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This thesis examines the recent history of the teaching of argument and its
implications in the face of new writing standards being implemented in K-12
classrooms under the Common Core State Standards. The new educational policies
will shift the focus of writing instruction onto argument writing as part of students’
“college readiness.” In a survey and analysis of the argument scholarship in the
National Council of Teachers of English’s (NCTE) premier journals on the teaching of
writing, College English and College Composition and Communication, I demonstrate
the clear trend in college argument scholarship away from initially hostile, two-sided
debates. Scholarship in these journals instead advocates for process-oriented argument
pedagogies that account for multiple voices, working towards arguments of
cooperation and skills that can be transferred out of the classroom and into real-world
problem-solving scenarios. Through close readings of the Common Core State
Standards for Writing in Grades 11-12 and the NCTE’s college-readiness document,
the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing, I argue that teachers of
argument can honor the commitment to cooperation present in argument scholarship
while meeting the state standards by using the Framework as a guide to pedagogy, which is not dictated by the standards. This thesis challenges the assumptions of opposition between policy and pedagogy in the teaching of argument by seeking their common ground.
Argument and Common Ground: Scholarly Research Meets the Common Core State Standards

by

Jillian Clark

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Jillian Clark, Author
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Dedicated to Carrie, my old friend, always with me. To Kristy, my older friend, no longer with me. And especially to Paige, who—next year—will take Smarter Balanced, which is a test and also a butter.
Chapter 1: Introduction

In the 2014-2015 academic year, the elementary and secondary school systems in the state of Oregon will fully implement the Common Core State Standards (the Common Core or CCSS) in the latest move to improve college and career readiness for high school graduates (Hammond). Many other states are following a similar timeline to implement the standards. The English Language Arts (ELA) standards for Writing now reflect a shift in focus to academic argument. It is commonly understood that the overwhelming majority of writing in post-secondary education is argumentative, but argument currently does not hold such prominence in secondary education and certainly not in primary education. Twelfth, ninth, even third grade students will soon be expected to learn and produce the foundations of argument. Significant curricular and pedagogical changes can be expected in K-12 school systems as teachers learn to teach argument and administrators adjust materials and assessments to meet the new standards. Eventually, these “college and career ready” students will graduate, and colleges may quickly feel the effects of the standards on the field of argument as a whole as students matriculate with new writing abilities.

K-12 teachers who have never taught argument before must now navigate unfamiliar territory. Some of these teachers have long histories of experience, but many do not. They will need both professional development and continuing education in pedagogy for teaching argument.
As many ELA teachers know, one solid source of support is the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). NCTE provides journals for all grade levels and post-secondary education, several national conferences every year, books, a members’ magazine, a newsletter, position statements regarding issues from censorship to working conditions, and a college-readiness guide of its own—the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*. The NCTE website represents a dynamic community of teachers and teacher educators. Teachers may well turn to NCTE for help with teaching argument. In fact, NCTE has a long history of discussing the role of argument in writing.

As a preparation for the renewed emphasis on argument, this thesis provides a selected review of the past 50 years of NCTE scholarship on argument and argument pedagogy with the goal of producing an analysis that will be useful for teachers of argument at all levels—K-12, higher education, and perhaps even teachers of writing outside academia. During this time period, scholars expanded the definition of argument beyond the purview of traditional argument, which has resulted in a large variety of pedagogies.

In this thesis, traditional argument is defined as communication—written or oral—with the intent to persuade an audience. The audience is usually oppositional, and the speaker is successful if the audience abandons their original point of view and adopts the point of view of the speaker. In contemporary argument scholarship, argument is defined as the act of multidirectional communication for cooperation or understanding, which can include but does not privilege persuasion.
This thesis also provides close readings of the Common Core State Standards for Writing and the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing. Neither document explicitly defines argument, so my reading of argument through the scholarship becomes especially relevant.

My thesis argues that the expanding definition of argument embraced by scholars is not obviously compatible with the understanding of argument promoted by the Common Core, which is argument that contains claims and evidence. While many scholars have emphasized the differences between the goals of the teaching profession and the goals of the accountability movement, I argue that teachers can find common ground between the pedagogies and outcomes they want and need to meet. This move for cooperation would enact the very values advocated by contemporary argument scholarship.

My thesis is guided by these questions:

1. As reflected in two premier NCTE journals, how has scholarship on argument changed over the past 50 years, and especially in the last 25 years?
2. How is the teaching of argument defined in the Common Core?
3. Where might NCTE and the Common Core find common ground around the teaching of argument?

Methodology

An overly ambitious first vision of this project involved examining argument in the NCTE literature from the last 50 years, which necessitated too many journals and too many individual texts. Because they are the premier journals on the teaching
of writing, I chose to limit my search to NCTE higher education journals College Composition and Communication (CCC) and College English (CE). Although the Common Core is being implemented in primary and secondary schools, the stated goal of the Common Core is to foster “college-ready” students, so it is pertinent to examine the trends and pedagogies for teaching argument as they appear in scholarship in the field.

My methodology for examining the contents of those two journals from 1963 to 2013-14 began with keywords. I read the titles and abstracts of CCC and CE articles with particular attention to words like “argument,” “debate,” “rhetoric,” and significant names in the argument field, such as Aristotle, Toulmin, and Rogers. Because logical fallacies are often a part of argument pedagogy, I also collected a number of articles discussing logic in writing. I looked through the table of contents of every issue of CCC and CE and collected those articles most promising on first impression.

After I read well-known articles on argument, my next step was to gather additional sources by mining the bibliographies. Occasionally, I found an article from CCC or CE that I had missed on my first sweep through the literature, and this triangulation provided me not only with additional resources but also the scholarly conversation taking place within the articles published in these two journals.

I soon noticed a major shift in the focus of the teaching of argument in the literature beginning in the early 1990s, and I chose to examine in detail the argument scholarship of the 25 year period from 1989-2014, as it most fully represents the
culture of argument pedagogy informing teachers today. There are certain key articles from the 25 year period from 1963-1988 that establish the context for later changes in the teaching of argument, and I provide a short section on the earlier period as context.

Connecting NCTE and CCSS

As of the writing of this thesis, NCTE has not endorsed the Common Core. It has responded to the Common Core with the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, which is also intended to promote college readiness. It is not within the scope of this thesis to study the emerging scholarship on the Common Core, but rather to place it in conversation with the scholarship on argument pedagogy and the *Framework*—a document developed collaboratively by the National Council of Teachers of English, the Council of Writing Program Administrators, and the National Writing Project.

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter 2 examines the contexts, definitions, and pedagogies for argument as represented in *College Composition and Communication* and *College English*, briefly looking at the period from 1963-1988 when classical argument was reintroduced to the discipline and then primarily focusing on the period from 1989-2014. The chapter notes the changing context of argument in the 20th and 21st centuries as argument moves away from primarily oral, delivered arguments represented in classical Greek and Roman rhetoric and into the contemporary genre(s) of written argument. In response to this changing context, scholars have sought to redefine argument, going so far as to name argument writing tasks with entirely different terms, terms which
emphasize the process of writing and its changeable, flexible nature. I argue that rather than “arguing to win,” scholars seek to teach their students “arguing to cooperate,” moving away from the hostile, pro-con style opposition which assumes a right and wrong answer. I argue that the literature demonstrates that scholars are embracing pedagogies of non-opposition that encourage students to seriously consider multiple perspectives before deciding on a claim. These scholars promote non-oppositional argument in the classroom in the hope that these critical thinking tasks will translate into real world situations where there is not necessarily a right and wrong answer, and viewpoints can be and should be reconsidered over time, in light of new information.

My thesis examines the Common Core State Standards for argument in light of this scholarly and professional advocacy for non-oppositional argument, searching for common ground between the scholarship and the outcomes.

In Chapter 3 I provide close readings of two important public documents: the Common Core English Language Arts Standards for Writing, Grades 11-12, and the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing. I argue that if the Writing standards are read as cohesive and relational, with each standard influencing the teaching of argument writing, then there is a great deal of space within the Common Core for contemporary argument pedagogies that emphasize cooperation and the writing process. Given NCTE’s evolving commitment to non-oppositional argument, a reading of the Framework which positions it as fundamentally opposed to the Common Core does not adequately support the culture of cooperation currently trending in argument pedagogy. Instead, I assert that the two components of the
Framework—Habits of Mind and Experiences—represent pedagogies that can be implemented within the Common Core framework to negotiate the goals of both policy makers and professional educators. Although the contexts for the Common Core and the Framework are quite different, their definitions of argument are not mutually exclusive, and this approach to pedagogy could lead to common ground between two seemingly opposed groups.

Chapter 4 discusses the significance of this research. My overview of 50 years of argument scholarship introduces teachers to the many various pedagogies for teaching argument that teachers can draw on. The chapter also describes several directions for future research.
Chapter 2: 25 Years of Argument in NCTE’s College English and College Composition and Communication

Introduction

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), as the professional organization of English teachers from primary to postsecondary education, is an invaluable community of resources for writing teachers at any level. This chapter provides an analysis of the contexts, definitions, and pedagogies for argument writing in the NCTE scholarly literature. My analysis indicates that over the past 25 years, scholarship on argument has emphasized inquiry and cooperation over traditional persuasion, expanding the definition of argument in order to also expand the context of argument beyond the classroom.

With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (the Common Core or the CCSS), national attention has turned to the teaching of writing, especially argument writing, which comprises the first writing standard under Common Core. The stated goal of the Common Core is to foster “college-ready” students, prepared to transition smoothly from secondary to postsecondary work. As two premier journals on the teaching of writing, the NCTE journals College English (CE) and College Composition and Communication (CCC) provide the teaching profession with the most up-to-date research on teaching argument in the college classroom, research which can inform the teaching of argument at the high school level as part of a “college-readiness” goal. In this chapter, I examine the scholarship from the NCTE
journals *College English* and *College Composition and Communication* in a search for the trends in pedagogies and attitudes towards teaching argument writing. These trends form the contexts for writing instruction in the college classroom.

Such an examination requires some scholarly context, specifically an overview of argument pedagogies represented in publications from 1963-1988, the 25 years preceding my examination. Those years represent the resurgence of rhetoric in English composition. I do not claim an exhaustive examination of argument pedagogies during this time; instead, I use the early argument literature from 1963-1988 as the background for contemporary argument contexts, definitions, and pedagogies.

I begin with the ways that the context for argument and argument writing changed in those first 25 years, revealing tensions between tradition and change. Then I examine how the following 25 years, 1989-2014, in a response to the changing contexts, witnessed a change to the definition of argument, including the very names given to argument writing by NCTE scholars. As I move towards analysis of the various pedagogies represented in the literature, I provide a timeline of significant *College English* and *College Composition and Communication* articles on argument from 1989-2014 for a visual representation of the patterns present. The pedagogy analysis includes scholarship from 1963-1988, but focuses primarily on those pedagogies that are present in the literature in the last 25 years. I end the chapter with a discussion of the patterns across the pedagogical landscape from the last 25 years.

During the early part of the twentieth century, the English classroom and the teaching of writing were primarily focused on literature. According to Edward Corbett, it was in 1963 that the English studies field renewed its allegiance to rhetoric and the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers (“Teaching Composition” 445). Corbett points to the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) that year, which featured several panels on rhetoric, as well as landmark articles from Francis Christensen, Wayne Booth, and Ken Macrorie (445). Corbett modestly omits his own contribution from that year—an article titled “The Usefulness of Classical Rhetoric,” which calls for the reintroduction of ancient Greek and Roman pedagogies such as imitation into the classroom.

Rhetoric as a field of study, both intersecting with and diverging from literary study, rapidly expanded in the following decades. Now-familiar names such as Corbett, Richard Leo Enos, and Andrea Lunsford pursued classical rhetoric and its applicability in the modern classroom. However, writing teachers faced increasing challenges in translating ancient argument pedagogies into contemporary classroom practices.

Aristotle categorizes rhetoric into three types, each occupying its own arena. Epideictic rhetoric is the praise or blame of a figure, used in speeches at public ceremonies. Forensic rhetoric is the establishment of facts from the past, used in the law courts to determine guilt or innocence of an alleged perpetrator. Deliberative rhetoric is the establishment of a course of future action, used in the political sphere to
debate the policies of the governing body. It is these established contexts for rhetoric that are carried into the work of Cicero, Quintilian, and the other Greek and Roman rhetoricians resurrected in the scholarship of mid-twentieth century scholars. But the types and contexts for contemporary rhetoric extend far beyond the three designations of classical rhetoric. Epideictic rhetoric, at least in its traditional arena of ceremonial speeches, is rarely seen or heard in contemporary American culture, save in the funeral elegy. Arguments in the political sphere include speeches on the legislative floor and presidential addresses, both of which may continue to fit under the “deliberative rhetoric” umbrella, but also include journalism, which intends to critique the existing political discourse. Forensic arguments in courts, seeking to establish what did or did not happen, are still present, but few other arguments will be made in the presence of a judge who has authority over the decision. Advertisements, propaganda, biographies, magazines, folk music, and labor negotiations, among so many other genres, all carry arguments that do not exist within one of those three classical arenas. Academic argument, the very foundation of the scholarship reintroducing classical rhetoric, does not exist if argument is limited only to courts, the legislative bodies, and ceremonies.

A few years into the resurgent conversation surrounding classical rhetoric, scholars began adapting classical rhetoric to contemporary concerns. Stephen Toulmin’s landmark book, *The Uses of Argument*, was published in 1958, and twenty years later, in 1978, Charles Kneupper published “Teaching Argument: An Introduction to the Toulmin Model” in *CCC*. Toulmin recognized that contemporary arguments do not follow the prescribed style of the Aristotelian syllogism, with its
major and minor premises and conclusion. Toulmin’s model expands upon the Aristotelian argument by including more layers for exceptions, reasons, and conditions that allow for an arguer to specify the contingency of an argument rather than its universal truth. The Toulmin schema is not confined to specific spheres, and so academic argument quickly took to the hybridization of its classical roots.

