

Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory

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Argumentation is a verbal, social and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of one or more propositions to justify this standpoint. In practice, argumentation starts from a difference of opinion: the speaker/the writer starts from the assumption that there is a difference of opinion between him or her and the listener/the reader. By uttering a range of propositions that must justify the standpoint at stake, the speaker attempts to convince his listener of the acceptability of his standpoint.

This course is an introduction to analyzing, evaluating and presenting oral and written argumentation and is based on the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation.

Course Outline:

A. Analysis

1. Differences of opinion (disagreement and argumentative discussion, explicit and implicit differences of opinion, standpoints and expressions of doubt)
2. Argumentation and discussion (resolving a difference of opinion, a model of a critical discussion, the ideal model and argumentative practice)
3. Standpoints and argumentation (identifying the standpoint, indicators of argumentation, clues in the context, maximally argumentative interpretation)
4. Unexpressed standpoints and unexpressed premises
5. The structure of argumentation

B. Evaluation

1. Sound argumentation
2. Fallacies

C. Presentation

1. Written argumentation
2. Oral argumentation

Requirements and assessment:

Attendance: 20%

Home assignments (exercise sheet handed out at the end of each lecture): 40%

Final exam: 40%