The problem of civic engagement necessarily entails the problem of argumentation. More specifically, it requires that citizens be critical consumers of public arguments. A central mode of critique encompasses the exposition of fallacious reasoning. This portfolio illustrates a strategy used to reimagine—and thus practice differently—the training of students in the ability to recognize, criticize, and even reproduce fallacies of argument. In particular, it establishes regular quizzing as a mode of cooperative learning that enables students to interrogate fallacies, produce exemplars, contribute to shared knowledge, and therefore move away from mere memorization and toward understanding. It also argues for a focus on cooperative learning as a mode of assessment, by which students create that which they “should” know. Furthermore, as a constituent element of a much larger ethos of *dissoi logoi*, fallacies of argument are shown herein to be part and parcel to a broader critical practice. This portfolio ultimately presents a case for quizzing as an effective tool for both cooperative and “extended” learning.

**Abstract**

The problem of civic engagement necessarily entails the problem of argumentation. More specifically, it requires that citizens be critical consumers of public arguments. A central mode of critique encompasses the exposition of fallacious reasoning. This portfolio illustrates a strategy used to reimagine—and thus practice differently—the training of students in the ability to recognize, criticize, and even reproduce fallacies of argument. In particular, it establishes regular quizzing as a mode of cooperative learning that enables students to interrogate fallacies, produce exemplars, contribute to shared knowledge, and therefore move away from mere memorization and toward understanding. It also argues for a focus on cooperative learning as a mode of assessment, by which students create that which they “should” know. Furthermore, as a constituent element of a much larger ethos of *dissoi logoi*, fallacies of argument are shown herein to be part and parcel to a broader critical practice. This portfolio ultimately presents a case for quizzing as an effective tool for both cooperative and “extended” learning.
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I. Contextualizing C228: Argumentation and Public Advocacy

i. General Overview

C228: Argumentation and Public Advocacy is an intensive, introductory level course on the theory, practice and criticism of public arguments. Typically, the course is offered in the Fall semester as a large 50-minute lecture (of which enrollment ranges from 90 to 120 students), which meets twice per week and is accompanied by 50-minute discussion sections (of up to 25 students). The discussion sections meet once per week and are led by Associate Instructors (A.I.s). In the Spring semester the course is offered again, albeit in two smaller 75-minute sessions (with no more than 35 students per class) that meet twice per week and are taught by the A.I.s. The course satisfies a general College of Arts and Humanities requirement. As such, it attracts students from a wide variety of disciplines, though it seems to be most popular amongst majors in Communication, Law, Environmental and Public Affairs, and Business Administration. In the Spring 2011 semester, I had a final enrollment of 26 students, of which 5 were Communication majors, 4 were Environmental and Public Affairs majors, 1 was a Business Administration major, 7 were Health, Physical Education and Recreation majors, and the rest were generally within the College of Arts and Sciences. Of these students, 1 was a Freshman, 5 were Sophomores, 10 were Juniors and 10 were Seniors. As well, 8 students were male, 18 were female. The composition of class levels appears to conform to general tendencies of enrollment, since the course seems to attract upper level students. The gender distribution might be a bit more uncharacteristic.

ii. Course Outline for Spring 2011

C228 is fundamentally grounded in the problem of civic engagement. It operates under the assumption that a liberal-democratic polity relies upon the ability of its citizens to be both active and critical producers and consumers of public arguments. This production and consumption of arguments is seen as part of a “reasoned” process, constitutive of individual and collective decision-making. This is not to suggest that decisions are always made according to rationality and reasonableness – or even that reason and rationality are the only or most productive vehicles of social and political change. It is to suggest that we are better off if we master the fundamental skills of rhetoric and argumentation as primary means for representing and protecting our own best interests and the best interests of the body politic. Accordingly, the course has five broad learning objectives:

1. To establish, practice and deploy a grammar of argumentation oriented toward public advocacy and an appreciation of controversy.

2. To understand the V-Model of Argumentation, which functions as an argumentative framework driven by the complex relationship between propositions of fact, value, and policy.

(continued next page)
3. To distinguish between propositions at the levels of fact, value, and policy in order to establish appeals appropriate to each level.

4. To embody the principle of dissoi logoi, or the “rhetorical and pedagogical strategy of arguing many sides of an issue that advances a particular relativism as constitutive of ethical action and a democratic polity.”

5. To rehearse the production and consumption (or criticism) of public arguments – with a particular eye to recognizing fallacious reasoning – in focused classroom exercises and carefully crafted argumentative essays.