Other scholars perpetuated this hybridization for the next decade. In 1983, Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor published “Teaching Argument: A Theory of Types” in CCC. They provided a systematic description of argument pedagogies from the time, including inductive and deductive reasoning, problem-solving scenarios, and classical invention, which Fahnestock and Secor proposed as the superior of the three pedagogies. Classical invention, according to Fahnestock and Secor, divides all arguments into four categories: Arguments of definition, causation, quality, and authority (23). Although the authors did not explicitly reference Cicero as the source of these argument categories, the delineation of types of arguments bore a striking resemblance to stasis theory, which finds its roots in ancient rhetoric. Richard Leo Enos also tried to negotiate the relationship between ancient texts and contemporary pedagogies in his 1987 article “The Classical Tradition(s) of Rhetoric.” Enos examined the tension between “first-order” scholarship in philosophy and classics and “second-order” scholarship, such as the teaching of writing. Both of these articles represent the sense of identity that classical arguments provided to the rhetoric and composition discipline, linking the new discipline to ancient rhetors and philosophers with established gravitas.
The same year that Enos wrote “Classical Tradition(s),” Corbett published “Teaching Composition: Where We’re Going and Where We’ve Been,” which applauded the increased professionalism in the composition field, citing numerous rhetoric conferences, an increasing number of graduate programs, and an abundance of rhetoric and composition textbooks to solidify the discipline. Although Corbett also highlighted some exciting new prospects for the teaching of writing—such as the process movement and Writing Across the Curriculum—it is clear that the professional identity of the discipline, in the first 25 years of its new era, was firmly rooted in the study and emulation of classical rhetoric.

In the 1970s, another, tenser conversation about classical rhetoric focused on the ethical implications of teaching argument in the twentieth century. As students who had learned argument strategies moved out of the classroom and into the world, the reality that classical rhetoric does not cover the expanding contexts of rhetoric became apparent. Carl Rogers, a psychologist and therapist, made waves in psychological circles with his client-centered therapy techniques, which emphasized trust and understanding as the best methods for productive communication. Rogers firmly believed that society’s penchant for judgment over understanding was inhibiting important relationships and fostering a consistently hostile environment. In 1970, Rogers’ work on both private therapy and public communication was introduced to the academic world of composition studies by Richard Young, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike, in their landmark book Rhetoric: Discovery and Change, which included an article by Rogers himself (Hairston 373).
Rogerian argument, beginning just about a decade after the reintroduction of argument to the pedagogical landscape, represents the beginning of a long, consistent revolution in NCTE scholarship. In her 1976 article, “Carl Rogers’s Alternative to Traditional Rhetoric,” Maxine Hairston suggested that “[t]he basic premise of [Rogers’] article is, like most important truths, very simple: you do not convert people to your point of view by threatening them or challenging their values” (Hairston 373). Hairston’s interpretation of Rogers was important in that it represented a movement to avoid essentially combative and oppositional arguments. With Rogerian rhetoric as an alternative, or what Hairston termed a “supplement” (373), to Aristotelian traditional argument, teachers of writing began to ask themselves the extent to which their teaching contributed to hostile arguments, aligned with the layman’s definition of quarrel or disagreement, rather than informed conversations based on mutual understanding.

Hairston advocated for teaching students Rogerian strategies for some of the new contexts not specified in traditional argument, such as when only two people are involved—without the third party judge or moderator—and in situations where deeply held beliefs are at stake. She focused on Rogers’ appeal for non-evaluative language in response to another’s statements, as opposed to offering one’s own opinion immediately. In 1979, Andrea Lunsford cited Hairston in “Aristotelian vs. Rogerian Rhetoric: A Reassessment.” Lunsford challenged the binary she felt Hairston and other Rogerian proponents had pushed, claiming instead that Aristotelian argument presupposes the level of respect and goodwill fostered through Rogerian argument
(Lunsford 148). Rogerian argument, she claimed, was not new, but was essential to understanding and creating effective arguments. In 1980, Paul Bator responded to Lunsford’s analysis with his own article, “Aristotelian and Rogerian Rhetoric.” Bator argued that Aristotle does not take for granted Rogerian rhetoric, as Lunsford claimed, but that Rogerian rhetoric offers a distinctly different approach to rhetoric which validates non-rational senses of well-being (Bator 427-428). Although Hairston called Rogerian argument a supplement to classical argument, Lunsford replied that they are actually two parts of a cohesive whole, to which Bator then replied that they are two parts of two entirely different wholes.

This conversation best represents the growing pains of an evolving discipline. The NCTE, through its scholarly journals, was exploring the extent to which it would be willing to depart from tradition, a tradition newly rediscovered. Classical rhetoric’s goal of maintaining a healthy *polis* remained the goal of twentieth-century scholars, but the expanding contexts of argument—both academic and non academic—called into question the ability of classical rhetoric to achieve this communal well-being.

From 1963-1988, in these first 25 years of (re-)teaching argument, NCTE, as represented in *CE* and *CCC*, was first an excited and then a conflicted organization, afraid to let go of the past as it reached for a different future.

**25 Years of Changing Definitions: 1989-2014**

In response to the changing contexts of argument, scholars have consistently altered the definition of argument to better reflect the goals of contemporary culture. This revision is accompanied with a consistent need to *rename* argument. This speaks
to the reciprocal nature of the naming process, in which what was descriptive becomes prescriptive. Many students see argument as the shouting matches of popular culture, bring that concept into the classroom, and then leave the classroom to perpetuate those oppositional “argument” skills. Scholars who rename argument appear to be attempting to break the descriptive/prescriptive cycle and recast rhetorical argument as more sophisticated and powerful than ideological shouting matches. Dennis A. Lynch, Diana George, and Marilyn M. Cooper, describing their own classroom practices in a 1997 article, rename argument agonistic inquiry and competitive cooperation. They also build upon the work of Susan Jarratt, who uses the term disputation, and John Gage, who uses the classical Greek term dialectic (Lynch, George, and Cooper 64, 65). Lynch, George, and Cooper assert that renaming argument does not detract from the real rhetorical work students are achieving: “Their work is a form of collaborative inquiry, but it is still argument, too, in that it negotiates serious differences and recommends a course of action” (82). Far from “differences of opinion…polarized and sensationalized,” this “course of action” develops from informed, critical analysis of multiple viewpoints (76).

Significant in the act of redefining argument is the shifting focus from the product of argument—a claim or thesis—to the process of evaluating and arranging materials on an issue. Again, the goal is not to win an argument, but “to make your own position more reasonable and practical, to take into account not only your own interests and desires and experiences but also those of others” (Lynch, George, and Cooper 79). A. Abby Knoblauch cites several new definitions and expectations of
argument appearing in contemporary textbooks, including *The Aims of Argument* by Timothy W. Crusius and Carolyn E. Channell, which compels students to use “mature reasoning,” and *Having Your Say* by Davida H. Charney, which equates arguing with “treating an issue as open instead of settled” (qtd. in Knoblauch 249). Knoblauch continues her list of new definitions by textbook author-editors, each insistent that pro-con debate style arguments are conducive to neither complex, multi-party arguments nor to critical thinking in the classroom (Knoblauch 250).

Rather than seeking out all of the available means of persuasion, it could be more properly said that contemporary rhetors are encouraged to seek out all of the available means of cooperation. This change expands the definition of argument to include strategies which strive for dialogical rather than monological communication. Cooperation is a relationship that can be enacted over time, continuing from one “argument” to the next without the end point of one-time “persuasion.” Cooperation can be achieved by parties who both agree and disagree, and it assumes some enacting of power by all involved parties.

Although not all alternatives to traditional argument are fully in line with Rogerian rhetoric, Rogers’ work did highlight a major theme present in the majority of these forthcoming pedagogies: the need not just for change or persuasion in a proposed audience, but also for the possibility of change within the speaker/writer through both the process of constructing an argument and in engaging in argument with other parties. As Lynch, George, and Cooper remind their readers, this is a vulnerable position for students:
From our perspective…the risk is not merely that your social position and identity may be challenged, or not merely that someone may disagree with your intellectual position, or not even that you may lose the argument; the risk is also that you may become different than you were before the argument began. Serious argumentation requires a willingness to see things differently and to be changed in and through the dialogic process…We believe that students will risk such changes only when argumentation is perceived as a social activity through which they, first and foremost, connect with others. (Lynch 68, emphasis in original)

Hence the cooperative nature of these pedagogies. If argument is a solo performative act, then monological arguments will continue to reign. Creating new names for argument that emphasize the process of arguments (inquiry) and that imply multiple invested parties (negotiation or disputation) can help encourage students to see argument as more than linear, claim based formulas. Jeffrey Walker sees this transformation as fostering far more sophisticated and complex understandings of the world: “[An argument’s] motivating force will derive not simply from a propositional logic (the kind that can be analyzed with syllogistic or Toulminian diagrams), but from what Perelman has called a ‘web’ or network of emotively significant ideas and liaisons that may or may not appear as a structure of value-laden oppositions” (Walker 55).

Creating space for multiple voices or focusing on the process rather than the product of an argument should not deter students from crafting forceful, opinionated arguments. This is not “anything goes” appeasement. Indeed, Lynch, George, and Cooper purposefully use the terms agonistic and competitive. Similarly, Barry Kroll, modeling argument on the Japanese martial art of Aikido, writes that argument
teachers can teach “tactics that have more of an adversarial edge—assertive claim, critique, refutation—and encourage students to use them within a ‘minimal force necessary’ framework” (466). Pedagogies of negotiation and mediation are also constructed to promote assertiveness rather than passivity. There is little danger that students will be discouraged from forceful arguments, but their arguments can take on more force by being well-reasoned and crafted through engaging with more than one perspective.

**Timeline of CE and CCC articles, 1989-2014**

The 25 years of argument scholarship in *CE* and *CCC* articles from 1989-2014 present an interesting dynamic of perspectives and focuses, moving away from the strictly classical or Rogerian pedagogies of the 1963-1988 time period and toward a diverse array of argument strategies. The following timeline, Figure 1, presents the titles, authors, and publication dates of significant articles on argument and the teaching of argument as the education profession transitions into a new era of policy and argument writing in the classroom. In the Appendix, each article presented on the timeline is listed chronologically with a brief description of the author’s claims concerning argument and argument pedagogy.
Figure 1: Scholarly Argument Timeline, 1989-2014 (See Appendix)

Lamb, 1991, “Beyond Argument in Feminist Composition”

Kantz, 1990, “Helping Students Use Textual Sources Persuasively”

Brent, 1991, “Young, Becker and Pike’s ‘Rogerian’ Rhetoric: A Twenty Year Reassessment”


Booth, 2005, “Blind Skepticism versus the Rhetoric of Assent”

Elbow, 2005, “Bringing the Rhetoric of Assent and the Believing Game Together—and into the Classroom”

Jack, 2006, “Chronotopes: Forms of Time in Rhetorical Argument”


Bizup, 2009, “The Uses of Toulmin in Composition Studies”


You, 2010, “Building Empire through Argumentation: Debating Salt and Iron in Western Han China”
50 Years of Argument Threads

Aristotelian and Classical Argument: Corbett to Knoblauch

Classical rhetoric, from the traditions of Greek and Roman philosophers, has been the foundation of the rhetoric discipline since its resurgence in the 1960s, but has largely fallen out of favor with contemporary scholars in CCC and CE. Edward Corbett begins his 1963 article “The Usefulness of Classical Rhetoric” with the question that would propel a new wave of composition studies: “What does classical rhetoric have to offer composition teachers?” (162). His subsequent answer begins with the assertion that logos, ethos, and pathos, as the three appeals used in classical rhetoric, “engag[e] the whole man in the writing process” (162).

Paul Bator argues that of the three, logos is the most important—and the one from which the other two flow—because “[t]he underlying principle of Aristotle’s Rhetoric is that man is a rational animal, capable of using logical reasoning as the basis for argument” (427). The effective application of these appeals requires a critical understanding of audience. Corbett asserts that “[a]bove all other considerations—such as the subject and the occasion—the audience was the consideration which gave ‘form’ to the discourse, which dictated the means that the speaker would employ to effect his end” (“Usefulness” 162). In Andrea Lunsford’s defense of Aristotelian argument, she suggests that understanding audience has a reflexive relationship with comprehending multiple viewpoints (148). Although Aristotelian arguments may not explicitly state contrasting arguments, the ability to entertain them is essential to
understanding audience, just as understanding a variety of audiences is essential to entertaining multiple viewpoints.

Lunsford sees little discrepancy between classical argument contexts involving a third-party judge and contemporary contexts involving two-party interaction:

In Aristotelian argument, the audience may often be a judge, but in that case the communication is still taking place primarily between two parties, and the speaker must do all in his power to induce similarities, built on common values, between himself and that audience. (Lunsford 149)

However, this explanation seems to render the presence of the judge moot and to suggest that classical arguments were persuasive to both the judge and the opposing party simultaneously and for the same reasons. Without the presence of an impartial third-party in many rhetorical situations, speaker/audience relationships become essential to contemporary arguments.

While Lunsford compares Aristotelian audience analysis to “building bridges based on shared attitudes, experiences, and values” (149), Bator criticizes the relationship between the classically-trained rhetorician and his audience, claiming that an audience analysis following Aristotelian guidelines “presupposes...an antagonistic speaker/audience relationship” (428). Bator’s argument, rather than Lunsford’s, takes hold within the NCTE scholarship, and over the latter half of the 20th century, scholars consistently distance their preferred argument pedagogies from intentional antagonism. After the 1980s, the terms “traditional argument” and “persuasion” are often treated with suspicion and implicit hostility. By 2011, as evidenced by A. Abby Knoblauch’s review of composition textbooks, “traditional” argument “attempts to
convince or convert an opponent” (245). Knoblauch decries the “primacy of
persuasion” because it “privileges argument as winning and undercuts the radical
potential of argument as understanding across differences” (245). While early scholars
saw the potential for classical arguments to reinvigorate the pedagogical landscape,
argument scholarship eventually veered away from classical pedagogy in an effort to
further change that landscape.

