

# **An Ethic of Argument For a Troubled World**

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# Presumptions

- An “Ethic of Argument” is not same as “Arguments about Ethics”
- In a “Troubled World,” arguments become fights.

“Argumentation” once described an orderly process of providing thoughtful reasons for claims, to promote mutual understanding and respect.

But “argumentation” has degenerated into a hostile process, in which adversaries simply shout without listening.



# Key Terms:



**Argument:** orderly process of providing thoughtful reasons for claims




**Rebuttal:** opposes or qualifies the argument put forward



# COOPERATION

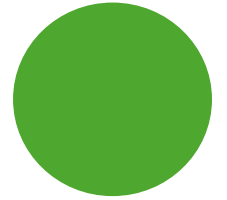
## My Main Points



- A critically important feature in the design of constructive argumentation is the “rebuttal,” which points out the exceptions to an argument.
  - By critically examining the structure and function of the rebuttal, we can design a more respectful, empathetic form of rebuttal, one that supports cooperative dialogue.
  - We support this with strong, consistent culture.
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## Forestall One Possible Misinterpretation of My Presentation

- I focus on collaborative, constructive argument in scholarly discourse.
- Nothing in this talk negates Ukraine's right/duty to defend itself against Russia.





## Case 1: Advocacy and Inquiry Arguments

Different Roles for Rebuttals



## Purpose of Advocacy Arguments

- Advocacy arguments are made by those advocating a belief, attitude or behavior to which they've already committed.
- They make these arguments to convince others to agree.

# Rebuttals in Advocacy Arguments

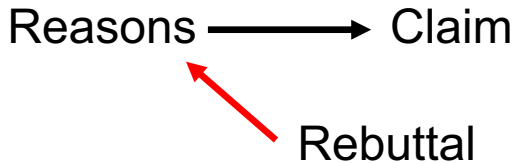
Advocacy Argument Form	Structure	Implementation
<p>Reasons → Claim</p> <p>Rebuttal ↗</p>		



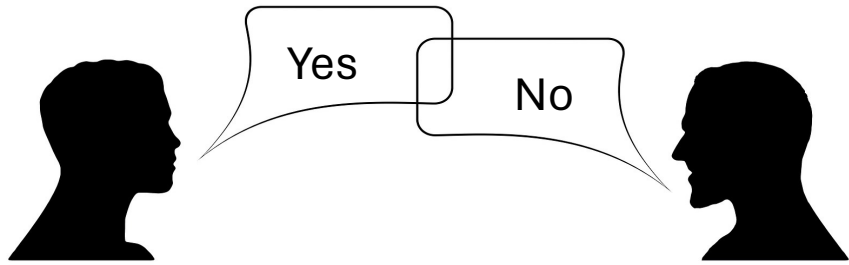
# Rebuttals in Advocacy Arguments

Advocacy Argument Form	Structure	Implementation
<p>Reasons <math>\longrightarrow</math> Claim</p> <p>          <math>\nwarrow</math> Rebuttal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Adversarial zero-sum game</li><li>- Assertive dominance</li><li>- Competitive listening</li></ul>	

# Rebuttals in Advocacy Arguments

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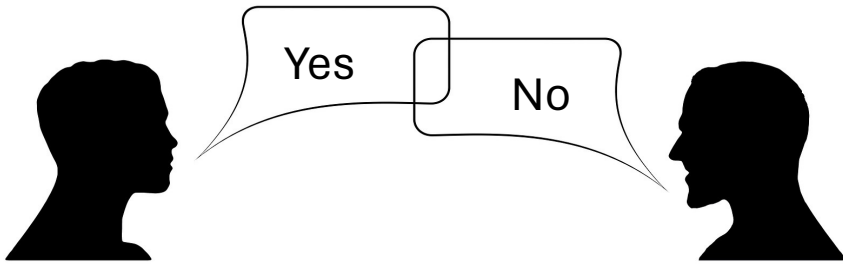
Resolution



## Advocacy Debate

- “Government” and “Opposition” argue for/against a resolution.
- Each side presents arguments in favor of their position.
- Each side “rebutts” the other’s arguments to show exceptions.
- The point is to WIN!