Though it seems obvious that argumentation is in essence a competitive endeavor, this course is designed to be a practice of cooperative learning whereby students are encouraged to produce what they learn. Controversia, or controversy, therefore figures central as a means for exercising questions of justice in and through methods of ethical deliberation, whereby self-interest is co-productive of the interests of others. In other words, conflict, tension and difference are taken as good things, and learning – as much as argumentation – is positioned as co-operative struggle. Dissoi logoi is, after all, best understood as a pedagogy of civic friendship.

iii. Background Narrative of Inquiry

When serving as a teaching assistant (A.I.) and discussion leader in the Fall 2010 semester, I was perturbed by the fact that students were required to commit to memory thirty-six micro-structural fallacies of argument. To be clear, it was not the memorization that bothered me, but rather the fact that not once were the fallacies discussed in class (aside from a very small portion of time that I dedicated to fallacies in my own weekly discussion sections) – and this despite the fact that questions pertaining to argumentative fallacies comprised 75 percent of the multiple choice midterm examination. Put simply, my concern was that, if knowledge transfer is “a function of relationships between what is learned and what is tested,” there must be some reciprocity between what goes on in the classroom and

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what is expected of students outside of it. Learning and understanding cannot, in my view, be a simple matter of information processing and regurgitation. My inquiry and concomitant intervention therefore focused primarily on Objective 5 (see above), though it is altogether incomprehensible outside of an awareness of the basic framework and grammar of the course. As such, I implemented a student-centered approach that focused on learning through understanding rather than straight memorization.

II. Critical Objectives

The purpose of training students to be able to recognize, criticize and even reproduce fallacies of argument is primarily to empower them to become critical producers and consumers of arguments. Of course, there is certainly an case to be made for the idea that “a training in critical thinking based primarily on a study of the fallacies is likely to foster a disposition in the student to be overcritical” and/or “to judge very good arguments as fallacious.” Hence why the investigation of fallacies is interleaved in the study of informal reasoning as a critical tactic, not as a program of study. Hence also why the scrutiny of fallacies is at once a tool for inspecting one’s own argument as much as one’s opposition.

The teaching challenge is concurrently the learning challenge, since both have to do with the fact that students must memorize the fallacies and be able to recall them based on (a) their name alone, (b) their definition, and/or (c) an example of them from public discourse. To facilitate memorization, a worksheet comprised of every fallacy is provided to the students. Fallacies are categorized by groups, of which there are seven: causal, circumstantial, synthetic, formal, propagandistic, ethical, and strategic. Each group is defined by the shared characteristics of fallacies subsumed in it, and each fallacy therein is accompanied by a definition and at least one example. To facilitate memorization is one thing. To facilitate understanding, it seems to me, is another matter entirely.

The overall objective is to enable students to recall and evaluate any one of the thirty-six fallacies on cue. As one might imagine, this is no simple task.

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III. An Interventional Framework

In order to give fallacies of argument a central position in the course, I implemented a comprehensive plan for cooperative learning – and this “to draw out students’ voices and put those in critical dialogue with others’ voices”:\(^5\)

- I structured 15 minutes into seven class sessions dedicated solely to work on particular groups of fallacies (1/19, causal; 1/24, circumstantial; 1/26, synthetic; 1/31, formal; 2/7, propagandistic; 2/9, ethical; and 2/21, strategic).

- I added a Cooperative Learning assignment (Figure 1) in which individual students signed up for one fallacy (and, in some cases, a second one due to enrollment numbers), which became theirs to master, summarize (in one sentence), exemplify (based on a “real life” argument from public discourse) and “present” to the class (by way of posting work to an OnCourse forum at least 24 hours before the day on which their group of fallacies was being discussed). I then engaged student work on OnCourse and responded to it with detailed feedback that was viewable by all class members.

- I added a Quiz component by which students were held responsible for learning particular groups of fallacies on particular days. Quizzes on specific groups of fallacies (Figure 2) took place on abovementioned dates and were entirely comprised of student work. They were typically comprised of 5 multiple choice questions. On many occasions, not every fallacy from a particular group would appear on a quiz. Also, as the semester went on, I cycled in questions dealing in fallacies from prior weeks – oftentimes those that were not earlier represented. All quizzes were graded and discussed in class.

- I added a graded component to fallacy work, which operated on a point system (10 points for individual work on single fallacy plus total points from all quizzes) and encompassed 5 percent of the students’ overall grades.

- I changed the weighting of the midterm examination from 75 percent to 50 percent fallacies and drew every fallacy question from student work. (For the final examination, each student elected to choose a fallacy that they had not previously worked on or had not fully understood to master, summarize, exemplify and post to a midterm examination forum on Oncourse [Figure 3]. All questions dealing in fallacies on the examination were pulled from this database of over 100 questions. Note also that students elected to write the questions from class sessions that would comprise the other 50 percent of the midterm examination. They produced a second database that contained nearly 60 questions).

My rationale for the “daily” quiz component alongside the cooperative learning initiative was based on my sense that (a) if a body of knowledge is important enough to mandate memorization, it is too important to leave out of classroom learning, (b) quizzing – if used as a an anticipated and ordinary tool for both reinforcement and “extended learning”:\(^6\) – can be an

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\(^6\) Melissa Broeckelman and Mylen Yamamoto, “Frequent Quizzing: Do we HAVE to Take a Quiz Again?” presented at 82 Annual Convention of the *Western States Communication Association* 2011.
effective instrument for both rote memorization and the practice of argumentative reasoning, and (c) students work better when held accountable to, by and for a group (not to mention to a grade, as much as we might like to resist this fact). This portfolio includes cumulative quiz data, midterm examination data, and conclusions for each hypothesis detailed below. These are followed by a selection of student reflections.
IV. Hypothesis, Data, and Conclusions

i. Hypothesis 1

The cooperative learning assignments will enable students to learn the fallacies together and will thus enhance individual comprehension. The “daily” quizzes will reinforce this cooperative learning and will help students memorize and retain the fallacies.

Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Fallacies</th>
<th>Circumstantial Fallacies</th>
<th>Synthetic Fallacies</th>
<th>Formal Fallacies</th>
<th>Propaganda Devices</th>
<th>Ethical Appeals</th>
<th>Strategic Fallacies</th>
<th>Total Averages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/19</td>
<td>1/24</td>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>1/31</td>
<td>2/7</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>2/23</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class Avg. 60% 75% 80% 86% 93% 91% 91% 75%

Presenter Avg. 75% 90% 92% 96% 93% 100% 100% 92%

Conclusion

In some ways, it is not entirely surprising that class and “presenter” averages consistently increased as the semester progressed. “Presenters” in particular were noticeably well prepared for quizzes – no doubt because they were required to submit work for day’s quiz. There is also reason to presume that low class averages early on motivated many students to come to class better prepared, especially considering that quizzes continued to assess retention of fallacies from prior weeks. Regardless, the quizzes appeared to be successful in reinforcing cooperative learning and helping students memorize and retain the fallacies.

“Presenter” indicates students who submitted work on the OnCourse forum for the group of fallacies under study on a particular day.
ii. **Hypothesis 2**

The cooperative learning assignments, paired with the quizzes and student-created questions, will yield high grades on the midterm examination.

**Data**

The following is cumulative data reflecting student performance on the midterm examination.

- The class average on the midterm examination was **91%**.
- The class average on questions dealing in fallacies on the midterm examination was **90%**.

The following is a breakdown of groups of fallacies represented in questions on the midterm examination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fallacies</th>
<th>Causal Fallacies</th>
<th>Circumstantial Fallacies</th>
<th>Synthetic Fallacies</th>
<th>Formal Fallacies</th>
<th>Propaganda Devices</th>
<th>Ethical Appeals</th>
<th>Strategic Fallacies</th>
<th>Total Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There are 5 causal fallacies, 6 circumstantial fallacies, 3 synthetic fallacies, 7 formal fallacies, 4 propaganda devices, 4 ethical appeals, and 7 strategic fallacies.

**Conclusion**

There is certainly reason to believe that students could have forgotten many of the fallacies from the quiz work and simply (re)committed them to memory for the midterm examination. In addition, it is plausible that a multiple choice test enables students to perform better – and display the appearance of comprehension – by virtue of the capacity to guess (and/or, in this case, to memorize the examples and their correspondent answers). Both of these strike me as fairly unlikely occurrences considering that many of the fallacies share similar features that are indiscernible without complete knowledge of them. In addition, the question bank from which I drew the 22 questions had, as mentioned above, over 100 questions.

That said, the cooperative learning and “daily” quizzing seemed to be a success. This is especially apparent considering that the class average on the midterm examination exceeded that of the cumulative quizzes and was comparable to the “presenter” averages.
V. Student Feedback and Reflection

I am generally not one who believes that any sort of discourse can speak for itself (and, after all, when we discuss “facts” in this class, one of the things we stress is that a “fact” can never speak for itself – it must always be spoken for). However, with respect to the relative efficacy of the interventions, I am inclined to let (at least some of) the students, well, speak for themselves.\(^7\)

Note: Students were asked to write openly in response to the following prompts: How valuable (or not) did you find the fallacy quizzes to be in helping you learn the fallacies? In general, how prepared do you feel for the midterm examination? How much did your knowledge of the fallacies of argument play into your research/writing of both the opposition research and the argumentative essays?

i. The Fallacy Quizzes

“The fallacy quizzes were one of my favorite activities in this class.”

“The fallacy quizzes were very useful because it helped us better analyze the things we read. While I don’t remember all of them, I remember some, so it is something I’ll take from this class.”

“Fallacy quizzes are by far the best thing I’ve learned in this course. I’m able to recognize them in the media and other public discourses.”

“I thought the quizzes helped but mainly for short-term. There were a lot of fallacies so it was difficult to retain information on all of them throughout the semester.”

“In terms of ‘value’ of the fallacy quizzes, I found the examples to be most helpful for knowing and applying each fallacy. I also thought it was helpful that everyone was, in a way, responsible for learning each fallacy – it made application seem less difficult.”

“The quizzes made me more mindful of fallacies, though names of the fallacies haven’t really stuck with me.”

“The quizzes were useful for the midterm because they exposed us to the fallacies before the midterm. Even though it was hard to remember all of them week to week, the exposure still helped.”

“The value of the fallacy quizzes was that in studying for them you had to grasp the concepts and challenge yourself to think hard to understand them. In producing my own examples for fallacy quizzes, I needed to truly grasp the fallacy and think critically to find appropriate examples.”

“The quizzes helped to guide studying for the fallacies. It was nice to also put together the work for them. Longterm [sic], I remember more than I would have without the quizzes, though I still do not remember all. It also helped me put more criticism in what we were looking at during research, because we were constantly looking for fallacies.”

