series, or a cartoon is probably familiar to everyone. Though, not everyone notices when it happens after seeing a poster. Most of us are unaware

of how bombarded we are with visual rhetoric and the extent to which it actually does influence our thoughts and behaviors. But it's not all nefarious. A bright advertising picture can lead to taking part in a charity event, as well, or lead people to donate money or blood to victims of a natural disaster or war. Such experiences may be deeply personal and at the same time shared by the majority of people within a society, culture, or subculture. These are just a few examples of the vast impact of visual rhetoric on the public mind. By employing visual rhetoric, the author can lead the reader/viewer to different outcomes. For instance, they can induce compassion, anger, fear, curiosity, etc.

Marketing companies often use visual rhetoric to the advantages. It can become an effective way for a successful product or a service promotion. Visual argument advertisements are often the most effective in persuading consumers to make a purchase, because they can communicate a lot of information, and more importantly emotional impact, very quickly. The “father” of this science, first called “public relations,” was a man by the name of Edward Bernays, who was none other than the nephew of the famous Swiss psychologist Sigmund Freud. In fact, Bernays used many of his uncle's theories about the human mind to craft the basic models of the advertising industry that are still very much employed today. We will watch a film about the history of the advertising industry, and Ed Bernays in particular, below.

But for now, it is important to understand how visual argument works and what the best practices are for using it effectively, ethically, and creatively to support the arguments you make in academic contexts.

Say you are at the doctor's office in the waiting room, and you see an advertisement that has a beautiful model sitting in a Lexus driving down a long, open road. The image may evoke some feelings of inadequacy ("I'll never be as pretty as her"), freedom (the long, winding road), and envy. All of these work together as an "argument" to convince you that a Lexus will change your life, and you will be as beautiful and as free as the model if you only had one. On a rational level, we know none of this is true. But the ad does not speak to our rational minds. It speaks to a more irrational place, the subconscious, where our desires and thoughts often mix with memories, projections, fears, and other phobias to encourage an irrational response to the stimulus. As we can already see, like with other forms of arguments, visual arguments may contain logical fallacies or use (and misuse) rhetorical appeals to persuade the viewer. Our job is to learn to spot the misuse of them, and to also use them ethically, accurately, and responsibly in our own argumentative contexts.

Learning to decode visual arguments can be challenging. We are bombarded with images every day and are often unaware of how they affect us. For instance, did you know that red, yellow, orange, and green make

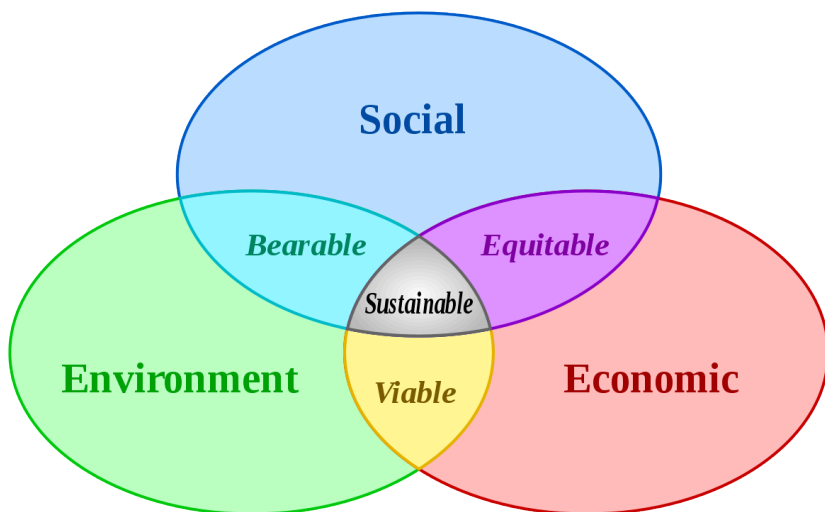


us hungry? Think about fast food chains. How many of them use one, or more, of those colors in their logo or design? In movies, we associate black with bad and white with good. In *Star Wars*, Darth Vader wears a black cloak, while Luke Skywalker often has light clothing. If a political cartoon showed a politician speaking in Times New Roman font and another politician speaking in Comic Sans, then it could be implying that one politician is serious while the other is childish. We tend to think of “visual” to mean only pictures, but learning to recognize how not just images, but color, layout, perspective, and even font choices, can affect people and influence their thoughts and choices can help you to hone your visual literacy and learn how to identify and evaluate visual arguments.