Resolution



## Features of Advocacy Debate

- Positive
  - Promotes Critical Thinking
  - Competitive = Exciting and “Realistic”
- Negative
  - Pressure can be counterproductive
  - Win/Lose does not promote “Common Ground” or “Mutual Learning”

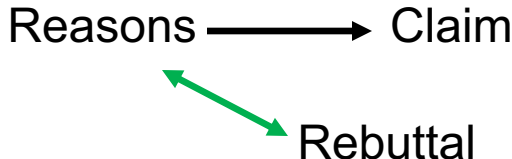


## Purpose of Inquiry Arguments

To understand ourselves and the world around us

To seek truth that we do not yet know

# Rebuttals in Inquiry Arguments

Inquiry Argument Form	Structure	Implementation
 <p>Reasons → Claim ← Rebuttal</p>		

# Rebuttals in Inquiry Arguments

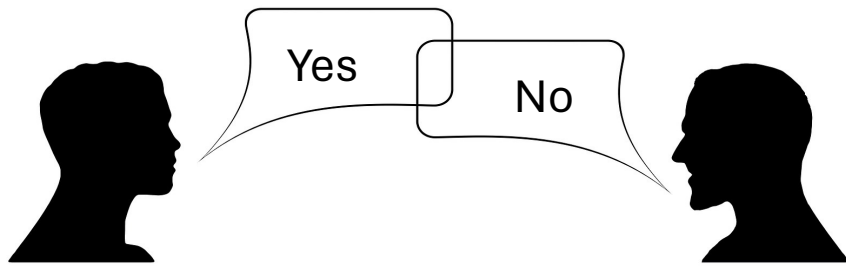
Inquiry Argument Form	Structure	Implementation
<p>Reasons <math>\longrightarrow</math> Claim</p> <p><math>\swarrow</math> Rebuttal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Win-win situation</li><li>- Build bridges for shared success</li><li>- Empathic listening</li></ul>	

# Rebuttals in Inquiry Arguments

Inquiry Argument Form	Structure	Implementation
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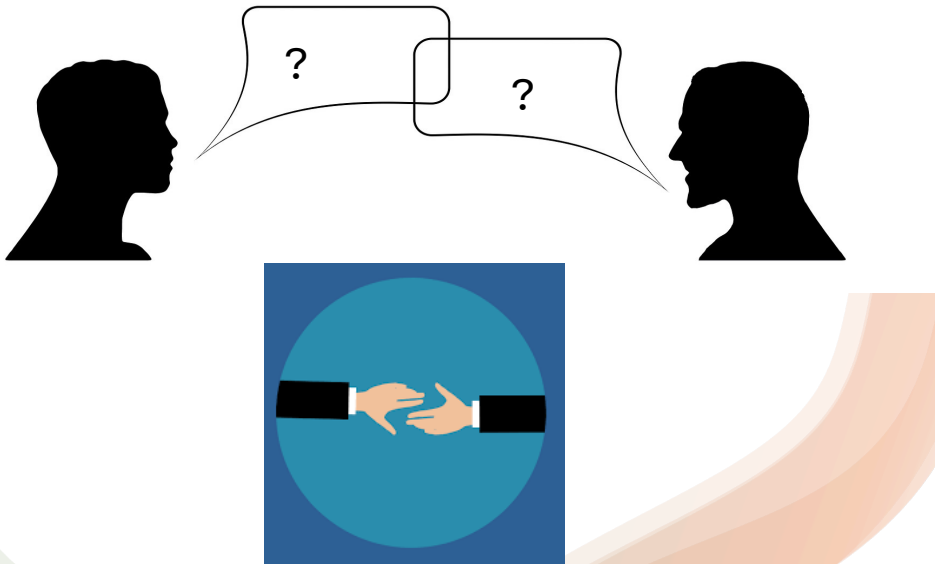
Resolution



## Inquiry Debate

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Resolution



## Inquiry Debate

- “Government” and “Opposition” argue for/against a resolution.
- Each side presents arguments in favor of their position.
- Each side “rebutts” the other’s arguments to show exceptions.
- They then explore “**common ground.**”

# Common Ground and Empathy

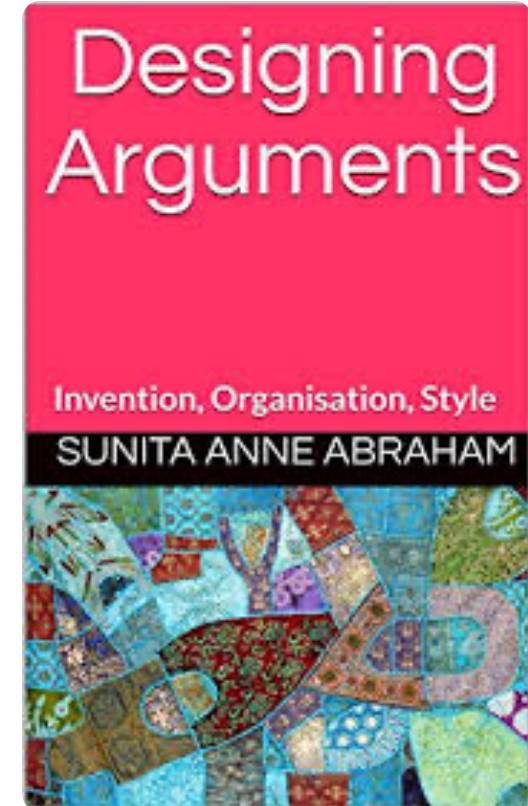
- Wayne Booth, a scholar of rhetoric advocated rhetoric as the practice of critical assent that uses empathy.
- He says we should never assent to or reject any new position we have not fully understood because the right to criticize must be earned by “dwelling with” and “dwelling in” another person’s ideas. It is a type of active listening in which we listen for meaning.