_Toulmin: Kneupper to Bizup_

Stephen Toulmin’s _The Uses of Argument_ and the Toulmin model of
argumentation have become staples of the composition classroom. Toulmin published
_The Uses of Argument_ in 1958, and in a 1978 article in _CCC_, Charles Kneupper
suggests that since speech courses had already adopted the Toulmin model for their
classrooms, the composition classroom would do well to follow suit. In his 2009
article, just over 50 years after _The Uses of Argument_ entered academic circles, Joseph
Bizup points to Toulmin’s schema as a “model of argument that has exerted enormous
influence on argument theory and on the teaching of argument for half a century”
(W1).

The Toulmin schema provides a logical structure for practical arguments,
moving argumentation away from what Toulmin saw as the absolutism of the
syllogism and towards a model with flexibility to accommodate probabilities. The
fundamentals of the Toulmin model are three elements: data, warrant, and claim. A
claim is a primary statement put forth by the speaker for the assent of the audience.
Data are the ideas and instances drawn to support the claim. The claim and the data are
connected by a warrant—a rule, value, definition, or understanding of relationship which makes drawing a claim possible. In the classic enthymeme, the warrant would be similar to the unstated premise supplied by the audience, and indeed, “[warrants], in particular, are frequently implicit. Yet in controversial arguments, implicit warrants are likely to be challenged to become explicit and to be defended” (Kneupper 237-238). The terms of claim and data are now familiar to students, even those who have never heard of Toulmin, which makes this schema approachable from a pedagogical perspective.

Toulmin’s model then allows for expansion where syllogisms do not. Warrants can be expanded by backing. Reservations can be added to warrants in order to explain scenarios where the warrant does not apply. Qualifiers can be added to claims in order to take into account the reservations. Thus, we get a much more complex model of the generalizations and exceptions we argue with all the time (Kneupper 238).

Kneupper discusses the way that the Toulmin schema can be used to teach logical fallacies in a much more productive way. Kneupper remarks that logical fallacies are usually taught outside of any argument framework: “this is a negative approach to argument (it tells students what not to do)” (Kneupper 237). After learning the Toulmin schema, students should be able to see fallacies as missing or weak components of the argument structure, critiqueable and fixable by the critical thinker.

Because Stephen Toulmin updated the Aristotelian syllogism structure to reflect contemporary discourse, Kneupper characterizes the Toulmin model as
descriptive in its representation of the way rhetorical arguments can be structured. However, because the schema is considered a hybridized version of Aristotle, Toulmin is often deemed a part of “traditional argument,” with “some scholars…objecting to the purported formalism of the Toulmin model” (Bizup W4). Bizup’s 2009 article “The Uses of Toulmin in Composition Studies” aims to critique this assumption of formalism, and Bizup argues that scholars have too narrowly focused on Toulmin’s early work and ignored “his writings on ethics and ethical reasoning” (W4). However, Bizup’s defense of Toulmin might be too little too late. According to Bizup’s extensive analysis of Toulmin citations in scholarly articles, from 1976 to 1990, Toulmin was cited 11 times in CE and 10 times in CCC; from 1991 to 2007, those citations dropped to seven and three, respectively, with other journals following similar trends. My own examination of the CE and CCC literature finds a great deal of conversation about argument and argument structure during this time period, but clearly, the two major NCTE publications for postsecondary education have moved away from the Toulmin model, as even a point of discussion.

Stasis/Reading for Argument: Fahnestock and Secor to Kantz

Another tradition from the classic Roman pedagogies suggested in the early NCTE literature is the series of argument questions or types that make up *stasis*. Status—the Latin word for the Greek *stasis*—is identified by Corbett as a pedagogy “useful in the freshman composition course” (“Stasis”, Corbett “Usefulness” 162). Students examine the essential questions rooted in the rhetorical situation: “did the cause turn on a question of fact (did Antony kill Caesar?); or on a question of
definition (yes, Antony killed Caesar, but was it murder?); or on a question of quality (yes, Antony murdered Caesar, but was this act good or bad?)” (“Usefulness” 162). Corbett claims that determining the most pertinent *status* question for an argument helps students produce “unified, coherent piece[s] of writing when they are forced, before they begin to write, to state their thesis in a single, declarative sentence” (“Usefulness” 162). Asking these questions with the intention of writing a thesis guides students to a clearly argumentative mindset; explanatory or narrative writing becomes background information for a thesis-driven argument.

As mentioned earlier, in their 1983 article “Teaching Argument: A Theory of Types,” Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor propose an argument course structured around these *stasis* questions. To the three questions described by Corbett—fact, definition, and value or quality—Fahnestock and Secor add cause and effect and authority. Combining questions of fact and definition into one, Fahnestock and Secor suggest a scaffolding of arguments: “categorical propositions, causal propositions, evaluations, and proposals” (23). Categorical and causal propositions can be taught using classical argument structures, and evaluations and proposals combine multiple layers of argument, such as the defining the category of “good” or “harmful” effects of a cause and effect relationship, which can then be argued for or against in a proposal. Fahnestock and Secor conclude their argument with the assertion that this assignment progression benefits any student, not just in the composition classroom, and is therefore ideal for the university setting:

> [T]he overall method of building from simple, basic types of argument to types requiring a combination of steps
gives the student transferable structures which are suitable for any subject but are not so automatic as to preclude the student from doing his or her own thinking. (29-30)

The emphasis is on transferrable habits of thinking, which is an essential part of contemporary argument pedagogy as argument becomes increasingly emphasized in both the postsecondary and K-12 educational landscape.

Closely related to these essential *stasis* questions in writing arguments is the practice of *reading* for argument. Margaret Kantz, in her 1990 article “Helping Students Use Textual Sources Persuasively,” suggests that students often do not produce innovative or creative arguments because they don’t read sources for the elements of argument—both the arguments of the authors and the arguments that the student could then craft using those sources. Kantz cites three fundamental problems for students’ reading comprehension:

1) Many students …misunderstand sources because they read them as stories. 2) Many students expect their sources to tell the truth; hence, they equate persuasive writing in this context with making things up. 3) Many students do not understand that facts are a kind of claim and are often used persuasively in so-called objective writing to create an impression. (77-78)

Kantz suggests that students read looking for arguments and rhetorical contexts as a pedagogy useful prior to their own attempt to write arguments, searching for the essential question answered or problem solved in a source text. This provides students with both an understanding of the types of arguments that they could, themselves, write, but also allows them to more critically evaluate source texts against each other
and develop more sophisticated arguments, fluidly moving from reading to writing (Kantz 78).

Although the primary questions used for stasis can change, as evidenced by the discrepancy between Corbett and Fahanstock and Secor, Fahanstock and Secor assert that, when their students were asked to propose potential argument subjects, all the answers given fell into one of the four primary categories they identify (Fahanstock and Secor 23). This should speak to the relatively logical—that is, common sensical, rather than formally logical—approach that the stasis pedagogy takes for both reading and writing arguments. Reading for argument also has clear applications in other disciplines and in K-12 classrooms, where students can begin reading to identify arguments before attempting to compose a thesis, as suggested by Corbett. Kantz’s example of students reading for argument is in History, and her support of students’ reading suggests an attention to the conventions of the discipline. This is certainly a pedagogy available to teachers of numerous subjects and levels, introducing their students to the conventions, purposes, and types of evidence used within their discipline, and making this pedagogy flexible in its applicability and adaptability.

Rogerian Argument: Young, Becker, and Pike to Lamb

As noted earlier, the first major departure from traditional, classical argument pedagogies took place in the 1970s with Rogerian argument. First, using scholarly sources from CE and CCC, I will give an overview of definitions of Rogerian rhetoric. Then I will look specifically at composition scholarship on Rogerian rhetoric.
Carl Rogers, a pioneer for nondirective therapy, developed a paradigm of client-therapist relationships with the intent to remove judgment on the part of the therapist. According to Rogerian scholar Douglas Brent, “to evaluate is to threaten, and to threaten is to block communication. The therapist must be content to open the channels of communication and let the client do his own healing” (Brent 455). It was clear to Rogers that his methods had greater implications than just inside his therapy sessions, especially in the aftermath of WWII and increasing international tensions. In 1951, Rogers wrote “Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation,” which “suggests optimistically that political conflicts such as labor disputes or international hostilities might be lessened if each party attempted to restate the views of the other until each was satisfied that the other had truly understood them” (Brent 455). By moving his strategies to the political realm, Rogers opened the door for new contexts for non-evaluative rhetoric.

A privileging, or at least acknowledging, of alternative ways of knowing is essential to the foundation of Rogerian rhetoric, and what separates it from traditional Aristotelian rhetoric, which privileges rational ways of knowing and an end goal of persuasion over feelings and a mutual sense of understanding and respect (Bator 428). Maxine Hairston, in her 1976 support of Rogerian rhetoric in the classroom, writes that Rogerian techniques are necessary because Aristotelian techniques have already fallen short in new contexts:

Ironically, those situations in which the classical methods of using proof, evidence, and logical deductions are most apt to fail are just the ones we care about most. Such arguments often concern issues that affect us deeply—
racial and sexual matters, moral questions, personal and professional standards and behavior. (Hairston 373)

To be an evolving, socially conscious society, it is imperative that we foster such fraught discussions, but in a way that produces greater understanding rather than deeper division.

Rogers himself advocates for techniques that establish understanding through listening and non-evaluative dialogue. Only through removing this evaluation, says Hairston, can we stop the cycle of “expect[ing] people to listen to us and respect our wisdom, even though we pay no attention to their opinions and feelings” (Hairston 374). This stems from a habit of responding to a value statement (e.g. I like _____) with a value statement of our own (I like _____ too! or No, ______ is horrible) rather than listening to and valuing the opinion of the first speaker. Hairston describes why value statements prevent generative communication:

> It seems to be almost human nature that we can’t hear an opinion without wanting to give one, however trivial the topic…Value judgments tend to freeze people into the status quo and make them commit themselves to a stand, and almost inevitably, once a person takes a position on an issue…the possibility of his listening to a dissenting point of view with an open mind diminishes. (Hairston 374)

Indeed, Rogerian rhetoric removes the notion of advocacy, or advancing one option over another, and moves toward a model of understanding. This model gives interested parties the space to explore and change the full dynamics of their opinions, allowing for the evolution of the argument process. Douglas Brent praises this shift: “The possibility of change, of shifting not just the grounds of argument but the basic
propositions that each of us believes, must be open to the arguing parties themselves” (Brent 463). Fluid, adaptable, and built on mutual respect, the Rogerian strategies present enormous promise for arguing outside the classical framework, a promise fulfilled in later scholarly threads.

In 1970, Richard Young, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike published *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*, which featured one of Rogers’ own articles and which faced the challenge of translating Rogerian communication strategies from therapy and political contexts, true dialogue, to the study of rhetoric and written composition which can only, at best, represent dialogue. Although many scholars write about Rogerian rhetoric, Douglas Brent argues that it is really Young, Becker, and Pike’s interpretation of Rogerian rhetoric that is present in composition pedagogy today. Maxine Hairston’s *CCC* article from 1976 in turn interprets Young, Becker, and Pike, and provides a five step approach to Rogerian techniques:

1. Give a brief, *objective* statement of the issue under discussion.
2. Summarize in impartial language what you perceive the case for the opposition to be; the summary should demonstrate that you understand their interests and concerns and should avoid any hint of hostility.
3. Make an objective statement of your own side of the issue, listing your concerns and interests, but avoiding loaded language or any hint of moral superiority.
4. Outline what common ground or mutual concerns you and the other person or group seem to share; if you see irreconcilable interests, specify what they are.
5. Outline the solution you propose, pointing out what both sides may gain from it. (Hairston 375, emphasis in original).

Hairston’s strategies of summary and identifying common ground help move dialogue onto the written page and provide practical, practicable moves for students to make in their writing.
In 1991, Douglas Brent revisited Young, Becker, and Pike’s famous book to evaluate its usefulness after twenty years. The results are mixed. Young, Becker, and Pike supported Rogers in a pedagogy of non-evaluation. Brent believes that no language is non-evaluative, and he suggests an emphasis on “non-threatening” language rather than non-evaluative (464). To this, I would even add Hairston’s use of the terms “objective” and “impartial” to the list of words to eliminate from Rogerian pedagogies, although her advice to avoid being hostile still rings true to Brent’s “non-threatening” language.

Brent also argues that the uses of Rogerian argument in the classroom are not always true to Young, Becker, and Pike’s vision. Such scenarios often still model traditional argument in that students take pre-established and diametrically opposed positions. With this a priori argument in mind, students are left with little room to change their own positions on an issue, no matter the amount of understanding developed between two arguers. This potential for change is an important part of Rogerian rhetoric’s departure from classical rhetoric, and shouldn’t be overlooked. Brent suggests emphasizing therapeutic rhetoric as a separate context from forensic and deliberative rhetoric, where classical arguments are traditionally practiced (462). Therapeutic rhetoric, as a space for understanding, would remove the tendency toward pro-con debate and better foster Rogerian ideals.

While some may continue to find value in teaching Rogerian strategies alongside traditional arguments, Rogerian rhetoric has been resisted by feminist theorists for some time now. As Catherine Lamb writes, “It has always been women’s
work to understand others [...]”; often that has been at the expense of understanding self” (Lamb 17). Lamb’s contention is that Rogerian rhetoric does little to challenge existing power dynamics within an argument framework, reinforcing the role of understand-er for those traditionally called upon to understand rather than to assert.

*Negotiation and Mediation: Lamb*

After the early 1990s, argument in *CCC* and *CE* scholarship firmly and consistently advocates for alternative argument pedagogies, moving away from classical argument. Douglas Brent’s review of Rogerian rhetoric in 1990 signals this turn, but his article is still retrospective rather than proactive. Catherine Lamb’s 1991 article, “Beyond Argument in Feminist Composition,” signals an impulse to expand the toolkit of argument pedagogies to include non-oppositional argument.

