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January 24, 2010

## Toulmin, Rogerian, and Aristotelian Arguments.

### Toulmin

**Claim:** Grover is the most important character on Sesame Street.

**Grounds/Data:** In a preschool poll, 70% of children reported liking Grover more than other characters. Children laugh, on average, 33% more when Grover is on the screen. In addition, Grover is shown exercising twice as often as any other character on the show.

**Warrant:** Grover has children's attention more than other characters, and therefore has more potential to make positive changes in preschoolers lives.

**Backing:** Children create many of their habits through mimicry.

**Rebuttal:** Other characters on Sesame Street fulfill important roles and model positive behaviors as well.

**Qualifier:** Grover is definitely the most important character on Sesame Street.

### Rogerian

There is a large split between opposing sides concerning the most important character on Sesame Street. Most people fall into two camps, those who feel that Grover is the most important character, and those who feel that Cookie Monster is the more important character. Cookie Monster is clearly a loveable puppet. He is funny, silly, and teaches children good counting skills with his snacks. However, I feel that Grover is overall a more important character, since he demonstrates healthier behaviors, is statistically ranked a favorite among children, and exemplifies a confidence that many other puppets lack. I'm sure that those who support Cookie Monster are as invested in the welfare of the children as those who support Grover, and therefore, perhaps the Cookie Monster supporters could identify each feature that is involved in determining the most important Sesame Street character and reconsider their choice in terms of what it is teaching their children.

### Aristotelian

Grover is the most important character on the long-running children's television show Sesame Street. The show was founded over forty years ago, and Grover's character has remained the most central throughout the years. In study after study, children report that Grover is their favorite character. As a favorite, the children are more likely to pay close attention to both his words and actions. According to a study by the MFA department at the University of Alabama, children often

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/16879d3c0e0f3000>



## WC assignment

2 messages

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**Rogerian argument:** In simple terms, this approach is about finding common ground with the intended audience. This argument has four main parts. First, the writer should state the problem and its affects to both parties; writer should avoid stating their position at this time. Secondly, the writer should be sympathetic to the reader's point of view on the problem and acknowledge how it is valid. Writer should avoid making a mockery of the reader's P.O.V. Thirdly, the writer moves to present his/her own P.O.V. on the problem as clearly as possibly. Here, the writer should include key evidence to support/develop his P.O.V. and explain why his position is valid. Finally, the writer closes the argument by introducing a compromise, or showing the reader how his/her position would benefit by adopting the writer's P.O.V. Writer can offer alternative solutions as part of the compromise that would benefit both parties.

This argument works best for highly emotional/divisive issues. (<http://writing.colostate.edu/>)

**Aristotelian argument:** Is a technique of persuasion either by what the writer writes, the affect on the emotional state of the reader, or based on the argument itself. Aristotle claim that if a writer is able to effectively do all three the audience will buy into his/her credibility and not doubt the claim(s). Writer will use logic (state his/her claim), appeal to the readers' rationale (with factual evidence), anticipate counterarguments to the claim, offer a rebuttal, and an effective conclusion will persuade the audience to adopt writer's P.O.V. or position.

Most common (easiest) form of argumentation. (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/#means>, <http://www.umuc.edu/ewc/onlineguide/chapter8/chapter8-03.shtml>)

**Toulmin argument:** Similar to Aristotelian, the writer should state the claim (whatever he/she is trying to persuade the readers to do) up front. The writer needs to ground the claim with truthful data, hard evidence that cannot be challenged; the grounds will also include the reasoning for the claim. Next the writer needs to provide a warrant (linking the grounds to the claim), in other words, tell why the data makes the claim a truth. Warrants can be simple and/or unstated. Next the writer needs to back up the warrant; anticipate other questions of the warrant and answer them. The writer may use qualifiers (words like "most", "some", "virtually", "usually") but this will limit the argument and raise more doubts with the readers. The writer can also decide to draw rebuttals at the onset of the argument or later (but rebuttals are also arguments, which may start the process all over again).

This argument is tricky. [http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:http://changingminds.org/disciplines/argument/making\\_argument/toulmin.htm](http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:http://changingminds.org/disciplines/argument/making_argument/toulmin.htm)

**Aristotelian Argument:**

Aim:

Glitter is the herpes of craft supplies.

Evidence (data, statistics, and/or anecdotal):

In my experience it takes about five fifteen-minute showers—during which I scrub my skin raw—to remove any residual glitter that has made its way onto my body after arts and crafts day. Also, statistics show that 57.62% of children under the age of ten are not allowed to use glitter during the week prior to family portrait day because their parents don't want residual glitter causing an unfortunate glimmer; male children in particular appreciate not being yelled at by their fathers for "wearing glitter" to the family photo shoot.

Counterargument:

Perhaps if the individual using glitter were only a little more careful, then glitter wouldn't have such a bad reputation in the arts and crafts community. Perhaps one should wear masks and gloves and long sleeves and pants when dealing with glitter.

Rebuttal:

One shouldn't have to wear full-body protective gear while decorating with glitter, which is, after all, supposed to be an enjoyable experience.

Conclusion:

Glitter can make a dull piece of macaroni art shimmer, a bleak rendering of the solar system shine. But glitter gets everywhere and you can never get rid of it. When I shaved my head last November I found pink and red glitter from Diorama-Rama '99 (I made a mini-model of a scene from The Little Mermaid and thought that Ariel should glimmer).

**Rogerian Argument:**

Problem:

Cafeteria food is the worst! The french fries are always soggy and cold. The hamburgers and hot dogs don't taste like they're made out of meat. I found a hair in last month's lasagna. Breakfast is always rubbery eggs and limp bacon and bruised bananas. And the vegetables aren't ever cooked, just dumped right of the can!