Adding visual elements to a persuasive argument can often strengthen its persuasive effect. There are two main types of visual elements: **quantitative visuals** and **qualitative visuals**.

**Quantitative** visuals present data graphically. They allow the audience to see statistics spatially. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience. For example, sometimes it is easier to understand the disparity in certain statistics if you can see how the disparity looks graphically. Bar graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, histograms, and line graphs are all ways of presenting quantitative data in spatial dimensions.

**Qualitative** visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions. Photographs and pictorial images are examples of qualitative visuals. Such images often try to convey a story, and seeing an actual example can carry more power than hearing or reading about the example. For example, one image of a child suffering from malnutrition will likely have more of an emotional impact than pages dedicated to describing that same condition in writing.



The Venn diagram above is a great example of how an image can be used effectively to communicate a complicated idea rather quickly and efficiently. Here, we can see that “sustainability” is defined as the intersection

of environmental, economic, and social concerns, for instance. Proper use of visuals can help us connect with an audience's emotions and values, build credibility, and share data and logical information in memorable and engaging ways.

- **Review** the handout: [Ideographs](#)
- **Review** the document: [Conducting Visual Arguments](#)

## Visual Argument Example: Gatorade Ad

Among the diversity of visual arguments, advertisers provide some of the most powerful examples. Let's examine a visual argument for Gatorade—a drink for sportspeople. It illustrates the supposed superiority of the Gatorade drink, among other beverages. A bright picture of the bottle and a memorable slogan are a marketing specialist's craft. It combines three main aspects of a successful visual ad: use of colors, “supernatural” power, and shock appeal.



The developers of the given visual ad reached a perfect mix of colors. The dominating ones of the poster are blue and green, which are generally considered to be “natural” ones. Nothing can be more powerful than “nature.” These are also the colors of “sport”. The colors of the grass and the sky. This idea serves as the hidden message of this color combination. As a result of this color mixing technique, the ad creator reaches its primary goal—the assurance of success in the race!

In addition to an effective color combination, the advertisement reflects a concept in advertising often referred to as “supernatural power.” The image illustrates

the bright container with the Gatorade drink pulling away from the others and dramatically winning the race. Moreover, it seems that the bottle with the advertised drink is “reaching for the sky.” This detail makes the ad even more eye-appealing and further suggests the one who has the drink will have the same power.

The rhetorical analysis helps to understand that the trick of placing the bottle ahead of other beverages is exceptionally effective. It persuades the audience to believe that Gatorade provides the drink takers with supernatural power. Hence, it motivates the target audience to purchase the beverage. The advertisement compares the athletes to the Gatorade. Thus, it convinces them that they will show excellent performance in the competition, as Gatorade does in the visual ad.

Apart from the use of colors and supernatural power, the given visual argument image implements other methods. For example, it uses a shock appeal technique. The ad demonstrates a real-life race, but with a metaphorical contestant—the Gatorade bottle. Consider the effect of “reaching the sky” by the container. It creates a vision of an incredibly strong nature of this beverage. As a result, the audience is “shocked” by Gatorade’s supernatural power and encouraged to buy it. Consequently, a shock appeal makes the visual argument images more effective. We will return to the ways advertisers and politicians use visuals to persuade us

later, but for now let us look at the academic ways to both analyze and use visuals in argument.