Negotiation offers a distinct alternative to monological argument in that the aim of the interaction is the satisfaction of all concerned parties rather than one authoritarian “winner.” If all parties entered the negotiation from congruent positions, identical and overlapping, then no negotiations would be necessary. In order for true negotiations to occur, interested parties must enter the negotiation with the expectation that they, themselves, will undergo some change. The result is “knowledge as something that people do together” (Lamb 17). Power is not received at the end of the argument, as a prize to the winner, but is actually created through the negotiation process: “Necessarily, the conception of power has changed as well: from something that can be possessed and used on somebody to something that is available to both and has at least the potential of being used for the benefit of both” (18). This potential of
mutual benefit can alleviate much of the fear of traditional argument, in which a well-reasoned and deeply personal argument can be termed “less effective” and, by extension, “ineffective.” The negotiation process lessens the likelihood that an argument will go unheard.

Lamb offers mediation as an extension of the negotiation process, whereby a disinterested third party also contributes. She writes of the difference between negotiation and mediation in the composition classroom: “Mediation may be somewhat more accessible because the roles of negotiator and disputant are separate” (19). Often, real-life negotiations involve clear power stratification, e.g. labor disputes between industry and union leaders. Professional mediators ensure that both parties are receiving fair treatment, and so students may find that the act of mediating further serves to highlight the changing power dynamic of the negotiation process.

Negotiation and mediation are excellent strategies to use in classrooms for a wide range of ages because they are already a part of the conflict-resolution processes used by students young and old. The mediation process, which can help young students feel heard and validated regarding their personal problems, can then be extended in later grades to include outside research and more than two viewpoints. Negotiation and mediation also have the added benefit of being present in our current news cycles, as we watch international officials, business moguls, and labor leaders enter negotiation periods. Students can benefit from both the practice and the observance of negotiation processes.
Believers and Doubters in the 21st Century: Elbow and Booth

Peter Elbow and Wayne Booth are both esteemed names in the Rhetoric and Composition field. In 2005, they collaborated on a dialogue project—two individually authored articles appearing side-by-side in an issue of *College English*. Elbow and Booth are both concerned with the reasons that students (and by extension, our culture) accept or reject an argument. The study of rhetoric has often focused on the act of persuasion, confined to answering the question, “how can I change your mind?” (Booth 379). But the extension of this question, which both authors feel is ignored, is, “When should I change my mind?” (Booth 379). Booth argues for a “rhetoric of assent” that navigates between dogmatism—which rejects any new arguments not already fitting within pre-established “truths”—and skepticism—which rejects any new arguments out of a rejection of “truths” in general. It is in skepticism and dogmatism that Booth sees the adversarial nature of traditional argument, seeking always to take down another rather than build them up.

This “rhetoric of assent” would ask arguers to examine why, exactly, they believe an argument, and Booth identifies four “universally” accepted reasons for assent: biological empiricism, experienced through the body; worldviews espoused by caregivers; chance; and pre-established authority figures (382-383). These four reasons emphasize the things that we believe, that we know with what might be called “common sense,” that we don’t question. The emphasis is thus on generating and perpetuating values rather than skeptically or dogmatically rejecting them.
Peter Elbow integrates Booth’s “rhetoric of assent” into his “believing game” and “doubting game,” which are a well-known pedagogy of Elbow’s, in order to combat the “pervasive assumption that good thinking centers only on argument as a process of skeptical scrutinizing for flaws and contradictions” (Elbow 389). Where Booth seeks to chart a middle course, Elbow asks students to inhabit the extremes—fully believing an idea or value they find contrary to their own nature or fully doubting an idea or value they find inherent to their own nature (Elbow 391-392). The goal, Elbow asserts, is not to “seek a monopoly for assent and belief—only to break the monopoly of the skeptical adversarial method” (390).

Together, Elbow and Booth present several methods of combining Booth’s rhetoric of assent and Elbow’s believing game in the classroom setting. The first is attentive listening and summarizing of another person’s view, which both authors describe as essential and which Elbow credits to Carl Rogers, “an important figure for rhetoric and thinking and [who] needs more notice than he is currently given” (Elbow 394). Next, Elbow suggests narrative, metaphor, or image-making to move away from the critical, oppositional rejection of ideas and into imaginative and associative thinking (Elbow 395). Elbow then moves to conversation-based pedagogies that are meant for classroom discussions: The three minute rule, where students may ask for three minutes of uninterrupted time to explain their own point with no interruptions; the Allies only rule, where only those who are successfully believing an idea or viewpoint are allowed to speak—no objections; the testimony, which invites students

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1 “The Doubting and Believing Game” is an essay in the appendix of Elbow’s *Writing without Teachers*, first published in 1973.
to speak narratively about personal issues; and silence, which Elbow mentions briefly but then names several other scholars who have done more work on the subject (including Belanoff, Dalke, and Gere) (Elbow 395-397). All of these pedagogies are firmly rooted in dialogue (or lack thereof), with a process-orientation to allow students the space to explore both assent and dissent and the motivations behind each.

While many of Booth’s and Elbow’s strategies are discussion-based, they provide an excellent example of written assent and dissent in their articles. The editor of *CE*’s decision to publish concurrent articles side-by-side, inviting readers to examine the authors’ similarities and differences together, in a single concurrent space is an important departure from the traditional published response from months or even years later. While not collaboratively written, Elbow and Booth demonstrate an acute awareness of the other’s guiding principles. Elbow even begins his article with the Rogerian move of a description of the agreements between the two authors, rather than founding his argument on the conventional “problematizing” move that many see as oppositional. Booth and Elbow are neither identical nor adversarial, but construct their articles to be written representations of the alternatives they advocate in the classroom.

*Argument and Kairos: Harker and Jack*

One small movement to evolve argument pedagogy for contemporary students has sought to reintroduce a component of ancient rhetoric—*kairos*. Traditionally defined as “saying the right thing at the right time,” *kairos* has proven to be more multifaceted than this hand-me-down saying implies. While in the 1970s, James Kinneavy called for a further exploration of *kairos*, Michael Harker argues in his 2007
article that scholars have implicitly more than explicitly explored *kairos* as an important factor in student writing, and that an understanding of *kairos* can “identifi[y] not only the temporal but the ethical influences that complicate how we navigate and understand the social context of argument” (Harker 79). Harker himself does not give a single definition of *kairos*, but instead analyzes the ways that *kairos* acts as an ephemeral, less controllable element in an argument.

Embracing this uncontrollable element is a theme in several award winning essays on the teaching of writing, each concerned with the “appropriateness” of the moment, as if appropriateness were not static but situation-dependent: “[The] view of writing as ‘frozen in time’ stems from a discourse of denial in which both students and instructors deny or resist temporal influences, insisting that writing does not unfold over time and remains immune to the presence of *kairos* in the writing process” (Nancy Sommers qtd. in Harker 88). *Kairos* provides an avenue to teach the evolution of the writing process or the evolution of an argument as an essential part of the argument rather than as a detractor.

*Kairos* is partly informed by the audience, but it is more expansive than the immediate audience of an argument, and so provides an important addition to the *logos-ethos-pathos* triangle which accounts for the speaker and audience but not time:

Including *kairos* in this manner (as the fourth vertices [sic] [of Aristotle’s triangle]) transforms the triangle into a pyramid that presents, in a timely and pragmatic fashion, the significance and influence of the passage of time and the importance of identifying the ethical ‘preferences’ that inevitably inform our arguments and actions in the world. (Harker 93)
Similarly, Jordynn Jack’s article on chronotopes develops the issue of “the significance and influence of the passage of time” based on the subject of the argument itself. She argues that we have different conceptions of time depending on situation, “chronotopes” or the “ways in which a text draws upon, constitutes, or appeals to particular notions of space or time” (Jack 53-54). We invoke an appeal to time very differently when we discuss genetically modified organisms (GMOs) than when we discuss racial tensions in America, especially, as Jack notes, when we discuss new technologies and feel an ever-increasing sense of urgency (56). Understanding the various chronotopes at play in the subject of an argument can be an alternative avenue for understanding the congruence or incongruence of multiple voices within an argument. Harker’s multifaceted, ephemeral *kairos* and Jack’s chronotopes both speak to the greater context of argument and its enacting over time.

*Non-Western Rhetoric: Kroll and You*

Some scholarship in the past half decade has made an interesting move away from traditional, Greek argument and towards Asian traditions. Barry Kroll and Xiaoye You both emphasize the potential of drawing from non-Western traditions in order to expand our contemporary notion of argument. You’s work with the Salt and Iron Debates of Western Han China reminds us that we can look to ancient events—beyond Greece or Rome—to discover some alternative methods with which global citizens have navigated disputes between powerful groups. Such history, first, validates the non-Western background of many of our students; second, might uncover undiscovered argument tactics; and third, sheds light on historical examples of
intercultural—rather than just interpersonal—conflict, which is so pervasive in our globalized world (You 382).

Barry Kroll’s brief introduction to the principles of aikido and its potential for classroom pedagogies is a reminder of the “nondualistic viewpoint that pervades much Japanese thinking (and is part of aikido’s cultural legacy)” (461). If we wish students to move away from the dualistic nature of the pro-con debate, we might do well to draw from cultures without this ingrained sense of two-sided argument. Kroll’s article is especially helpful because he describes two different aikido moves and then follows them with texts to model for practical classroom discussions.

Tenkan, the move of circling, redirects the attention of the adversary from the defender, turning both adversary and defender to a side-by-side position with their attention focused on a common sight. When two seeming adversaries find an alternative, shared interest, “readers who favor divergent solutions are given ways to construe themselves—at least for a time—as partners, with the writer, in a conversation that matters to them all” (458). Kroll’s example is a New York Times editorial on the thirtieth anniversary of Roe v. Wade in which the co-authors state outright that they will probably never agree in conversations about abortion, but can find much common ground regarding contraception, affordable child-care, and other important interests for women and families with young children (458).

Another move, irimi, is the move of entering in. If a defender were to enter in, he or she would respond to an attack, not by a counter attack, but by anticipating and intercepting the harmful blow. Rather than seeking an alternative issue, as the tenkan
circling does, *irimi* identifies and validates an underlying interest, the deep root of the adversary’s sign of aggression. While I would align this underlying interest with the “warrant” in the Toulmin schema—a value, assumption, or rule through which the argument is functioning—the difference in the rhetorical *irimi* move is that it specifically requires one to seek out the underlying interests rather than leaving them unsaid. Kroll analyzes another editorial regarding a jurisdictional change to gun crime cases. The author of the editorial actively seeks out the intentions behind the proponents of the change and offers evidence that their goals will not actually be achieved under the proposed plan. By siding with the imagined audience and stopping their “blow” before it starts, the author achieves the desired persuasion without causing harm to the adversary.

Although a confrontation in *aikido* ends with the submission of one fighter to another, the skilled *aikido* fighter always prioritizes defensive moves and seeks to alter the direction of an opponent’s energies, maneuvering them into submission without causing them harm. Not only is the opponent not to be physically harmed during an encounter, but the moves do not even result in the opponent feeling the potential for danger. As one of Kroll’s students writes, after having volunteered to demonstrate a move, “when I was put into a hold, I realized that while I couldn’t attack with my own moves, I was not in serious danger myself” (465). The physical demonstration of safety is an innovative method to explore the ways that classrooms can be intellectually and emotionally safe for students exploring both new and familiar viewpoints.
These new and familiar viewpoints are essential to making argument relevant to contemporary students. It can no longer be assumed that a student’s rhetorical and argumentative skills will be practiced in a strictly monocultural environment. Indeed, few classrooms are ever monocultural or even monolinguistic, nor are the lives of the students after they leave the classroom. Kroll’s unorthodox pedagogy and You’s call for an expanded rhetorical tradition demonstrate a fundamental commonality among many of the alternative rhetorical strategies—the need for understanding and the transparency of cultural assumptions.

*Argument Textbooks: Knoblauch*

In 2011, in the most recent *CCC* article to explore argument in the 21st century, A. Abby Knoblauch’s article “A Textbook Argument: Definitions of Argument in Leading Composition Textbooks” presents a startling contradiction to the pervasive alternative pedagogies present in the *CE* and *CCC* literature over the past 25 years. While it is clear that college-level scholarship has all but abandoned traditional models of argument (even, to some extent, including Rogerian rhetoric), Knoblauch argues that argument textbooks have not. Many very popular textbooks, which can form the backbone of composition curriculum, especially for inexperienced teachers and graduate teaching assistants, still promote very traditional definitions and pedagogies for argument. Knoblauch takes the fifth edition of *Everything’s an Argument*[^2] as her primary example, in addition to *Writing Arguments* by John D. Ramage, John C. Bean, and

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[^2]: A sixth edition was published in 2013 and may include changes and expansions.
and June Johnson, because they are the most popular textbooks and hence direct the priorities of composition classrooms across the country.

Knoblauch begins her analysis with a survey of several different textbooks, most of which appear to promote alternatives to the pro-con debate style argument that NCTE scholarly journal articles specifically reject. *Everything’s an Argument*, by Andrea Lunsford, John J. Ruszkiewicz, and Keith Walters even mentions invitational rhetoric, which Knoblauch calls “perhaps one of the more extreme alternatives to persuasion-based argument” (252). Knoblauch finds the inclusion of alternative definitions and pedagogies in these textbooks disingenuously encouraging. A precursory glance at these textbooks seems to subscribe to scholars’ commitment to non-oppositional rhetoric, but many of these are alternatives in name only. While Toulmin is now rarely cited in contemporary scholarship, his theories of argument are certainly taught in contemporary classrooms. Not only does Toulmin occupy a 21 page section in *Everything’s an Argument*, but students are often directed back to Toulmin’s terms and models in the text: “In other words, Toulmin strategies permeate the textbook” (254). While *Everything’s an Argument* does provide six pages on Rogerian argument, it is clear that the Toulmin schema is the overwhelmingly favored form of argument (254). In fact, Knoblauch’s analysis of the discussion questions accompanying the section on Rogerian argument finds the questions to directly contradict the aims of Rogers, consistently framing Rogerian strategies in Aristotelian terms, reflecting the view Lunsford expressed in her 1979 article (254-255). This extremely popular textbook demonstrates the disconnect between composition
scholarship and composition pedagogy, despite the pedagogies purposely proposed by composition scholars.