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\(^7\) I do not include any names of student respondents in order to preserve anonymity.
“The fallacy quizzes helped me more with the midterm than I thought. I had trouble on the fallacy quizzes, but remembered them more down the line after talking about them.”

“The nice thing about the quizzes was reading the feedback on them (the OnCourse postings).”

“The pre-quiz fallacy assignments (examples, defs [sic]), def. [sic] helped me remember the fallacies beyond the quiz. Also, having them reappear on the midterm grounded me in them through repetition.”

ii. The Midterm Examination

“I felt very prepared for the exam – the format and style (how we basically made it ourselves) was very useful and helped me get a better grasp on the material.”

“I thought the midterm was appropriate and an excellent method to solidify the ideas of the course. The set-up was perfect for my style of learning.”

“I thought I was very prepared for the midterm. I really like how we (students) got to basically write it. The forum helped a lot as well.”

“Fallacies were good prep for Midterm….“

“I felt very prepared for the midterm. I’ve never felt more prepared for a college test.”

“I thought that the midterm was extremely fair, and that the forum for it was extremely helpful.”

“One of the most fair exams I have taken in college. Hit the most important aspects of the course and all my understanding of content.”

iii. The Opposition Research and Argumentative Essays

“Whenver I’d be writing, I’d constantly be thinking about the fallacies, making sure that I didn’t make any. I found that my knowledge of these fallacies allowed me to better my argumentative writing.”

“My knowledge of fallacies found its way into my research. I’d say more than anything I use the fallacies with ‘out of classroom’ activities.”

“Knowledge of fallacies did help me evaluate research for the opposition research assignment and P.O.V. [Proposition of Value] paper. This has definitely helped me evaluate argument [sic] in this class, as well as in my other classes and thesis research.”

“When developing my papers I feel as if every phrase could be seen/interpreted as a fallacy so it’s overwhelming to try and seek them out and then correct them. I am more conscious of my language and claims, though.”

“While the fallacies didn’t have a huge role in my opposition research and P.O.V., they did help me remember ‘how not to argue’ my points.”
“It was helpful to know the fallacies when writing these papers because I would more readily point out weaknesses in the opposition argument as well as mask and/or eliminate fallacies in my own argument [sic].”

“I think that I was already sensitive to fallacies of argument. It did neat things to my thought process to enhance the resolution of my B.S. detector from a simple flashing B.S. light to a specific fallacy.”
VI. Reflections and Ways Forward

C228 operates on the premise – and perhaps too optimistically – that social change can be effected by working through systems of governance rather than around them. It is a class that pushes students to confront power relations as an unavoidably burdensome part of civic and cultural politics while recognizing that contemporary political agendas, especially vis-à-vis the educative aims for a supposedly democratic citizenry, are fraught at best. And perhaps most importantly, it foregrounds the notion that many public arguments come to us as prejudiced opinions that masquerade (or at times even unabashedly flaunt) as reasoned judgment. As Benjamin R. Barber notes of today’s political milieu: “Being right quickly comes to trump being creditable and provable, and we lose the core democratic faculty of admitting that we might be wrong, and that our views must be judged by some criterion other than how deeply we hold them.” An understanding of fallacies thus figures central as it engenders the capacity to call out both unsoundness and deception – even when it is our own judgments that stand to be deceptive and unsound.

From a more practical standpoint, the “daily” quizzes seemed to put enough pressure on students to produce quality work and trust the work of their peers while rewarding them for preparedness. The pedagogy of cooperative learning – whereby students are empowered both in and out of the classroom to participate in the establishment of learning objectives and the production of teaching materials – is an influence of Henry Giroux, among others, and a philosophy of teaching that undergirds my larger teaching goals. This is to say that it is part of a broader pedagogy that I employ to enable students to participate more freely, to democratize the classroom, and to debate the form and content of both class discussions and learning assessments (they elected, for example, to be quizzed on each group, to post work to online forums, to write questions for the midterm examination, and the like). Unfortunately, space prohibits any further mention of specific methods. I will say, however, that the emphasis on fallacies of argument cannot be understood outside of the broader framework of dissoi logoi, which underwrites our argumentative ethos and the critical agency I hope to inspire. On this thought I will conclude.

The concept of dissoi logoi is an ancient rhetorical philosophy that states: every argument has many sides, and all of them are correct. Of course, not all of them are good. A good public advocate – and likewise a good critique – is not only able to recognize good and bad arguments, but is also “to reproduce them, to understand them, and to critique them all.” Understanding the fallacies of argument better positions a student of argumentation to approach such an end. The learning assessments discussed herein tell me that many of my students developed a fairly strong sense of what constitutes fallacious reasoning. They also seem to suggest a proven capacity of my students to understand fallacies, reproduce them in specific examples, and “critique” them by picking them out. They also tell me that more needs to be done.

In the future, I would like to have students work as closely with more fallacies as they did with just a couple. It might be that having students work collectively on particular groups of fallacies is a next step. As well, I would like to have students embody in class the arguments they are supposedly critiquing. Exercises in role-play might be another addition. Lastly, much of our

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studies in rhetoric have students crafting their own arguments. It might be fun, as an extension of role-playing, to have students write a fallaciously argumentative essay. But there is more.

