This course is designed to provide you with strategies to strengthen your reasoning and arguments, with special attention to giving clear, fair, and insightful readings of real arguments in real texts and situations.

You use arguments every day to persuade, rebut, and clarify positions. We argue about -- and must decide how to act on -- highly contentious moral, political, and scientific issues: Should you have a smallpox vaccination? Under what circumstances would a support a war with, for example, North Korea be justified? Is secondhand smoke so dangerous that smoking should banned entirely from public places?

And while reasonable people can and do disagree, not all arguments are equally good, nor certainly, are views on these matters “just your opinion.” You will be required to evaluate arguments in newspapers, movies, TV, each other’s arguments in the context of making the case for or against a position, and of course, your own arguments. I expect engagement that actively extends beyond the world of the text. We will spend class time on brief reports on everyday tales from your logical lives.

Required texts:

H. Kahane and N. Cavender, Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric, ninth edition
Katha Pollitt, Subject to Debate

Requirements:

General information. Get used to using Blackboard; I will use it to post assignments, call your attention to late-breaking news, and so on.

Never send work to me electronically or by campus mail. If you are turning in something outside of class bring it to my office at 210 CHR.

Attendance, preparation, and participation. A baseline condition for being in the course. You may have to miss a class or two because of exhaustion, last minute urgent work on your thesis, etc., and while not every absence will be counted, more than two will affect your grade. Preparation includes daily reading of a reputable national newspaper, or tuning into a national news broadcast. Some excellent sources in
addition to the Times, the Wall Street Journal, etc.: National Public Radio’s “All Things Considered” from 4:00-6:00 at 91.9; Slate's Today’s Papers, emailed to you every morning, an excellent summary – including links – of news stories from all the major papers. I will often assign in-class assignments that require basic background knowledge of unfolding news events. The Supreme Court, for example, ruled just this summer on three hugely important cases: affirmative action (University of Michigan’s AA practices), the rights of states to criminalize homosexual sexual acts that are otherwise legal when practiced by heterosexuals, and finally, the constitutionality of some state’s versions of Megan’s Law. And the political campaigns for 2004 – and for the Democrats’ nominee for 2004 - are at a fever pitch right now. Unimaginable riches for the critical thinker.

**Student group presentations.** All students will be a part of one debate. Your contribution to the debate will be part of what makes up your participation grade.

**Logic portfolio.** Collected twice a semester (at midterm time and at the end of the semester), with a combined worth of 100 points. In the portfolio you identify and assess the reasoning in twelve distinct items falling into four categories. The items can be drawn from any printed material except logic or critical thinking books. Detailed handout to follow. I have many excellent portfolios in my office from previous semesters: please come by during office hours some time in the next few weeks to look at some of them.

**Homework.** Homework will be due at least once a week, assignments made in class. Homework is due in the class period after it has been assigned unless otherwise noted. It is your responsibility to get homework in on time even for classes you might miss. Late homework -- that is, any not turned in by the due date -- will not be accepted. This includes homework due when you are sick, have an excused absence, had it done but forgot it, etc. Please do not ask me to make exceptions. Homework will be graded with a plus (95), check (85), or minus (75). You may drop your two lowest homework grades -- these drops are to be used as your "safety net," use them wisely. The final homework grade will include in-class writing assignments.

Everyone must attend at least two of the five lectures listed on the syllabus below – your choice – but take advantage of the first you are able to see without conflict so that you don’t find yourself at the end of the semester with multiple obligations at the same time. I will provide you with a short assignment just before each lecture.

**Homework guidelines:**

1. Do your homework legibly, preferably in pencil.
2. Make sure all pages are attached with a staple or paper clip, and that your name is on each page.
3. Put the assignment at the top of each homework, e.g., “exercise 3-1.”
4. Check at least one of the starred homework answers in the back of your book under the penultimate section “Answers to Starred Exercise Items” to make sure you are doing the assignment in the right way.

**Short critical analyses of in-class debates.** 1 page each, with a focus on strengths or weaknesses of the arguments or overall case presented. All short papers due in the class immediately following the presentation. Debaters must also do the assignment. Your papers should neither focus on the style of the presentations, nor on your views about the issue being debated, nor on the merits of the cases as presented elsewhere.

**Final exam.**

Portfolio: 30%
Homework: 20%
Short papers: 20%
Final exam: 20%
Attendance and participation: 10%

**Tentative Course Schedule**

January 19  Introduction
January 21  Chapter 1: basic concepts
January 26  Chapter 2
January 28  Chapter 2
February 2  Chapter 7
February 4  IN-CLASS PRESENTATION #1: TOPIC TBA
February 9  Blackboard: Catherine Elgin's "The Relativity of Fact and the Objectivity of Value" SHORT CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PRESENTATION #1 DUE
February 10
February 11  Blackboard material on reasoning by analogy
February 16  More on analogy
February 18  3.1-3.3
February 23  3.4-3.5
February 25  3.7-3.8
February 26  (Thursday) Lecture #2, Daniel Dennett at Hartwick College, 5:30
March 1  4.1-4.4  Lecture #3: Richard Rorty, 7:00
March 2  Lecture #4: Sandra Harding, “Science and Technology Studies in a Postcolonial World,” 8:00
March 3  IN-CLASS PRESENTATION #2: TOPIC TBA
March 8  4.5-4.7; SHORT CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PRESENTATION #2 DUE
March 10  5.1-5.3
March 15-24  SPRING BREAK: HAVE FUN AND HAVE FUN READING POLLITT
March 29  5.4-5.6
March 31  5.7-5.9 PORTFOLIOS COLLECTED  (Sections 1-4)
April 3  Lecture #5, Susan Sontag, “ Chapel, 8:00
April 5  Chapter 6
April 6  (Tuesday) First day of Passover
April 7  Chapter 8
April 12  IN-CLASS PRESENTATION #3: TOPIC TBA
April 14  Pollitt – readings TBA; SHORT CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PRESENTATION #3 DUE
April 19  Pollitt; Blackboard readings on hypothetical reasoning
April 21  Pollitt; Chapter 9
April 25: (Sunday) March on Washington for abortion rights

April 26  Pollitt; Chapter 10

April 28  IN-CLASS PRESENTATION #4

May 3   Chapter 11; SHORT CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PRESENTATION #4 DUE

May 5   Chapter 12; LAST CLASS

May 7   PORTFOLIOS COLLECTED (Sections 5 & 6)

May 12: FINAL EXAM, 2:00-5:00