50 Years of Changing Patterns

Contexts: Classroom Writing and Real-World Scenarios

One major characteristic of the context of argument in the past 50 years has been the emphasis on written argument. Both classical argument and Rogerian therapy are rooted in oral communication, but teachers of writing and composition scholars have endeavored to translate argument pedagogies into written structures. On the one hand, written arguments can provide for more flexibility in negotiating multiple viewpoints; without the clearly established roles of the judge and two advocates, as in Aristotelian argument, contemporary arguments can incorporate multiple viewpoints, vary between assent and dissent, and be revised later with respect to new arguments or new stakeholders. On the other hand, written arguments do not have the same implicit audience that oral arguments have. The NCTE scholarship on argument writing reviewed in this thesis has consistently emphasized audience-based pedagogies so that students will come to see audience as an essential part of any writing project, despite the fact that the intended audience—besides the instructor—may never read the paper.

The hope, then, is that a student’s attention to audience and the many voices present in an issue will transfer out of the classroom and into real world scenarios requiring critical thinking and informed decision making. Present throughout the NCTE scholarship is an acute awareness of the detrimental power of antagonism. By teaching ethical, informed argument, these NCTE scholars strive to rectify our
culture’s rejection of dialogue, a refusal to entertain multiple viewpoints. The context for argument writing thus becomes the writing classroom, but also wage negotiations, grant proposals, news articles, political debates, scholarly journal articles, and other academic, professional, and personal interactions.

Definitions: Renaming Students

While scholars in CCC and CE have proposed a diverse array of alternatives and supplements to traditional argument pedagogies, none of the proposed changes to the name of argument address the necessary position of the student in the argument process. Almost all of the scholars named thus far have steadfastly avoided naming the participants in argumentation. Most of them simply refer to students as “students,” firmly establishing the pedagogical context of learning argument but ignoring the relationship between students engaged in argumentation or between writers and readers of argument. Those scholars who do name the participants in argumentation—Kroll with “adversaries,” You with “the Other”—do so to criticize the narrow, combative definition of argument present in popular culture.

With the creation of an abstract noun—argumentation—the act of arguing becomes removed from the agents involved. This may absolve argumentation of those hostile agents implied in the popular definition of argument: a yelling parent, a shouting politician, a ruthless lawyer. As I wrote the early drafts of this thesis, I often felt forced to use the word “opponent” to describe someone who would disagree with a student, and the animosity and violence implied in that word has to be removed from
argumentation if students are ever to embrace a fuller understanding of argument’s potential.

By studying argumentation, theorists and pedagogues have opened up a space for kairotic, ethical arguments with a wide array of strategies. New definitions of argument and argumentation do much to help expand the pedagogical tool box of teachers of argument. However, they do little to redefine the identity of the student striving for a complex relationship between a chosen subject, a visible audience in person or an imagined audience in writing, an unknowable unintended audience, a variety of stakeholders, the historical contexts of the subject and the student, and the potential for being persuaded by someone else.

It is my belief that not naming the position of the student in the act of argumentation both helps and harms the cause of reimagining argument for a more cooperative world. Students’ identities as students are maintained, with their inherent differences, cultural values, and future uses of argumentation in their academic careers. Not defining the role of the student in argumentation thus allows for multidisciplinary use of argumentation and aids in liberal arts and general education goals for colleges and universities. This is an important goal in current writing pedagogy, as Writing Across the Curriculum continues to gain momentum and teachers within disciplines besides English are expected to teach writing.

On the other hand, a reimagined understanding of argumentation does not necessarily help students see their ethical responsibility as an enactor of argument. If students are to resist the popular definition of argument which pigeonholes them into
pro-con debates, students must see themselves differently. Their practice crafting arguments must be transferrable to the “real world,” where they won’t be considered students any more.

The term most often used for post-school students is “citizen.” In the classical sense, education is intended to foster a citizenry of critical thinkers, and so I was surprised to not observe any of these NCTE scholars describing their students as citizens. The authors’ forceful faithfulness to arguments for real policy changes and their belief that argument is a community-minded and community-building process both seem to speak to the classic idea of the student-citizen.

However, it may be that we have reached a point of globalization that we feel uncomfortable calling all our students, from their diverse backgrounds and nationalities, “citizens”—and rightly so. If that word is carrying with it the same stigma of the word “argument” that comes from polarized viewpoints—one is either a citizen or an immigrant or a foreigner or an international student, for example—then it, too, should be avoided with the same sensitivity. I certainly would not wish to alienate my international students, who struggle enough with culture shock and learning in their second language and who may or may not have any intention of remaining in the United States after graduation. Nor would I want to stigmatize undocumented students. But that leaves a large hole for a necessary sense of identity and responsibility that students of all backgrounds must embody in order for new argument pedagogies to be successful beyond the term’s grading period.
Pedagogies: Discovering Arguments Beyond Pro-Con

The CE and CCC scholarship from the past 25 years consistently avoids mock debate situations and pro-con arguments. Instead, many authors emphasize the act of creating an argument through the inquiry process. This not only encourages students to consider how many different arguments could stem from a given issue; it also discourages students from entering into the argument-writing process with a pre-established claim in mind.

The range of pedagogies represented in this body of recent scholarship is vast. The pedagogies allow for a larger number of genres to influence argument writing, including narrative writing, personal journal entries, and physical activity, such as Barry Kroll’s aikido moves. As high school teachers of argument seek to prepare their students for postsecondary writing, they can begin to draw upon the threads suggested in the argument scholarship. The combination of voices published in CE and CCC present a strong trend in the profession to teach cooperative argument strategies for success in postsecondary education. If these pedagogies can be implemented in secondary school classrooms, teachers of argument can ostensibly foster college-readiness and follow the predominate attitudes about argument as represented in postsecondary scholarship.
Chapter 3: Argument Writing in the Common Core and NCTE’s *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Education*

**Introduction**

The previous chapter examined some of the trends and attitudes in the teaching of argument writing as represented in the scholarly conversation in the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) journals *College English (CE)* and *College Composition and Communication (CCC)*. With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (the Common Core or CCSS), argument writing will soon hold a new prominence in K-12 education, in addition to its presence in postsecondary education. One of the purposes of this chapter is to examine how the Common Core does or does not fit with NCTE’s long-term view of argument writing. NCTE has engaged with argument pedagogies not only through the literature at the postsecondary level, but also by publishing the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Education* (or the *Framework*).

In this chapter, I begin by citing some recent studies of student writing in high school and college, demonstrating the connections and disconnections between the expected level of commitment and the genres used in the respective levels of instruction. I then explain the importance of argument writing as it pertains to the “college-ready” student. Next, I describe the relationship between the NCTE and the drafters of the Common Core. This is followed by a close reading of the Common Core’s Standards for English Language Arts (ELA), with the intent to discover what
types of pedagogies on argument might best or most easily contribute to success under the standards. I then examine the Framework for Success in light of its tenuous relationship to the Common Core. I argue that instead of positioning the Common Core and the Framework as inherently opposite, a positioning of the Framework as pedagogies for the Common Core would negotiate the common ground that is so consistently advocated in the NCTE literature.

**What Students Write**

According to the Common Core website, Common Core is “preparing America’s students for college and career” (National Governors Association). Like never before, America’s education system will be focused on negotiating the transition from secondary education to postsecondary life. Recent studies about the writing habits and expectations of American high school and college students reveal important information about this transition.

In 2010, Joanne Addison and Sharon James McGee published a CCC article titled “Writing in High School/Writing in College,” which collected data from recent surveys of high school and college writing, including surveys from the College Board, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and Stanford University. Addison and McGee then present the data from their own survey comparing the writing tasks and habits of high school and college writers, looking for some of the ways that high schools might already be attuned to the writing expectations of college life. College faculty were asked to list their three most important writing assignments for junior and senior students; the five most popular
answers were: Research Paper (47%), Analysis Paper (30%), Critique/Review Paper (23%), Reaction Paper (18%), and Position/Issue Paper (18%). Asked the same question for freshman and sophomore students, the faculty responded with similar answers; the five most popular answers were: Research Paper (34%), Critique/Review Paper (27%), Analysis Paper (27%), Journal/Reflection Paper (24%), and Reaction Paper (21%) (Addison and McGee 164). It is significant that the majority of these major projects are argument based, requiring students to craft and present an argument to support their research, analysis, or position on an issue. Clearly, college faculty members expect students to perform argumentative writing for success in postsecondary education.

It would follow that in order to be college ready, high school students should at least be introduced to argument writing during their secondary education. Addison and McGee’s survey finds that this is indeed the case: high priority writing for high school freshmen/sophomores is “in-class writing, journals/reflective writing, and summaries/abstracts,” while high school junior/senior level is “research papers, critique, position paper, and analysis paper” (Addison and McGee 164). For Addison and McGee, the similarity between late high school and early college writing is a good sign: “The data seem to suggest that high school faculty are following the lead of college faculty and working to prepare students for the types of writing they will encounter in college” by moving toward argument writing in the later years of high school (Addison and McGee 164).
A 2011 study by Arthur N. Applebee and Judith A. Langer further examined the writing practices of middle school and high school students, in an attempt to present a “snapshot” of student writing on the cusp of major policy changes. Applebee and Langer’s study collected and analyzed student writing in English, Social Studies, Science, and Math, for frequency, genres, and even page length of high school writing assignments. Their findings on page length were disconcerting at the least: “the typical student would be expected to produce approximately 1.6 pages a week of extended prose for English, and another 2.1 pages for [Social Studies, Science, and Math] combined” (15). This remarkably small amount of writing on a weekly basis is further emphasized with the page length expectations of the assignments for the entire year: “of the 8,542 separate assignments that we gathered from 138 case study students in these schools, only 19% represented extended writing of a paragraph or more” (Applebee and Langer 15). Students write an average of less than four full pages per week, and the writing that they do complete is broken into extremely short assignments, despite the ability of teachers to assign extended writing that can take place over a period of time.

This pattern of short and infrequent writing extends to the assessments as well, where students cannot participate in lengthy revisions but can use writing to demonstrate content mastery. On high stakes English tests, students were expected to write open-ended responses only 17.8% of the time in middle school and 30.3% of the time in high school (Applebee and Langer 17). The increase from middle school to high school is encouraging, but the numbers still indicate that writing is of much lower
importance in high-stakes testing than multiple choice and True-False questions. End-of-course exams administered by teachers, that is, not state tests, fare a little better: “Teachers reported that 24.4% of the total grade in middle school, and 41.1% in high school, would be based on writing of at least a paragraph length. But even these somewhat higher numbers mean that writing on average matters less than multiple choice or short answer questions in assessing performance in English” (Applebee and Langer 18).

The results of these studies are mixed: college instructors overwhelmingly favor argument writing, and high school instructors are moving to prepare their students to perform in those tasks; however, middle school and high school students are writing very little overall, and writing makes up very little of the course grade.

**Argument Writing for the College-Ready Student**

Crafters and proponents of the Common Core advocate strongly for the image of the “college and career ready” student, prepared to tackle further academic or skills-based learning after high school. Applebee, in his own 2011 article after his consulting for the Common Core, remarks,

> The vision of a student who is college and career ready is difficult to argue with. Such students demonstrate independence; build strong content knowledge; respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline; comprehend as well as critique; value evidence; use technology and digital media strategically and appropriately; and come to understand other perspectives and cultures. (Applebee 26)
Sandra Murphy and Mary Anne Smith describe such overarching demands as “range” with “multiple moving parts” (105). One of these parts, as one of the three primary modes of writing called for by the Common Core, is argument writing, itself composed of multiple parts and processes.

Argument writing may sound familiar to teachers, as a newer incarnation of the more traditional persuasive writing; however, Ryan McCarty, from the Academy for Urban School Leadership, insists that this is an important shift. While “persuasion is personal, passionate, and all about winning,”

the logical process of gathering evidence, coming up with a claim, and linking evidence to your claim is different than the passion of persuasive debates. Rather than ignore contrasting points of view, different perspectives strengthen arguments by giving students the chance to test their claims with contrasting evidence and refine their positions. (McCarty)

McCarty also claims that argument writing is essential to foster the smoothest transition between courses within high schools and from high school to college:

“College professors always complain that students are not prepared to craft an argument when they get to college…Argument is important in all disciplines, which can make it a common thread throughout the school day” (McCarty). This speaks once again to range, to teaching students the types of intellectual moves that will best enable them to thrive in a variety of situations. Writing teachers have long known that writing is important to such thriving, and for the first time, the overwhelming majority of states will give “a central place for writing within an integrated view of the language arts” through their adopting the Common Core (Applebee 26).
NCTE’s Connection to the Common Core

The Common Core State Standards were written by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, not the NCTE. Although some NCTE members were consulted individually (including Arthur Applebee, cited above), NCTE as an organization was not invited to participate in the initial drafting of the standards. Instead, a committee of NCTE members was given a review copy of the standards to engage in the revision process. One of six groups asked to review the standards before publication, the NCTE Review Team presented three thorough critiques of the standards and the assessment methods to the Council of Chief State School Officers work group, all three of which can be found on NCTE’s website. During this process, Kylene Beers, the President of NCTE at the time, wrote two open letters to the NCTE community—one to describe the process of revising the standards, but without the specific recommendations given, and another that detailed the committee’s criticisms after the standards were published.