My experience in the Collegium has led me to some other “conclusions” that need to be figured in:

- Assessments can, and should, be an integral part of classroom culture. Many students seemed to truly appreciate them as a reward for learning. Others still envisioned quizzes as formative assessments insofar as they felt more “seamless with teaching and learning.” This seemed to be even clearer in students’ express ability to incorporate their understanding of the fallacies into their argumentative essays.
- Promptness of feedback, and maintenance of a feedback stream, also seemed to be imperative to student success. Both I and the students used OnCourse as a conduit for communication and learning, and it was obvious that my critical commentary helped in their comprehension of their own work and the work of their peers.
- Learning transfer seemed to be directly implicated within conditions of possibility for understanding. A key condition, I think, was the capacity for cooperative learning to foster ongoing negotiation and collective thought.
- The creation of a general “learner-centered” environment made purposeful, intentional instruction “easy.” Because students were fully encompassed in the broader feedback loop of the class, I was able to learn from them what it is that they needed to learn. Much of our work stemmed off of their input.

I admit that seemingly constant quizzing was not something I ever imagined myself incorporating into a class – especially not one predicated upon argumentation. However, I have come to appreciate the quiz as a powerful tool for cooperative learning. To be fair, the fallacies that I require my students to learn are conducive to frequent quizzing, if for nothing other than their groupings and segmentations. I also understand that it can be difficult to strike a balance between not enough quizzing and, what is probably worse, too much. Yet I would be surprised if more courses in the humanities would not benefit from such an antithetically quantitative practice for measuring student understanding. That quizzing itself is an outmoded form of teaching and learning is, it seems to me, a fallacy of argument.

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Appendix

Figure 1: Sample Cooperative Learning Assignment Online Post

1.

While defending Sarah Palin's use of what appeared to be rifle sights on an electoral map, media aide Rebecca Mansour claimed that the symbols in question were actually "surveyor's symbols." Understanding the symbol as a surveyor's symbol rather than a rifle sight is a constant sign fallacy because though the mark may once have had strong associations with surveying, it now has strong associations with shooting.

This is a fantastic example! After all, much of the general U.S. population is unfamiliar with such symbols, but is familiar with the symbol of a crosshair. Considering the resonance of Palin's catchword, "Reload," the argument is indeed a tough—if not fallacious—one. I deleted the last line because you do not want to tell people what the fallacy is in the course of the example; and I kept the original wording of your first sentence because, well, its perfect.

2.

Controversy arose from Alabama governor Robert Bentley's assertion that "anybody who has not accepted Jesus Christ as their savior" is neither his brother nor his sister. Bentley went on to suggest, with notable nineteenth and sixteenth century Puritan overtones, that faith is evident in those who are willing to die for their core beliefs. Moreover, such a willingness is the only sign of religious tolerance. His argument: "I do have core beliefs and I will die with those core beliefs. But I do not want to be harmful to others. And I will die if I have to defend someone else's right to worship as they choose."

Obviously, I edited this a bit. The core idea is, however, spot on. Nice work.

3.

When Ivan Pavlov struck a bell while feeding his dogs, the dogs learned to associate the bell with the food, which caused the dog to salivate. When the dogs continued to salivate at sound of the bell even after food was no longer presented, the dogs experienced an automatic constant sign fallacy.

While this is certainly "fallacious reasoning," I am not sure (a) dogs "reason" or (b) it is indicative of an argument. I also do not know if we want to go the route of Pavlovian behaviorism to typify the fallacy of constant sign—unless we wanted to show how someone made a fallacious argument based on Pavlov's findings or in line with such rationale. So, you're not "wrong" per se, but let's scratch this one.

Grade: 9/10
Figure 2: Sample Mini-Assessment

Name: ____________________________ Mini-Assessment: Circumstantial Fallacies

1. The following is an example of which type of fallacy?

   The idea of building a mosque near “Ground Zero” is a huge offense to all Americans, and a desecration of America that should not and cannot be allowed to stand.

   A. Red Herring Ad Hominem  C. Equivocal Sign
   B. Hasty Generalization       D. Mystic Sign

2. The following is an example of which type of fallacy?

   J. Robert Oppenheimer was seen in the company of Luther Perkins, a known communist spy. Shortly thereafter, atomic secrets were smuggled out of the country by men associated with Luther Perkins. We can conclude that Oppenheimer is probably a communist spy.

   A. Hasty Generalization       C. Equivocal Sign
   B. Constant Sign             D. Mystic Sign

3. The following is an example of which type of fallacy?

   While defending Sarah Palin's use of what appeared to be rifle sights (or what we commonly refer to as “crosshairs”) on an electoral map, media aide Rebecca Mansover claimed that the symbols in question were actually “surveyor's symbols.”