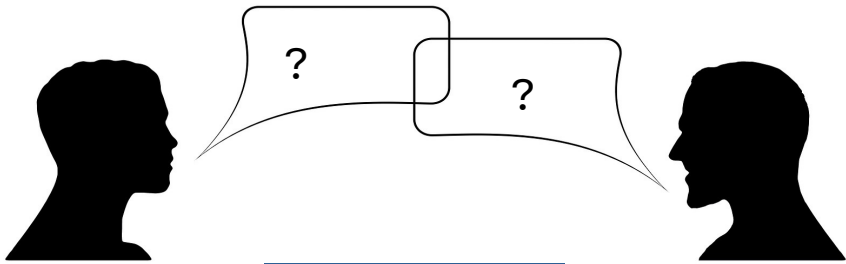
# Common Ground and “Larger Perspective”

- “Unlike adversarial argument which adopts a win-lose zero-sum view of argument, non-adversarial argument acknowledges that two ideas that appear logically contradictory may both be viable if viewed from a larger perspective.”

Sunita Anne Abraham, “Designing Arguments: Invention, Organisation, Style”



Resolution



## Exploring “Common Ground”

- In small groups, analyze debate and look for creative “middle way” solutions



## Case 2: Campus Protests about Gaza

- “The Chicago Statement”
- The Culture of Debate
- Test of Culture: Consistency

# The University of Chicago

- Founded in 1890 , a leading research university distinctive for pioneering breakthroughs in many fields.
- “New knowledge cannot be formed when we’re hindered by old ways of thinking. By cultivating a wide range of thoughts from our peers, students, and the communities where we live and work, we are better able to bring forth ideas that change the world.” – U of C webpage
- “I came here to hear views that are different than mine. That’s the point of coming to the University of Chicago. I want to know what you think and why you think it.” -- Olivia Gross, a fourth-year undergraduate



# Gaza Protest at Chicago

- In May, student encampment on central quad.
- University allowed it, longer than at other schools, even though it violated policy.
- After 9 days, encampment was removed for safety.





# The “Chicago Statement”

- 2015 free-speech declaration.
- Given to new students.
- It encourages students to not be afraid to think about ideas that they disagree with.

[2019 Survey of Campus Speech Experts | RealClearEducation](#)



## The University of Chicago

With its famous "Chicago Statement," this school guarantees students and faculty "the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn." By proactively encouraging a climate of open inquiry, its leaders have established their institution as a clear leader in the area of academic freedom. It is little wonder that our panel of experts voted overwhelmingly for the University of Chicago as the nation's free speech champion.

# From the “Chicago Statement”

- “From its very founding, the University of Chicago has dedicated itself to the preservation and celebration of the freedom of expression as an essential element of the University’s Culture. In 1902 . . . President William Rainey Harper declared that ‘the principle of complete freedom of speech on all subjects has from the beginning been regarded as fundamental in the University of Chicago’ and that ‘this principle can neither now nor at any future time be called into question.’”

# Freedom and Civility

“...it is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive. Although the University greatly values civility . . . , concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas, however offensive or disagreeable those ideas may be to some members of our community.”

# Exceptions to Freedom

- University may restrict statements that:
  - Violate the law
  - Falsely defame someone
  - Genuinely threatens or harasses
  - Invade substantial privacy
  - Are directly incompatible with University function
- University may reasonably regulate the time, place and manner of expression to not disrupt University activity.



# Constitutional Law or Culture?

- Protected by 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment?
- Guided by a “culture of argument”?
- “While the First Amendment protects the right for people to say things that scare other people, what you want to tell students and citizens is: You should try not to do that. You should communicate your message in a civil and respectful manner.” --Geoffrey Stone, law professor who oversaw 2015 Chicago Statement

# Culture Makes a Difference

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- U.K. Universities More Permissive, Less Confrontational
  - Less-polarized debate within U.K.
  - Majority call for Israel cease-fire
  - British police use less confrontational tactics

Source: New York Times



# Test of Culture: Consistency

- Gaza protests call for divestment.
- In 1980s Chicago resisted South Africa Divestment, due to “principle of neutrality.”
- But in 2022, Chicago supported Ukraine.
- Protesters: Hypocrisy??



# In Conclusion

- Ethics of Argument:
  - What about our rebuttals?
  - What are the values of our culture?
  - Are we consistent in expressing our values?