Beers does not give a definitive stance on the Common Core, citing the democratic nature of NCTE and the various and potentially conflicting viewpoints of its members. She writes in her first letter that “the Executive Committee awaits with cautious optimism the release of the Common Core State Standards final document,” but in her second letter, reminds NCTE members that “this is not a document we were asked to write; it is not a document we proposed” (Beers “Open Letter” and “Open Letter September”). Beers’ tone is tense throughout. She marks clear distinctions between when NCTE was and was not “invited” to participate in the policy-making
process. She ends her second letter with attention to education’s purpose for democracy, and asks the National Governor’s Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to turn to NCTE members for their expertise to make this democracy possible (“Open Letter September”).

Jeff Williams, the chair of the NCTE review committee for the ELA standards, wrote a third open letter to the NCTE community in 2010, and in it, he makes the priorities of the NCTE community clear as they move forward to engage with the new standards coming soon to schools. Williams writes,

NCTE recognizes that no standards document in and of itself will change instruction or student learning; teachers will. And so, with the release of the Common Core standards, we are renewing our commitment to teacher learning communities—collaborative, local efforts to support teachers in making complex judgments about how best to advance students as engaged literacy learners.

(Williams)

Resolved to the presence of a new policy document only partially influenced by its expertise, NCTE moves to supporting teachers and pedagogies that advance the goals of NCTE.

In 2011, NCTE responded again to the Common Core, this time with a different approach. NCTE published the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing, a document also intended to provide guidance for college readiness, but with no ties to assessment. Some NCTE scholars were quick to point out the tensions between the two documents. Chris W. Gallagher’s 2012 College English article, “The Trouble with Outcomes: Pragmatic Inquiry and Educational Aims” examines the ways that outcomes can both structure and hinder student learning in a course, noting that
the Framework, as an overarching document not specific to a single course, attempts to position itself as non-assessable, distinctly different from the politically-driven outcomes of the Common Core.

Kristine Johnson’s 2013 College Composition and Communication article “Beyond Standards: Disciplinary and National Perspectives on Habits of Mind,” examines the Framework in light of national pressures to provide quantified, standardized data of student performance. She argues that the Framework is evidence of NCTE’s commitment to the liberal arts tradition, but that the contemporary political climate surrounding education has already altered the reception of the Framework by the NCTE community.

Both authors, writing for NCTE publications, take seriously NCTE’s ambiguous position within the educational policy landscape. NCTE is comprised of many scholars who are capable and eager to engage in conversations about outcomes and assessment, about productive writing habits and “college readiness,” but also many who are consistently critical of policies they did not create or advocate for, individually or as a professional organization. In all three of NCTE’s open letters and in these two scholarly articles engaging the standards movement, NCTE and the Common Core appear to be intermittently in sync and opposed, like two constantly rotating magnets, one moment attracted to each other, the next repelled.

**English Language Arts Standards for Argument Writing**

Accountability measures over the last several decades have included a dramatic increase in the number of standardized tests administered to students and the
tying of federal funding for Title I—at risk—schools to test scores based on federal standards. When No Child Left Behind was passed by the legislature during the George W. Bush administration, it established a timeline to enforce Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Title I schools and to perfect school performance by 2014 (“Evaluation Reports: Title I”). When it became clear that a significant number of schools could not make AYP and would be labeled “failing” in 2014, law makers sought a way to revise the upcoming fallout. In 2010, the Obama administration proposed a waiver program for any states that could demonstrate an alternative set of standards based on international benchmarks to promote college and career readiness (“What is the Elementary”). Rather than writing a new set of standards at the federal level, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers joined with several non-profit groups to develop the Common Core State Standards in Math and English Language Arts.

When the Common Core was first released, teachers of writing had cause to celebrate changes from No Child Left Behind that would add emphasis to writing in the classroom. While the No Child Left Behind standards made reading comprehension the focal point of English Language Arts, “CCSS, on the other hand, elevates writing to a central place, not only giving it the same number of individual standards as reading but also making writing the central way in which content knowledge is developed and shared” (Applebee 27). The value of teaching writing, in the eyes of policy makers and administrators, has increased exponentially.
The Common Core ELA functions as a three-tier standard system. The highest tier is comprised of four sets of “Anchor Standards”—Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening, with much overlap—as overarching goals for “college and career readiness” as a whole. The middle tier consists of grade specific goals for proper development at each stage as they pertain to each of the anchor standard sets. Ninth through tenth grade and eleventh through twelfth standards are given in two year increments to allow high schools more flexibility for course offerings. The lowest tier—specific curriculum—is not dictated by the standards. This structure was intended to provide state-to-state standardization of acquired skills so that, should students move from one state to another, they will have met the same developmental goals as their peers at their new school. It is also intended to provide a large amount of control to local school districts and individual teachers to meet the Common Core goals.

The ELA Writing standards have witnessed two dramatic shifts from their predecessors: The first is the introduction of standards for Social Studies/History and Science/Technology, not just English; the second is a new focus on argumentative writing as it moves to the top of the list of standards. Indeed, ELA Anchor Standard for Writing #1 states that students must be able to “[w]rite arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence” by the time they graduate (National Governors Association). Under the Common Core, the elements of argument writing will be introduced as early
as the third grade, superseding narrative and expository writing for the first time (National Governors Association).

As so much attention has been drawn, and rightfully so, to the transition from high school to college, I am examining the eleventh/twelfth grade-specific standards of Oregon for a fuller understanding of their potential implications for the writing lives of future college students. In the following close reading, I italicize words and phrases in the standards that I will analyze further, marking the places within the standards where I focus my attention. Writing Standard 1 requires students to:

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
  - Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
  - Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
  - Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationship between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
  - Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
  - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented. (National Governors Association, emphasis mine)
Upon reading these standards, I am struck first by the terms “claims,” “reasons,” and “evidence.” These words strongly echo the Toulmin schema and would seem to prompt a smooth transition from the standards to an established pedagogy. Teachers and administrators looking for curricula to implement immediately will find volumes of college materials that can be adapted to the high school classroom.

Although the Toulmin schema is often associated with traditional argument, which can be oppositional and hostile, two phrases in these standards could foster more contemporary, cooperative argument pedagogies. In section (a), students are prompted to distinguish their own claims not only from “opposing” claims, but also “alternate,” implying that not all arguments are simply two-sided. This turn is similar to the tenkan move in aikido described by Barry Kroll in his 2008 article “Arguing with Adversaries,” through which students seek to transform opposition into shared attention to an alternative issue where they can find common ground. Section (b) prompts students to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of both the counterclaims potentially leveled against them and their own claims. This section of the standards does support students’ evaluating and re-evaluating their own positions, a key component in many of the more contemporary pedagogies seen in the scholarship on argument.

Standard 1.d asks that students “establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone” (National Governors Association). This standard strikes me as a Catch-22. Objectivity isn’t the same as informed argument. An objective tone might be useful in moving students away from persuasive writing—bent on winning and
given to dramatics—but it may also imply that there is a right and a wrong answer to every question or a single solution to every problem.

The other nine standards are not explicitly about argument, and so they present a site of potential tension as new curricula are developed. If every standard is read as discrete and mutually exclusive, then the argument standard stands alone, replete with Touminian diction and some room for more nuanced argument. However, if Standards 4-10 are read as dictating expectations for all writing—overarching patterns to be found in a myriad of student work and therefore potentially applying to argument writing—then there are additional spaces for more contemporary argument pedagogies. Those standards read:

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to an including grades 11-12.)

6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience;
integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

9. *Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.*
   a. Apply grades 11-12 Reading standards to literature.
   b. Apply grades 11-12 Reading standards to literary nonfiction.

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of *tasks, purposes, and audiences.* (National Governors Association, emphasis mine)

Standards 4, 5, 8, and 10 all draw attention to the rhetorical elements of “task, purpose, and audience” of either the students’ writing or of outside sources. This attention to rhetorical context is essential to writing in the disciplines and to understanding the changeable nature of writing and communication. Understanding audience expectations can facilitate argument pedagogies pertaining to non-English subjects, and it opens up space for pedagogies in contexts that traditional argument doesn’t account for, such as negotiations and advertising, heightening students’ rhetorical sensitivities. The repetition of the phrase “task, purpose, and audience” so many times marks it as essential to success in the Common Core, but the phrase is actually not present in Standard 1 for argument. If teachers see Standards 4-10 as encompassing the three primary modes of writing, overarching expectations for all writing, then there is surely space within the argument standard for the audience-sensitive, context driven pedagogies that are advanced by so many educators. However, if teachers read each standard as discrete, then audience awareness, an essential part of argument writing, might not be fully expressed in student work.
Standard 5 addresses students’ “planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.” It is important that revising, rewriting, and trying a new approach are all three separate acts. Focusing on the process of writing—continually reevaluating writing, making changes over periods of time—is essential to the argumentative process as described by NCTE scholars. Writing is enacted over time. I am intrigued by the varying shades within “revising,” “rewriting,” and “trying a new approach.” I would assume that the words “rewriting” and “trying a new approach” are used in trouble scenarios: “rewriting” is what a student writer does when his or her first paper fails; “trying a new approach” is what a student writer does to overcome writers’ block. But “revising” is what a writer does after a good first draft. Successful writers revise, students are told. So the list begins with the positive verbs—planning and revising. First a writer plans, presumably writes a decent rough draft, and then revises it. With this positive outlook, rewriting and trying a new approach aren’t necessarily marks of failure, especially given the addition that students should “focus on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.” If that focus and audience has changed, students would do well to rewrite the argument and try a new approach.

This reasserts that there is no specific end point to argument—it is kairotic rather than discrete. This is even further highlighted by the fascinating Standard 6: “Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or
information.” Even after a piece of writing has been published, students are encouraged to update the work given new feedback and new information.

Standard 7 is really interesting. The first phrase simply confirms that students should write varied length projects, but the impetus of those projects is to answer a question or solve a problem. This inquiry is an essential part of the argument process, so that all arguments are grounded in problem solving or decision making rather than self-confirmation. It is also intimately connected to stasis theory, in which all arguments are crafted around a primary question at stake. Answering a question could lead a writer back into pro-con style arguments, but solving a problem rarely does. Interestingly, this could keep argument connected to two of its ancient roots—deliberative and forensic rhetoric—or it could facilitate further scholarship and pedagogy on the contexts for problem-solving outside of these traditions.

Students are then required to narrow or broaden their questions as well as synthesize multiple sources, and Standard 9 links the use of outside texts to the Reading and Language standards for each grade level. This integrative approach, both the synthesis within a specific project and the weaving together of reading and writing, emphasizes a pedagogy that includes reading for argument. The fact that the Writing standards also explicitly reference other standards supports a reading of the Writing standards as relational and interconnected rather than discrete and separate.

Standard 10 demands that students “write routinely” over varied time periods, including short periods that are only a sitting. However, the overwhelming direction of these standards is away from instantaneous, polished writing. Students are encouraged
to revise work that is going well, to reconsider writing that is not going well, to reconfigure writing that worked in one context and now gets moved to a new context, and to update writing that is “finished” based on new information. While the specific terms used for the components of argument are rooted in the traditional argument structure, the Common Core State Standards consistently emphasize the changeable nature of writing.

Standards 2 and 3 present a slightly different scenario than Standards 4-10. Because Standards 1-3 appear to be laying forth expectations for three mutually exclusive modes of writing—argument, informational, and narrative—those standards do not appear to speak to each other. However, Standards 4-10 do not suggest new modes but additional expectations for all three types of writing, and the other standards explicitly invoke the mutuality of reading, writing, and language, so it can be reasonably assumed that the three modes of writing are interconnected within the classroom. It seems prudent, therefore, to examine Standards 2 and 3 for how expository and narrative writing might influence argument writing. The standards read:

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
   a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
   b. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and
examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.

c. Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.

e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).

d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative. (National Governors Association, emphasis mine)

I see three primary spaces for potential connections to argument. First, in addition to the continual emphasis on audience in Standards 4-10, Standard 2 on informative writing also calls attention to the audience’s background knowledge of the
Such continual emphasis on other people, people with different viewpoints and understandings, different stakes in the issues, should aid students in developing rhetorically sensitive arguments, despite the fact that audience is not mentioned in Standard 1. Second, Standard 3 for narrative writing demands that students “Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view,” which could just as easily be instructions for introducing an argument as a narrative piece. “Problem, situation, or observation” provides a great deal of space for interpretation as students consider “significance” and students’ attention is drawn to context and problem-solving; moreover, conveying “significance” to an audience could be seen as essentially an argument.

“One or multiple point(s) of view” describes narrative points of view, in the context of Standard 3, but is also essential to the contemporary argument pedagogies advocated by educators. One of Peter Elbow’s uses of Rogerian strategies is to have students narrate their own points of view, their experiences that frame their opinions, in order for other students to understand that contrasting viewpoints are to be honored because of their personal nature (Elbow 395). If students can come to understand that the multiple viewpoints within their narratives are important because they are reflective of the multiple viewpoints in the world, then argument pedagogies emphasizing the negotiation and interaction of multiple viewpoints can naturally extend the narrative standards.
The third potential site for argument connection is in the standards for conclusions in both expository and narrative writing. Expository writing should “articulate[e] implications or the significance of the topic,” which is also a fundamental part of argument writing. The set up for an argument must include its implications or significance in order to engage the audience, so this section of the informational writing standards serves to emphasize again the interaction between writer and context. An understanding of significance or implications appears to be the result of informational writing, in this context, while it is the impetus for argument writing, which may make for a natural progression of assignments in the classroom.

The conclusion portion of the narrative standard also has interesting connections to argument writing. Students are to “reflect on what is experienced, observed, or resolved” at the end of a narrative piece, but contemporary pedagogues would strongly encourage this practice as a regular routine in argument writing as well, emphasizing the humanistic quality of argument in addition to the factual nature of it. Many educators encourage narrative, especially within classroom discussions, to contextualize different values and viewpoints and identify stakeholders within an argument. If students can see their narrative writing as reflective of and influencing their argument writing, then narrative writing also opens up a space for teachers to use contemporary argument pedagogies in K-12 classrooms.