   A. Equivocal Sign             C. Hasty Generalization
   B. Constant Sign             D. Mystic Sign

4. The following is an example of which type of fallacy?

   The 1969 western “True Grit” was successful during a time of political struggle in the U.S. Reporting on its recent release, The Times suggested: “In our current winter of high domestic anxiety, as in the politically turbulent American summer of 1969, (“True Grit”) is a hit with the national mass audience and critics alike. The new version is doing well in New York and Los Angeles as it did in Cincinnati.” It is as if movies like “True Grit” can let us know what we are in times of political struggle.

   A. Multiple Causation         C. Mystic Sign
   B. Equivocal Sign             D. Constant Sign

5. The following is an example of which type of fallacy?

   A recent article in the IDS covered the IU men’s wrestling team. The head coach was quoted as saying, “We wrestled real well against Minnesota, and I expect us to wrestle well this week.” Every wrestler on the IU wrestling team must have wrestled well.

   A. Hasty Generalization       C. The Fallacy of Composition
   B. Substitution of Sign for Cause       D. The Fallacy of Division

6. An advocate who draws a conclusion about a whole based solely on particular characteristics of its parts commits _________.

   A. the Fallacy of Division  C. a Fallacy of Multiple Causation
   B. a Hasty Generalization    D. a Fallacy of Composition
Figure 3: Sample Midterm Examination Question

*Affirming the Consequent*

Laura Elizabeth Austin (moderator) [Feb 21, 2011 6:20 AM] - Read by: 4

The fallacy of presuming that if A is true then B is true, and vice versa.

Mobile phone use causes changes in brain cells closest to the antenna. Therefore if you experience abnormal changes in your brain cells, blame your mobile phone. <o:p></o:p>


http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7279451/ns/health-health_care/

Figure 4: Student-Generated Midterm Examination Question

12. An advocate commits the following fallacy when she makes a conclusion about the whole based on what is “true” about the parts.
   
   a. Part-Whole Composition
   b. Fallacy of Division
   c. Fallacy of Composition
   d. None of the above

13. If attempting to establish that a social or political condition is plausible, an advocate would use the following type of reasoning.
   
   a. Analogical
   b. Signal
   c. Causal
   d. None of the above

14. The following is an example of which type of fallacy?
   
   A recent government-funded study found that, if you talk on a cell phone for fifty or more minutes, then your brain cell activity increases. If you get brain damage because of increased activity in your brain cells, blame your cell phone.
   
   a. Denying the Antecedent
   b. Affirming the Consequent
   c. Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc
   d. Multiple Causation

15. Empirical verification is to fact as inferential reasonning is to ______________.
   
   a. Opinion
   b. Proof
   c. Value
   d. Authority
C228 Argumentation and Public Advocacy is an intensive introductory level course on the theory, practice, and criticism of public advocacy – the use of propositions, evidence, reasons, and the general rhetorical strategies of symbolic action to promote and advance one’s public or civic interests. The course operates with the assumption that a liberal-democratic polity relies upon the ability of its citizens to be active and critical producers and consumers of public arguments as part of a reasoned process of collective decision-making. This is not to suggest that public or political decision making in a liberal-democratic society is always rational or reasonable – or even that reason and rationality are the only or most productive ways to effect social and political change – but it is to suggest that we would all be better off if we were to master the fundamental skills of rhetoric and argumentation as a primary means to represent and protect our own best interests and the best interests of the polity. In a word, we are working through one, particular mode of public argumentation. As such, this course operates with the assumption that one can best learn the skills of public advocacy through a rigorous combination of theory and practice. Accordingly, the course will combine both lectures designed to identify and elaborate the theoretical precepts of public advocacy – the norms and assumptions that tend to guide successful public argumentation – and exercises (formal and informal) designed to allow students to practice the fundamental skills of public argumentation. Some potentially heavy burdens, to be sure, but consider the “truth” in the following public performance of comic relief.

TEXTS

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To establish, practice and deploy a grammar of argumentation oriented toward public advocacy and an appreciation for controversy.

2. To understand the V-Model of argument, which functions as an argumentative framework driven by the complex relationship between propositions of fact, value, and policy.

3. To distinguish between propositions at the levels of fact, value, and policy in order to establish appeals appropriate to each level.

4. To embody the principle of dissoi logoi, or the capacity understand, critique, and reproduce all sides of an argument.

5. To rehearse the production and consumption (or criticism) of public arguments – with a particular eye to recognizing fallacious reasoning – in focused classroom exercises and carefully crafted argumentative essays.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Course Reading:**

   The required, common, daily reading assignments for this course are very light because I want you to dedicate your energy first and foremost to working through lecture materials, practicing the execution and consumption of public arguments, and integrating coursework into your everyday understanding of argumentation and public advocacy in contemporary society. Reading assignments are as follows:

   a. Read Rottenberg and Winchell’s *The Structure of Argument* as outlined on the course calendar. Note: This book is a supplement to class lectures and not a substitute for them. While the authors of this text discuss many of the same themes that we will cover in class, other topics are not mentioned at all or are only considered in abbreviated fashion. The book is particularly useful in helping to identify research strategies and approaches, which will be useful in writing papers. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the exercises at the end of each chapter (“Assignments for Understanding…”)—and we may even utilize some together—even though we will rarely discuss them in class. The course calendar notes where the readings from this book most closely match the themes and topics of class lectures, though such reading is not a prerequisite to the materials being discussed in class on a given day.