- **View** the vidcast: [Purdue OWL – Visual Rhetoric](#)
- **View** the video: [Visual Arguments Essay](#)
- **View** the video: [Visual Arguments](#)

## Visuals in Advertising and Social Media

The following video content explores how visual stimuli impacts the ways we think, believe, and behave in the world. We begin by returning to the beginning of the discussion about Edward Bernays, the “father” of modern advertising and the nephew of Sigmund Freud. After that, we look at the more modern impacts of visuals on social media in young people with an informative Frontline episode with the media analyst Douglas Rushkoff:

- **View** the film: [The Century of the Self – Happiness Machines](#)
- **View** the film: [Generation Like](#)

# II. Rhetorical Analysis

ANDREW GUREVICH

## Rhetorical Analysis



In this chapter, we will examine what is often called “rhetorical analysis” in English Composition

*“orario di lavoro operaio edile volta” by geralt is licensed under CC BY 4.0*

studies. In a sense, this is the culmination of everything we have been studying thus far. Through this analytical process, an analyst defines, classifies, analyzes, interprets, and evaluates a rhetorical artifact. Through this process a critic explores, by means of various rhetorical approaches, the manifested and latent meanings of a piece of rhetoric; thereby offering further insight into the field of rhetorical studies generally, and into an artifact or rhetor specifically. Such an analysis, for example, may reveal the particular motivations or ideologies of a rhetor, how they interpret the aspects of a rhetorical situation, or how cultural ideologies are manifested in an rhetorical artifact. It could also demonstrate how the constraints of a particular social

context or situation shape the rhetoric that responds to it.

**Rhetorical analysis/criticism** analyzes the symbolic artifacts of discourse — the words, phrases, images, gestures, performances, texts, films, etc. that people use to communicate. Rhetorical analysis shows how the artifacts work, how well they work, and how the artifacts, as discourse, inform and instruct, entertain and arouse, and convince and persuade the audience. As such, this discourse includes the possibility of morally improving the reader, the viewer, and the listener. Rhetorical criticism studies and analyzes the purpose of the words, sights, and sounds that are the symbolic artifacts used for communications among people.

A rhetorical analysis considers all elements of the rhetorical situation—the audience, purpose, medium, and context—within which a communication was generated and delivered in order to make an argument about that communication. A strong rhetorical analysis will not only describe and analyze the “text,” but will also evaluate it. This curated and careful evaluation represents your own argument in response to the rhetorical stimuli. The rhetorical situation identifies the relationship among the elements of any communication—audience, author, purpose, medium, context, and content. The time, place, and occasion surrounding the text during its original generation and delivery should also be considered. The text may also be analyzed within a different context, such



as how an historical text would be received by its audience today. It usually considers the following:

- **Description:** What does this “text” (rhetorical artifact) look like? Where did you find the text? Who sponsored it? What are the rhetorical appeals? (i.e. calm music in the background of a commercial establishes pathos) When was it created? Does the timing of its creation influence its reception and interpretation?
- **Analysis:** Why does the author incorporate these rhetorical appeals? (For example, why does the author incorporate calm music? What is the point of the pathos?) How would the reception of this text change if it were written today, as opposed to twenty years ago? What is left out of this text and why? Should there be more appeals to logos or ethos? Why or why not?
- **Evaluation:** Is the text effective? Is the text ethical? What might you change about this text to make it more persuasive?

## Rhetorical Analysis – Examples

- **View** the video: [Rhetorical Analysis Budweiser Commercial](#)

- **View** the video: [Rhetorical Analysis Coke Commercial](#)
- **View** the video: [Rhetorical Analysis P & G Commercial](#)
- **View** the video: [Rhetorical Analysis Taylor Swift](#)

## Rhetorical Analysis – Exercises

Now try your hand at it. Review the following documents and then conduct your own rhetorical analysis on the visual advertisements below.

- **Review** the document: [Rhetorical Analysis](#)
- **Review** the document: [Media Manipulation](#)
- **View** the video: [Nike's Colin Kaepernick ad](#)
- **View** the video: [Gillette Toxic Masculinity ad](#)
- **View** the video: [Kendall Jenner Pepsi ad](#)
- **View** the Video: [Ten Commercials From the 1940s](#)

# Critical Thinking Essay - 12 Angry Men

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Consult this [Critical Thinking Essay - 12 Angry Men Assignment Sheet](#). Due dates can be found on the Course Blackboard Page.

# Annotated Bibliographies: What? Why? How?

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Consult this [Annotated Bibliography Assignment Sheet](#).  
Due dates can be found on the Course Blackboard Page.

# Final Analysis Essay - Social Media and Public Argument

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Consult this [Final Research/Argument Essay Assignment Sheet](#). Due dates can be found on the Course Blackboard Page.

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