A close reading of the ELA Writing standards reveals a great deal of space to discuss the process and context of writing arguments, including how they relate to and build upon principles from informational and narrative writing. A new college student
would be well-served by knowing these things on the first day of class, if the tasks were taught creatively and well. The Common Core does not dictate specific curriculum, but is a blueprint for the outcomes by grade-specific curriculum. In theory, the Common Core provides a great deal of autonomy to the agents in the classroom.

**NCTE’s Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing**

In an effort to further promote college and career readiness in its own spheres of influence, NCTE published the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* in 2011, a strikingly close timeline to the beginning of implementation for the Common Core. This is certainly no coincidence, as the “primary disciplinary use of the *Framework* is to provide an authoritative professional statement of educational aims, and thereby to counter or forestall relatively reductive, uninformed ‘outsider’ notions of writing” (Gallagher 52). NCTE’s response to the Common Core, therefore, is to craft an alternative to the government sanctioned documents and to suggest, not-quite-explicitly, that the Common Core is *not* approved by NCTE.

The *Framework* makes no secret that it, like the Common Core, is crafted to promote college readiness. However, rather than setting out standards, the *Framework* is comprised of “habits of mind” and “experiences with writing, reading, and critical analysis” (Council of Writing Program Administrators). The *Framework* “takes as its central premise that teaching writing and learning to write are central to education and to the development of a literate citizenry” (Council of Writing Program Administrators). The emphasis on citizenry is essential, as the *Framework*
enters the American educational landscape by offering a broad vision of writing and writing instruction. Positioning rhetoric and composition to address troubling gaps in this landscape, it affirms teachers and students as intellectual agents and forwards writing as a civic, ethical practice. (Johnson 523)

Because neither civics nor ethics are “included in standardized curriculum nor fully captured in assessment instruments” (Johnson 523), the Framework is both disciplinary and democratic, which NCTE sees as lacks in the current Common Core.

Most prominent in the Framework, because they are given identifiable names, are the “habits of mind”: curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition. These habits clearly differ from the genre expectations presented by the Common Core. In their adaptability to multiple genres, the habits are thus process-oriented rather than product- or genre- oriented: “The spirit of the Framework asks writing teachers and program administrators to focus on the often-ephemeral intellectual processes that enable students to write and learn” (Johnson 529). “Ephemeral” is certainly not a word that one often hears in relation to standardized testing, which marks a further departure of the habits of mind from the Common Core. This characterization of intellectual processes speaks to the range and adaptability of a college-ready writer who can “[progress] across a spectrum of learning” because “being able to write one or two kinds of writing” as represented in standardized assessments “doesn’t mean that students will be able to write other kinds proficiently” (Murphy and Smith 109). Gallagher argues that the habits and experiences promoted by the Framework do not constitute traditional “outcomes,” and so attempt to offer an alternative to the conventional ends of education: “These look
like outcomes statements—it is easy to imagine a stub phrase such as ‘by the end of high school, students will…’—but this framing emphasizes instead the kinds of experiences teachers can help provide for students. It also suggests that the aim—to ‘develop flexible [writing] processes’—can be achieved only over time and through many kinds of related experiences” (Gallagher 52).

These experiences are delineated in the rest of the Framework, broken up into experiences for “developing rhetorical knowledge,” “developing critical thinking,” “developing flexible writing processes,” “developing knowledge of conventions,” and “composing in multiple environments.” Although the Framework does not explicitly state that it is NCTE’s response to the Common Core, the contrasting tones and intended changes to the pedagogical landscape mark the Framework as NCTE’s attempt to transform the conversation surrounding argument pedagogy.

Unfortunately, the Framework is now regarded as a sort of pedagogical utopian vision by some people. In order for the habits of mind to be a viable alternative to the Common Core, they have to have credence in the current culture of educational accountability. Johnson argues that in order for educational improvements to receive widespread approbation, they have to be assessable, to have measurable outcomes:

The Framework positions habits of mind as attitudes and intellectual processes, but pressures in the national landscape may motivate writing teachers and program administrators to position habits of mind as outcomes—end results from an assignment or program that external audiences may be interested in assessing. (Johnson 529)
Johnson fears that the *Framework*, which was intended to categorically oppose the narrowly defined standards of the accountability era, must submit to the pressures of accountability. Indeed, “[l]ess than a year after the *Framework* was published …participants on the Writing Program Administration listserv (WPA-L) began to consider how habits of mind could be assessed and measured” (Johnson 529).

In the attempt to participate in and shape the national educational policy, the *Framework* may actually be too limited, which is resulting in this pull to assess the habits of mind:

[T]here is no indication that the *Framework* is dynamic and evolving; instead, it is presented in fixed terms (rooted in research, thoroughly vetted by high school and college faculty, professionally endorsed). Perhaps most important, the framing of the *Framework* offers little by way of guidance on how the document ought to be used. Although the document identifies ‘instructors who teach writing’ as the primary audience and asserts that ‘audiences beyond the classroom—including parents, policymakers, employers, and the general public—also can use this document’, it does not specify what either audience might do with the *Framework*. So even as its framing of educational aims avoids many of the pitfalls associated with outcomes, the *Framework* does not go far enough in guiding its potential uses. (Gallagher 52-53)

Gallagher argues that the *Framework* is actually too similar to the traditional, measurable outcomes. If the *Framework* actually presented a radical, evolving alternative to traditional outcomes, an alternative which had immediate pedagogical implications both inside and outside the classroom, then it would pack more punch against the forces of accountability and assessment. Instead, educators are wondering
if it isn’t a good idea to add the “By the end of high school, students will…” tag and transform the habits and experiences back into outcomes.

For many years, NCTE has been at the forefront of pedagogical discussions on the role of writing in the classroom. Now, faced with increasing tension between pedagogy and policy, some writing teachers feel forced to choose the lesser of two evils:

The convergence of habits of mind and assessment seems to offer two unsatisfying options for fostering habits of mind: (1) position them as assessable outcomes to assure their significance, or (2) position them as unmeasurable and fundamentally antithetical to large-scale assessment. While the first option violates the spirit of the Framework, the second undermines its public aims. (Johnson 534)

Johnson’s evaluation of the Framework in the current political climate and its implications for NCTE is dire: sell out or back off.

**Negotiating the Framework and CCSS**

The positioning of the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing and the Common Core State Standards for Writing as antithetical to each other is a fundamental misapplication of NCTE’s scholarly advocacy for non-oppositional argument. To position the Framework and the Common Core as competing world views is to create a two-sided argument, a pro-con lumping together of the values espoused by the crafters of both the Common Core and the Framework. This is further highlighted by the supporters of the Framework who argue that creating assessable outcomes from the habits of mind would be essentially giving in to the “other side.”
“Can the Framework be assessed as outcomes?” is simply the wrong question. In the spirit of NCTE scholars’ decades-long commitment to arguing for cooperation, the question should be, “What kind of common ground exists between the Framework and Common Core?”

If, for the time being, NCTE collectively decides that the habits of mind cannot and fundamentally should not be assessed as outcomes, there could be a way that both the Framework and the Common Core could be present within the classroom at the same time. Surprisingly, given this fraught debate over the role of NCTE’s document in current educational policy, the answer is written right into the experiences with writing, reading, and critical analysis that form the second half of the Framework. The beginning of the section dedicated to developing rhetorical knowledge states,

> Teachers can help writers develop rhetorical knowledge by providing opportunities and guidance for students to learn and practice key rhetorical concepts such as audience, purpose, context, and genre through writing and analysis of a variety of types of texts (nonfiction, informational, imaginative, printed, visual, spatial, auditory, and otherwise); … (Council of Writing Program Administrators)

The language and structure of these sections make it very clear: the experiences and habits of mind are not outcomes; they are pedagogies. And the Common Core does not dictate pedagogy; on the contrary, it is built with the explicit goal of providing maximum flexibility for teachers and administrators to choose the most appropriate tools to reach the outcomes.

Given this opportunity to shape the direction of argument pedagogy within the Common Core framework, a brief reading of the experiences with writing, reading,
and critical analysis reveals strong correlations between the two supposedly contradictory documents.

The Framework’s section on developing critical thinking echoes many of the priorities seen in the Common Core, including using multiple points of view, synthesis, putting ideas into conversation with each other, and using questions to guide research. One pedagogy in this section is to “read texts from multiple points of view (e.g., sympathetic to a writer’s position and critical of it)” (Council of Writing Program Administrators). Educators may recognize this pedagogy as nearly identical to Peter Elbow’s Believing and Doubting Game, and it is also a key component of the habit of openness, in which students are encouraged to “examine their own perspectives to find connections with the perspectives of others” (Elbow; Council of Writing Program Administrators). Reading the same text from multiple points of view could help students meet Writing Standard 1.b, “Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both” (National Governors Association). A student’s ability to reflect upon the weaknesses of their own claims can be fostered by developing an appreciation for the strengths of alternative claims, as the Framework suggests.

Developing flexible writing processes, one experience in the Framework, is consistent with the emphasis of the Common Core, in which students are over and over again encouraged to plan, draft, revise, reconsider, and republish. The Standards emphasizing revision could be further supported by the habit of engagement, in which
students are asked to “find meanings new to them or build on existing meanings as a result of new connections; and act upon the new knowledge that they have discovered” (Council of Writing Program Administrators). “New” or “existing meanings” is not something that can be measured by a standardized test, but a pedagogy emphasizing the layering of meaning, building extended projects that get reconsidered would seem to speak to Writing Standard 6, in which students must “update…writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information” (National Governors Association). Teachers using a pedagogy of the habit of responsibility, in which students “act on the understanding that learning is shared among the writer and others—students, instructors, and the institution, as well as those engaged in the questions and/or fields in which the writer is interested,” would also be fostering the sense of importance for creating and building upon new and existing meanings (Council of Writing Program Administrators). Responsibility fits seamlessly within the literature on argument pedagogy, which consistently stresses the ethical implications of acting in a community. A student can demonstrate engagement and responsibility and meet the expectations of the standards at the same time.

In the Framework’s experiences section for developing rhetorical knowledge, almost every sentence includes the words “audience,” “purpose,” “context,” or a combination of the three. I have already shown that the Writing Standards for the Common Core provide ample space for teachers to explore audience and purpose with students in order to meet those standards, and the Framework as representative of NCTE provides an access point to those explorations which can be devoted to
understanding multiple viewpoints and audiences, as well as how they are enacted over time. This can be further highlighted with a pedagogy of emphasizing metacognition, the last habit of mind in the Framework. The Framework states that:

> Metacognition is fostered when writers are encouraged to examine processes they use to think and write in a variety of disciplines and contexts, …[and when writers are encouraged to] connect choices they have made in texts to audiences and purposes for which texts are intended. (Council of Writing Program Administrators)

This type of reflection on and justification of rhetorical choices is implicit in Writing Standards 1 and 8, where students are required to assess the strengths and limitations of their claims, opposing or alternative claims, and any outside sources they find. The Framework requests that teachers help students practice these skills over time and in various contexts, while the Common Core requires that students perform these skills at specific times and in specific contexts.

These specific times and contexts, of course, are during standardized tests. One of the biggest criticisms of the Common Core, and No Child Left Behind before it, has been the extent to which standardized testing affects both the evaluation and salary of teachers and the curricula taught in classrooms. Many educators oppose standards because of the “teaching to the test” mentality that has accompanied the accountability movement in education, wherein classroom materials and activities focus solely on content and skills that can and will be tested, nothing more. The context for the standards moves outside of the testing room and into the everyday classroom. However, the Common Core itself clearly states that it is not intended to be read as curricula. While the implementation of new standardized tests will certainly have an
effect on the teaching of writing under the Common Core, NCTE members teaching argument could successfully and justifiably adopt the Framework for Success as classroom pedagogies. Such a move—to incorporate cooperative and process-oriented habits into the open tier of the Common Core structure—is consistent with the literature from Chapter 2 of this thesis that praises inhabiting multiple viewpoints at once, finding common ground, and negotiating differences so that all parties achieve their goals.

Layering the outcomes of the Common Core with the pedagogies of the Framework first stems from the Believing and Doubting Game of Peter Elbow and the rhetoric of assent from Wayne Booth. What would change if we believed that both the Common Core and the Framework were necessary, rather than seeing them as fundamentally opposed? We might first assent that there is a need for outcomes in K-12 education, so that parents and teachers can gauge student learning across grades and across states. We might dissent, however, that those outcomes are the only thing that should be taught in the classroom, as this stifles student and teacher creativity. We might next assent that habits and experiences, fostered over time in various contexts and with many different genres of writing, are flexible tools in which college-ready students should be well practiced. We might dissent that these habits and experiences should ever be quantified or made assessable.

This leads into a promising negotiation situation, as advocated by Catherine Lamb. If the Common Core and the Framework are assumed to not be inherently opposed, then we can examine their stated goals for any conflict in underlying interest.
The Common Core’s goal is to dictate outcomes but not content. The Framework’s goal is to suggest practices but not outcomes. Under Lamb’s negotiation and mediation pedagogies, argumentative interactions can result in both parties achieving their desired goals if they are able to reconcile their underlying interests. In this case, one of those interests is the definition of argument used in the Common Core and the contemporary trends in argument scholarship. On the surface, those definitions do appear to be divergent. The Common Core describes argument writing in Standard 1 as fairly traditional and rigid, focusing on claims, counter claims, and evidence, with no mention of attention to audience or enacting argument over time (National Governors Association). The Framework promotes argument writing far less explicitly; it describes analysis as a task to identify “relationships among…key choices and the ways that the text(s) appeal or speak to different audiences” and to “contribute, through writing, [students’] own ideas and opinions about a topic to an ongoing conversation” (Council of Writing Program Administrators).