   b. You are to read and learn the thirty-six fallacies described and illustrated on the handout “Recognizing Microstructural Fallacies in Argumentation” (available on the course website). It will be incumbent upon you to internalize and habituate yourself to recognizing these fallacies. Accordingly, we will engage as a class one group of fallacies at the beginning of each meeting. The groups we will engage are identified on the course calendar. You should come prepared on that day and each day thereafter (a) having memorized the group of fallacies, (b) having located [or, if need be, created] at least two to three examples for each fallacy from “real life” [to be discussed and detailed in class], and (c) having prepared yourself to complete mini assessments.
c. You should read the New York Times (NYT) on a fairly regular basis (and might I recommend satirical newspaper The Onion, for some comic relief?). The NYT is obviously not the only important newspaper, but it is “the paper of record” and provides an important resource for staying on top of national and international public controversies. We will draw from the newspaper in class, and occasionally I will ask you to locate and bring in examples (or counter-examples) of the fallacies, concepts, rules, and norms of public advocacy being considered.

d. Occasionally I will ask you to read an essay, article, or book chapter for class. On such occasions the reading assignments will be announced during the previous class at the latest. These readings will typically be available online or at the course website.

2. Examinations:

There will be an in-class midterm examination on **Wednesday, March 2 in class** and a final examination on **Wednesday, May 4 from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.** The midterm examination will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions from class readings and lectures (the examination will likely be a 50-50 or so balance between class readings – primarily fallacies – and lecture materials, but we will work through the allocations together in class). The final examination will consist of four essay questions that ask you to analyze and evaluate specific instances of public advocacy.

3. Essays:

You will craft **three argumentative essays** establishing and defending a proposition of fact, a proposition of value, and a proposition of policy. Due dates are listed on the course calendar. I will provide detailed descriptions of each assignment at the appropriate time. Note that, as you construct your defense of a proposition of value, you will also be required to conduct **opposition research**. Details for this assignment will also be provided when it is apposite. Each of the essays will be 6-8 pages (except for the paper on opposition research, which will be 3-4 pages) in length, typed, double-spaced, and formatted with appropriate references according to the conventions of the **MLA Handbook**, 5th ed. Each essay will be graded for both argumentative form and style (including the standard conventions of English composition and grammar. So, yes, spelling, syntax, formatting—it all counts!). We will also conduct in-class writing workshops for each essay. These workshops will be required steps of the writing process and will be incorporated into your final drafts.

**GRADING**

All grading will be conducted on the standard A to F scale. A specific rubric for grading argumentative essays can be found on the course website. In general, however, a grade in the “A” range indicates work that is “outstanding” relative to basic course requirements; work in the “B” range is significantly above basic course requirements, though it may not be outstanding in any or every regard; work in the “C” range meets the basic course requirements in every respect; work in the “D” range fails to meet the basic requirements but is minimally deserving of credit; “F” work indicates a failure to meet the basic requirements of the course, typically by failing to complete assignments or by violating fundamental, University rules and regulations concerning plagiarism (or cheating on exams).
A Note on Plagiarism. Plagiarism is the use of the work of others as if it were your own without properly acknowledging their contributions through the use of quotations (where appropriate) or citations in footnotes and endnotes. Ignorance of the rules and regulations regarding plagiarism and student conduct is not considered a defense against indiscretions. Be sure to read the IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct (1998), Part III, Student Misconduct, Section A, Academic Misconduct, 3. At a minimum, students guilty of plagiarism will receive a “0” for the assignment and, depending on the severity of the indiscretion, will receive an automatic “F” for the course. All acts of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean for Academic Affairs.

Link to IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities & Conduct: http://www.iu.edu/~code/
Link to IU Policy on Plagiarism: http://acp.indiana.edu/IUPolicyOnPlagiarism/

Your final grade for the course will be a calculation based on the following percentages:

- Attendance 10%
- Fallacies (mini-assess.) 5%
- Essay #1 (Fact) 10%
- Opposition Research 10%
- Essay #2 (Value) 15%
- Essay #3 (Policy) 20%
- Midterm Exam 15%
- Final Exam 15%

Note: I retain the privilege of raising your final grade for the course by a 1/3 increment (e.g., from C to C+ or from B+ to A-) on the basis of my assessment of the quantity and quality of your participation in class, performance on essays, as well as the caliber of your contribution to our collective understanding of coursework. Students who miss more than three lectures are typically not eligible to have their grades raised in this manner.
A NOTE ON CLASSROOM POLICIES

1. **Attendance:**

Regular attendance in this course is *essential* given that the primary source of theoretical materials will be provided in class lectures and the primary site for practicing the norms and conventions of public argumentation will be discussed in class. **Accordingly, attendance is required at all class sessions** (there are no excused absences for medical or other reasons) and will count as 10% of your final grade for the course. There will be no penalty for missing classes, but obviously I cannot give you credit for a class that you did not attend. If you do miss class it is your responsibility to get class notes from a classmate. Once you have reviewed such materials, you are welcome to consult me over specific problems you may be having with the material. Attendance will be graded according to the following scale: 0-3 absences = A; 4 = A-; 5 = B+; 6 = B; 7 = B-; 8 = C+; 9 = C; 10 = C-; etc.