Opponent's Position:

"The cafeteria seeks to provide wholesome and nutritional food for the students of our school system. All menu items are approved by the school board and bi-monthly kitchen inspections are performed throughout the school year."

Living the Opponent "Props":

I agree that the cafeteria “seeks to provide wholesome and nutritional food.” And I’ve seen that guy carrying a clipboard checking things off of some sort of list.

ating How Opponent’s Position Would Be Stronger:

Perhaps you should experience cafeteria food for one month next semester. You can sit at my table, we can make notes together, count the number of black spots on each other’s bananas. In theory, everything you’ve said is correct. But until you find a hair in Thursday’s spaghetti, you won’t understand the dire situation of cafeteria-frequenters—because I know that you order your lunch from Subway and have it delivered.

### **Toulmin Argument:**

Claim:

James Dean is not dead; he is in fact the living father of actor James Franco.

Data, Evidence to Support:

The young actor James Franco is a direct descendant of James Dean. DNA tests report that they share the same blood, that Dean is Franco’s father. Franco (who shares my birthday!) was born in 1978. Dean reportedly died in a tragic automobile accident in 1955 at the age of 24. At the time of Franco’s birth however, Dean was a healthy 47 years old. There have been strategically (somewhat illegally) recovered photos of Dean in the delivery room when Franco was born. Please see attached for these photos.

arrant:

James Franco (who portrayed his James Dean in a biopic) looks uncannily like James Dean.

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## Models of Argumentation

When an author wishes to make a point to readers, he or she may use Aristotelian/Classical, Rogerian or Toulmin models of argumentation. The use of each model involves inherent advantages and disadvantages. The Aristotelian model dates from the time of the ancient Greeks and is named for its most famous practitioner. The goal of Aristotelian argument is to refute opposing claims while also promoting one's own argument, most often by offering supporting evidence and using appeals to morality, logic and/or emotion. Aristotle, an early scientist, wrote on a great many subjects to which he applied logical reason. He attempted to classify plants, animals and insects known in the ancient Greek world using observation and reason. Based on his observations of he concluded certain types of flies had only five legs, and that male animals of a species were always dominant to the female of that species. This example points out an inherent problem with Aristotelian argument. Faulty reasoning can sometimes be applied to too little observation, leading to a flawed argument.

A model of argument much more recent in origin is the Rogerian. Psychologist Carl Rogers emphasized commonalities rather than differences between the position he held and that of the position of others. Rogers sought to establish relationships between opposing sides of an argument in an effort to find a consensus on a particular issue. Modern politicians frequently use Rogerian argument, because they must attempt to make good on promises made to constituents while confronting opposition from members of the other party. Rogerian argument can be used to bridge differences between sides on a particular issue, typically resulting in a compromise in which each side on the issue feels it has gained. While this can have the effect of ending deadlock, it sets politicians up to charges that they have compromised on principles in order to reach a political compromise.

The Toulmin model of argumentation seeks to refute or uphold an argument by paying attention to the assumptions behind or underlying said argument. Philosopher Stephen Toulmin taught that those arguments were the most logical which could be supported by assumptions consistent with the argument. The issue of the death penalty provides one notable example of how supporters of a position overlook or refuse to see how supporting their position violates the very principle they are attempting to uphold. Proponents of the death penalty may claim that serving capital punishment to convicted murderers is justified because the convicted have taken life. Using Toulmin reasoning, one might arrive at the following position: taking human life is wrong; therefore taking life to punish someone for murder is wrong. Said more succinctly, if murder is wrong, then government sanctioned murder is wrong.

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### Argumentation

The last time I taught EN 102 at UA, the course was centered on teaching students how to write about literature; therefore, I have never taught the course based on models of argumentation. However, I have used classical models of argumentation in 101 classes that I have taught. Without realizing exactly what frame I was teaching—Aristotelian, Toulmin, or Rogerian—I found through my research that I have actually taught the Aristotelian and Toulmin models before. As far as I understand them, the Aristotelian and Toulmin models are more oppositional than Roger's model; they seem to be based on the thesis/antithesis frame, while Rogerian argument seems to be focused more heavily on synthesis. While the Aristotelian and Toulmin frames rely on establishing one's claim as superior to opposing claims, Rogerian argument seems to be more dialogic in nature.

I do not see a hugely significant difference between the Aristotelian and Toulmin models. According to both frames, it seems that the writer would begin by engaging the audience's interest and establishing the significance of the problem/subject at hand. Then, the writer states his/her claim or thesis and the reasons for this claim. According to Aristotle, the writer should support this thesis with appeals to logos, ethos, and pathos, while Toulmin argues that the claim should be supported by grounds or data, which is then connected to the claim by means of the warrant. In other words, the warrant explains how the grounds or data actually work to support the central claim. Of course, intrinsic to both models is the use of evidence in order to support the claim and the reasons for the claim, all of which must be connected to one another logically. Additionally, in both the Aristotelian and the Toulmin models, the writer must acknowledge counterclaims (or qualifiers) and then rebut them, thus establishing the supremacy of his/her claim.

On the other hand, Rogerian argument seems to be more concerned with synthesis among opposing viewpoints. In other words, the writer should fully explore, with an open mind, all points of view on a subject before arriving at his/her position. According to this model, the paper would begin by exploring the similarities between different points of view. Only after these similarities have been explored would the writer state his or her position on the issue, so it appears that this type of paper would have a delayed thesis. Also, when using the Rogerian model, the writer should persuade the audience of her position by demonstrating the benefits of this position. In other words, rather than emphasizing the weaknesses of counterarguments by rebutting them, Rogerian argument focuses on the strength of the author's position without denigrating other points of view. Rogerian argumentation seems to be more diplomatic and respectful of different perspectives while at the same time having a persuasive aim.