However, a further reading of the Common Core supports a flexible definition of argument when argument writing is also considered in light of the other standards. Student writing, thus presumably argument writing, must attend to context, purpose, and audience; must demonstrate revision and attention to new information coming to light; and must justify the strengths and weaknesses of the texts involved, including the student’s own work and the outside sources. The result of this comparison is that the Common Core and the Framework have comparable expectations for argument writing—cooperative, audience-driven, and process-oriented.
When the interests of two supposedly “opposed” parties are actually in line with each other, Barry Kroll teaches his students the aikido move irimi, or entering in. An aikido martial artist stops an oncoming blow at its source, focusing attention on the root of the attack and not its manifestation (Kroll). Arguers using irimi-like moves in rhetoric can identify the underlying interests and use that energy to focus on a solution for both parties—entering into the argument instead of backing away from it, using defense as the best offense. This is precisely what teachers committed to the Framework’s goals would be doing by using the habits and experiences as pedagogies. Rather than battling over the outcomes performed by students in the context of testing and wondering if the Framework should likewise be assessed, countering the Common Core blow for blow, teachers of argument could use the comparable definitions of argument to find space in the Common Core to engage before the outcomes “strike.” They could focus their energies on collaborating and assenting to similar definitions of argument, allowing for the different contexts of the Common Core and the Framework to exist side by side.

This strategy on the part of teachers of argument not only addresses one of the major criticisms of the Common Core, but it does so in a way that is consistent with the contemporary scholarship on argument. Teachers of argument would be enacting, in a real-world context, the type of non-oppositional and cooperative strategies that they hope to teach to their students. They could present an alternative to the pro-con debate style of argument too prevalent in the world, asserting not that the Common Core and the Framework are fundamentally opposed but that they are implicitly
layered, their underlying interests the same and their manifestations different. The two documents would represent two voices in a multifaceted conversation instead of a shouting match between “right” and “wrong.”

If we view the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* as a compilation of best practices in the teaching of writing, then there is potential to use the *Framework* within the space created by the Common Core. Given NCTE’s commitment to negotiation, analysis of intent and purpose, and cooperation, this approach would achieve both of NCTE’s goals to foster the habits of mind for college readiness and to influence public policy on the teaching of writing and the ethical implications of non-oppositional argument. The NCTE could, in essence, practice what its scholars preach.
Chapter 4: Conclusion

This thesis seeks to capture one moment in the contemporary history of argument, putting an analysis of recent trends of argument pedagogy in conversation with two public documents on the teaching of writing: the Common Core State Standards (the Common Core or CCSS) and the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing. It examines the dynamic tensions present in the teaching of argument—between academic argument and “real world” argument, between classical oral arguments and contemporary written arguments, between education experts and policy makers, and between classroom practices and assessment measures. The significance of this examination is two-fold. First, it provides a survey and synthesis of argument pedagogy in the late 20th and early 21st centuries as a resource for new and experienced teachers of argument. The analysis of argument pedagogies thus serves as an extension of the professional development and scholarly research that drives the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Second, it suggests how teachers of argument can use these tensions and this unique moment—prior to full implementation of the new standards—both to achieve their desired goals in the classroom and to enact the values of cooperation so passionately and consistently expressed in the scholarly research.

My argument is, in essence, a hopeful one. This is not a moment of despair or a losing battle for teachers of non-oppositional argument. This is a moment of great opportunity, when teachers and administrators can have a profound effect on
educational policy across the country. Scholars who have previously considered the relationship between NCTE, as a professional organization, and the Common Core, as politically-driven policy, have portrayed the profession as under attack from policy makers who undermine the authority of teaching experts. My thesis presents an opportunity for teachers of argument to reclaim that authority, and to do so in a way that is not only strategic but admirable.

The greatest limit to my approach is that the policy landscape surrounding the Common Core has already changed during the writing of this thesis. Over the course of the 2013-14 academic year, the state governments of Indiana and South Carolina chose to revoke their adoption of the Common Core, and several other state legislatures and Departments of Education are having similar conversations (Ujifusa). In April, the federal Department of Education revoked Washington state’s waiver from No Child Left Behind, which means the state will be held to the Adequate Yearly Progress expectations under the old law (Higgins). Parental critiques of the Common Core, including a recent Twitter storm instigated by comedian Louis C.K., often lambast the Math standards as confusing and detrimentally difficult for young children.

We simply cannot know the full effect that the new education policies will have for many years. We do not yet have data on the effectiveness of the Common Core, and we do not even have fully developed assessment measures to test children’s performance of the standards. Assessment measures are going to be hugely influential in the choosing and teaching of curriculum in classrooms. Many fear that while the
standards permit creativity and teachers’ autonomy, they do very little to encourage it. Faced with high stakes for students, teachers, and districts—anything from school funding to teachers’ salaries to a students’ eligibility for graduation—teachers and administrators will naturally seek the most conservative approaches that will ensure success: “unfortunately, the emphases suggested tend toward the formulaic and perfunctory, rather than supporting the development of a flexible array of strategies” (Applebee 29).

This thesis seeks to intervene in a pre-assessment moment, when assessment measures are still in development and can still “support the development of a flexible array of strategies,” but that kairotic moment is not long. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium has already posted practice tests and preparation materials for K-12 teachers and students through a secure online system. Future research into the teaching of argument could examine the questions on the argument writing tests, discussing the extent to which the argument assessments do or do not support the cooperative pedagogies advanced in NCTE research.

Although the scope of this thesis limits it to the teaching of argument in English Language Arts, as supported by NCTE, the scope of argument writing in K-12 classrooms is actually much wider. The ELA also includes standards for grades 6-12 for the application of the Anchor Standards in History/Social Studies and Science and Technology. The Oregon Department of Education states, as the caption for both Social Studies and Science standards,

In the CCSS, literacy is a shared responsibility within the school. Teachers in all subject areas use their content area
expertise to help students meet the particular challenges of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in their respective fields. (“Common Core Standards”)

Postsecondary instructors will recognize these standards as similar to Writing Across the Curriculum programs in higher education, in which reading and writing are both used as learning tools in classes other than English and Composition. Future research could certainly discuss the extent to which argument pedagogies from the teaching of English support the goals of educators in other disciplines.

The relationship between high school and higher education in the teaching of argument also bears further exploration. This thesis does not examine the conceptions of argument represented in secondary education journals, such as NCTE’s *English Journal* and *Voices from the Middle*. Future research on the history of teaching of argument at the high school level would add a layer of depth to the research that I have already conducted and add another voice to the conversation surrounding the relationship between the Common Core and the *Framework for Success*, both of which are intended for secondary school classrooms.

The many voices discussing the implementation of the Common Core State Standards can quickly dissolve into a cacophony of hostile opinions. All those with a vested interest in K-12 education—students, parents, teachers, administrators, legislators, textbook writers, testing consortiums, and experts in the field of argument—are quick to become defensive, to protect their values and their wellbeing. Teachers of argument know these scenarios all too well; they are the ones where people “feel that any effort to communicate is doomed because both sides are too
emotional and sensitive for calm discussion” (Hairston 373). But such feelings are not productive; they do nothing to promote scholars’ visions of cooperation in the world and do nothing to promote smooth, integrated curriculum in the classroom. There is common ground, and the moment is right for occupying it together.
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APPENDIX
Annotated Bibliography, 1989-2014

*Margaret Kantz*

In her 1990 *CE* article “Helping Students Use Texts Persuasively,” Margaret Kantz describes a series of tasks and questions to provide students struggling to read rhetorically, noting that reading for potential arguments is often less familiar to students than reading for reporting. Kantz describes what she calls “gaps” in the rhetorical triangle—between Encoder, Decoder, and Reality—which may alert students to when they are not connecting with a text. This scaffolding process situates students as active creators of argument in the process of absorbing and processing new material, even before they consciously begin argumentation.

*Douglas Brent*

In 1991, Douglas Brent revisited Young’s, Becker’s, and Pike’s famous book, *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*, published in 1970. In his *CE* article, “Young, Becker, and Pike’s Rogerian Rhetoric: A Twenty Year Assessment,” the results are mixed. Young, Becker, and Pike supported Rogers in a pedagogy of non-evaluation, suggesting that students first summarize the position of their opponents in a fair and unbiased manner. We contest now that no language is non-evaluative, and Brent suggests an emphasis on “non-threatening” language rather than non-evaluative (464). Rogerian argument, as it had been used in classrooms, often still modeled traditional argument in that students take pre-established and diametrically opposed positions. With this *a priori* argument in mind, students are left with little room to change their own positions on an issue, no matter the amount of understanding developed between
two arguers. Brent thus suggests emphasizing the therapeutic aspects of Rogerian argument over a pro-con debate (462).

*Catherine Lamb*

Catherine Lamb’s 1991 *CCC* article “Beyond Argument in Feminist Composition” in *CCC* suggests that feminist scholars in search of a feminist argument theory can challenge the traditional models of power without abandoning them, allowing traditionally underrepresented groups access to the benefits of argument and the change enacted therein. Lamb uses the term “monologic” to describe the assumptions that arguments take inherently oppositional positions and that the argument which has persuaded most effectively has enveloped and conquered the less effective argument. These assumptions can privilege and sustain authoritarian power structures, and feminist scholars, including Lamb, argue for an expanded definition which would include negotiation and mediation.

*Jeffery Walker*

Jeffery Walker’s 1994 article in *CE* entitled “The Body of Persuasion: A Theory of the Enthymeme” seeks to recast the enthymeme as a strategic rhetorical and stylistic tool of modern writers. He combines definitions of the enthymeme from Aristotle, Isocrates, and Anaximedes to examine contemporary texts for a more nuanced manifestation of the ancient technique.
“Moments of Argument: Agnostic Inquiry and Confrontational Cooperation,” the CCC article by Dennis A. Lynch, Diana George, and Marilyn M. Cooper in 1997, recounts the experimental writing classrooms of the three authors as they search for a new method of teaching argument. Their goal in each of these classes is to prepare students for multilateral, research-intensive problems in the real world, problems that cannot (though often seem to be) reduced to pro-con debates.

Peter Elbow and Wayne Booth

Wayne Booth’s and Peter Elbow’s 2005 collaborative CE articles “Blind Skepticism versus a Rhetoric of Assent” and “Bringing the Rhetoric of Assent and the Believing Game Together—and into the Classroom”, respectively, engage in a dialogue about the value of assent, not just criticism, in the classroom. Booth suggests an examination of the processes by which we assent without fear, such as learned behaviors and experiential truths. Elbow suggests strategies for classroom discussion that can help students embody both assent and dissent respectfully in order to more fully understand their own personal values. Most remarkably, Booth and Elbow engage in the kind of examination of their agreement that they both advocate in their respective articles, making the two pieces a noteworthy moment in the teaching of argument.
Jordynn Jack

Jordynn Jack’s 2006 CE article, “Chronotopes: Forms of Time in Rhetorical Argument,” applies M.M. Bakhtin’s notion of the “chronotope,” or a particular notion of time and space relationships, to contemporary arguments, especially the public debate surrounding genetically modified foods. Perhaps considered an additional layer to kairos, “chronotope” describes the specific way that time works for a given argument, such as the exponentially increasing scientific advancements in genetic modification and the sense of urgency that accompanies such fast-paced discoveries. Jack asserts that chronotopes are commonplaces for rhetoricians to draw upon in their constructing of appropriate arguments.

Michael Harker

Michael Harker’s 2007 CCC article “The Ethics of Argument: Rereading Kairos and Making Sense in a Timely Fashion” also seeks to complicate the relationship between arguments and time, this time more directly related to the Greek term kairos and its complex definition. Harker examines Braddock Award-winning articles for the ways that they implicitly draw upon kairos in their arguments regarding pedagogy, and in doing so argues for the ethical implications of kairos as an important part of rhetorical argument.

Barry Kroll

In 2008, Barry Kroll’s CCC article “Arguing with Adversaries” combines rhetoric with the Japanese martial art aikido, or the “art of peace.” Examples of aikido
moves, as a supplement to Kroll’s argument curriculum, create a space in which “physical goals and ethical/spiritual ideals are enacted simultaneously” (468). Kroll emphasizes the values of aikido—empathy and the creative use of energy rather than hostility and attack—and describes several pieces of writing that translate such physical movements onto the written page.

Joseph Bizup

Joseph Bizup’s 2009 CCC article “The Uses of Toulmin in Composition Studies” presents a detailed survey of Stephen Toulmin’s work as it is cited in the composition field. Toulmin was frequently cited as an authority especially during the 1980s and early 1990s (W4). However, citations dropped significantly after the year 2000. In College English and CCC, from 1981-1990, Toulmin was cited 18 times; from 1991-2000, 6 times (and only in CE); and from 2000-2007, when Bizup’s study was concluded, only 4 times (W3). Bizup also claims that these citations of Toulmin represent a very narrow selection of his scholarship, which has contributed to Toulmin’s legacy as formulaic and prescriptive rather than dynamic.

Xiaoye You

In 2010, Xiaoye You published “Building Empire through Argumentation: Debating Salt and Iron in Western Han China” in College English. While it is easy to see the need for alternative argument strategies in the internal politics of the United States, You reminds his readers that “[a]long with pedagogical and ideological challenges, globalization presents us with opportunities to reassess American
rhetorical education, and to engage other traditions of rhetorical education and practices” (367). You emphasizes that classic Greco-Roman tradition does not have a monopoly on public debate, and that examples of the successful or unsuccessful use of argument can be found in a diverse history. You’s resistance to traditional argument is not so much the expectation of a winner and loser as the expectation that the winner and loser are determined solely by the act of argument in that moment: “This assumption is both naïve and dangerous for a global citizen living in a world of structural inequalities… Failing to recognize the structural, material inequalities involved in discursive relations will render one’s communication ineffective at best and damaging at worst” (382).

A. Abby Knoblauch

A. Abby Knoblauch, in her 2011 CCC article “A Textbook Argument: Definitions of Argument in Leading Composition Textbooks,” asserts that the content of textbooks is both a reflection of and a creator of current practices in the field. She gives a brief overview of the textbooks in the field, and then further examines the two most popular argument textbooks in order to determine the extent to which their definitions of argument coincide with the predominant, non-oppositional argument scholarship. She finds that while many textbooks purport to teach alternatives to traditional argument, the most popular argument textbooks give overwhelming attention to traditional argument models, even framing alternative arguments with traditional questions.