2. **Participation:**

This course is structured around lectures, collective and individual practice of lecture materials, and discussions—all of which, pending your participation, should provide regular opportunities to engage both coursework and classmates in an open, dialogic forum. Though this is not a course in democracy per se, democratic principles underlie all of our work and it is presumed that students will undergird their participative sensibilities with an appreciation for decorous civic engagement. I therefore expect that you will come to every class prepared and ready to engage.

3. **Late Work:**

Late work will not be accepted. An assignment is due in class on the day it is due, period. Be sure to record all due dates in your planner, calendar, phone, etc. Please do not e-mail work to me unless I specifically request it.

4. **Suggest a Policy:**

Notice that I missed something? Something you’d like to add to the policy list? We will attempt to practice enacting a democratic community, so feedback is always welcome.

**Academic Accommodations**

If you qualify for any academic accommodations or have any documented learning disabilities whatsoever, please let me know as early in the semester as possible. I want to ensure that everyone has the same opportunity to learn and feel comfortable in this class.
COURSE CALENDAR

Note: Readings marked with an asterisk (*) and/or as TBA will be available as .pdf files on the course website under the “Assignment Information” link.

Note as well: In the event of any unforeseen circumstances, infelicitous happenings, or simply a need to revise plans over the course of the semester, the following schedule and syllabus is subject to change. You will be made aware of any changes in as timely a fashion as possible.

Part I: On the Relationship Between Argument and Public Advocacy

| M 1/10 | Introduction to Argumentation and Public Advocacy |
| W 1/12 | The Grammar of Argumentation – Required: Ehninger, “Argument as Method,”*; Framing Arguments (Structure of Argument, 3-30) |
| M 1/17 | No Class (Martin Luther King Jr. Day) |
| W 1/19 | The V Model of Public Advocacy – Argumentative Stases and Framing the Proposition (Structure of Argument, 373-75) |
| **• Group I: Causal Fallacies** |
| M 1/24 | Directed Research – Bias, and Seeking Information in the Computerized Age (Structure of Argument, 431-74; Lucaites and West, “Research Strategies.”*) Also look over “Research Resources” online |
| **• Group II: Circumstantial Fallacies** |

Part II: In Defense of a Proposition of Fact

| W 1/26 | What is a Fact? (Structure of Argument, 157-67) |
| **• Group III: Synthetic Fallacies** |
| M 1/31 | Argumentative Stases and the Problem of Definition (Structure of Argument, 122-56; 367-74) |
| **• Group IV: Formal Fallacies** |
| W 2/2 | Argumentative Stases and the Problem of Definition – Required: Transsexuals and the Law (“Transsexual Marriage and Definitions”*) |
| **• Fausto-Sterling, “Two Sexes Are Not Enough,” online.** |
| **• Grossman, “In a Decision Rejecting …,” online.** |
| **• “Same-Sex Marriage with a Twist,” online.** |
| M 2/7 | Topoi of Fact: (a) Location, (b) Quantity and (c) State – Day 1 |
| **• Group V: Propaganda Devices** |
| W 2/9 | Topoi of Fact – Day 2; Forms of Evidence (Structure of Argument, 211-27, 515-18) |
| **• Group VI: Ethical Appeals** |
Part III: In Defense of a Proposition of Value


• Essay #1 Due in Class

M 2/21 The Reasoning Process – Day 2

• Group VII: Strategic Fallacies

W 2/23 The Reasoning Process – Day 3

M 2/28 Value Propositions, or Spanning the “Is-Ought” Gap (Structure of Argument, 167-77)

W 3/2

• Midterm Examination in Class

M 3/7 Conducting Opposition Research and the Concept of Dissoi Logoi

W 3/9 Topoi of Value Judgments – Day 1 (Structure of Argument, 227-46)

M 3/14 No Class (Spring Recess)

W 3/16 No Class (Spring Recess)

M 3/21 Topoi of Value Judgments – Day 2

W 3/23 Topoi of Value Judgments – Day 3

• Opposition Research Due in Class

M 3/28 Sample Analysis of Proposition of Value and Proposition of Value Rough Draft Workshop

Part IV: In Defense of a Proposition of Value

W 3/30 The Political Dimensions of Social Change (Structures of Argument, 179-91)

M 4/4 The Social-Psychological Dimensions of Argument

• Essay #2 Due in Class

W 4/6 Topoi of Policy Arguments – Introduction to The Prima Facie Case

M 4/11 The Doctrine of Opposites – Day 1

W 4/13 The Doctrine of Opposites – Day 2
M 4/18   *Prima Facie* Considerations of Propositions of Policy

W 4/20   Proposition of Policy Rough Draft Workshop

M 4/25   Public Controversy and Democratic Public Culture

• **Essay #3 Due in Class**

W 4/27   Review for Final Exam

W 5/4    Final Exam – 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. (in TE, F256)