



## ***The Art of Argument: An Introduction to the Informal Fallacies***

### **Writing Intensive Course**

Yearlong 2023-2024

#### **ELIGIBLE STUDENTS:**

**Rising 7th–12th graders** who are able to type and have had some experience writing academic papers including the following skills: compare/contrast essays, thesis statement and evidence, and alpha-numeric outlining.

**Please note:** Students enrolled in this course will complete not only the text, but also regular writing assignments varying in length from one paragraph to a full 4 to 5-paragraph essay, thus earning this course the distinction of being a writing intensive course. Students who complete this course earn 1 high school course credit.

**Class Times: Monday & Wednesday: 11:00am–12:15am (EST)**

**Instructor:** Weslea Bell

#### **Course Map**

##### Quarter 1

1. What is Logic?
2. Critical Thinking as a Way of Life
3. Formal vs. Informal Logic
4. Fallacies of Relevance: Ad Fontem Arguments
5. Fallacies of Relevance: Appeals to Emotion

##### Quarter 2

1. Fallacies of Relevance: Appeals to Emotion

2. Fallacies of Relevance: Red Herrings
3. Unit 1 Cumulative Fallacy Test
4. Fallacies of Presumption

#### Quarter 3

1. Fallacies of Presupposition
2. Fallacies of Induction
3. Unit 2 Cumulative Fallacy Test

#### Quarter 4

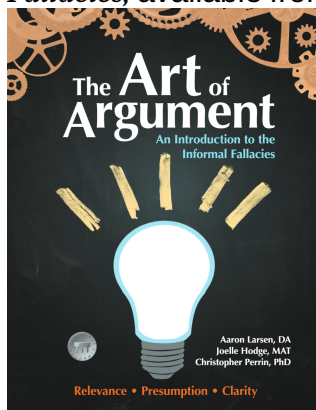
1. Fallacies of Clarity
2. Unit 3 Cumulative Fallacy Test
3. Final Exam
4. Final Project

### OFFICE HOURS

In addition to scheduled class times, the teacher will generally designate an optional weekly session as needed. During “office hours” students may raise questions, seek assistance, or review class material.

### REQUIRED COURSE TEXT

The course text is the award-winning *Art of Argument: An Introduction to the Informal Fallacies*, available from [Classical Academic Press](#)



### OPTIONAL COURSE TEXTS

Papers and essays will be submitted using basic MLA formatting guides. The *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers: 7th Edition* may be a helpful resource.

### ART OF ARGUMENT COURSE DESCRIPTION

Because this is a writing-intensive course, completing this Art of Argument class is the equivalent of 1 full high school credit. As a fundamental text for teaching logic and critical thinking, *The Art of Argument* will impart to students the skills needed to craft accurate statements and identify the flawed arguments found so frequently in editorials, commercials, newspapers, journals, and every other media—as well as the ability to accurately identify fallacies throughout their course texts, lectures, and other curriculum. Students will complete the entire *Art of Argument* text, learning all 28+ fallacies, identifying them, defining them, and creating them.

Students will also be required to write approximately six short essays (4-5 paragraphs) which are intended to highlight specific concepts where students often get stymied. Early in the year, we learn basic MLA formatting guidelines that they must incorporate for every essay submission. Formatting, grammar, spelling, word choice, clearly expressed thoughts—these are all graded. The general paper topics are:

1. Similarities and Differences between Inductive and Deductive Logic
2. Propaganda/Non-argumentative persuasion / Legitimate (though possibly fallacious) Arguments.
3. Appeal to Pity vs. Appeal to Fear
4. Irrelevant Goals and Functions vs. Irrelevant Thesis
5. Composition & Division vs. Hasty Generalization & Sweeping Generalization

Students in my course usually complete the *Art of Argument* text with about 3-4 weeks remaining at the end of the year. At this point they engage in a review in preparation for a final exam in which students will demonstrate their ability to define, categorize, and identify all 28+ fallacies. Additionally, during these final weeks, students work on a creative project, providing them a different kind of opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of how to avoid logical fallacies. For this project they play the role of a reporter, creating either a TV news report or a newspaper article, employing fallacies as well as a critique and correction for each one.

The Art of Argument is geared directly toward students as young as 7th grade, while still engaging for students in senior high. The course and text emphasize the practical and real-world application of soundly structured inductive logic. Using methods such as Socratic dialogue, ample discussion, integration of other subjects, and application to current events, the book is essential for dialectic and rhetoric students. We recommend *The Discovery of Deduction* after a study of informal fallacies.

Early in the year, we learn basic MLA formatting guidelines that they must incorporate for every essay submission. They practice applying these guidelines for the first seven essays and are also required to apply them for their final three-page essay. Formatting, grammar,

spelling, word choice, clearly expressed thoughts—these are all graded.

## **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS**

Students enrolling in Scholé Academy's Logic Program will be expected to show development of Executive Function Skills throughout the year. Executive Function Skills speak to a set of qualities and skill sets students can develop and hone to better approach the courses, lectures, readings, and teachers they will face in their future academic coursework.

Each teacher will invariably have his own set of requirements and skills he requires students to bring to their studies. *Generally* speaking, there are five such qualities that are necessary for my students in various subjects:

**1. An Engaged Student:** One who is willing to step into the arena of class discussion, ask questions, supply answers, and generate the internal dialogue necessary to determine if what's being discussed is important and necessary to himself.

**2. Note Taking:** A student who, both during and after being engaged with the class, has been trained to note important and relevant content in an organized fashion (Cornell Notes would be a great option). His notes would then be consulted, independently, for application in assignments and assessments.

**3. Attention to Detail & Preparedness:** A student who consistently adheres to deadlines, submission requirements, and style guides and codes; confirms technology is working prior to the start of class; and is responsible to determine how to proceed after an absence, consulting the course syllabus and adjusting as the class proceeds, etc.

**4. Employ Critiques:** One who receives feedback on a submission and then is sure to apply that feedback to future assignments rather than repeating mistakes. Such a student also gleans information from the live class critiques of fellow students and notes mistakes to avoid by learning from others.

**5. Initiative/Maturity:** This student would hear the teacher's comments and be able to assess whether or not the teacher was describing his work, and then take the initiative to schedule office hours with his teacher if necessary.

## **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS IN ACTION**

Students will be following the sequence of study contained in *The Art of Argument*. The ultimate goal for the students will be to engage with this type of logic outside the classroom and apply the skills they learn in class as they engage with the world around them. Therefore, some student work and assessments will be completed in the text, using online tools and assignments, through regular classroom participation, and through at least seven typed essays. Students will be asked to review news articles in preparation for class— meaning **they will need access to either a local newspaper or an online news source.**

During class discussion, students will review answers, pose questions, and explain and justify their answers and solution. Each week the teacher will lead discussions informed by issues and problems raised by students, as well as issues introduced by the teacher.

In this class, students will be expected to listen attentively and participate actively in class discussions and practices. Students are expected to arrive to class on time and with all assigned material completed. The instructor will facilitate learning for the student, but the responsibility for staying up-to-date with classwork and assignments ultimately falls to the student. ***Nota bene: If you are aware that your child may miss more than six classes for the year, it may not be advisable to enroll in this course! For more information, please see the Student-Parent Handbook.***

### **SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS AND POLICY FOR LATE WORK**

The instructor will facilitate learning for the student, but the responsibility for staying up-to-date with classwork and assignments ultimately falls to the student. All work will be submitted the appropriate Schoology Assignment prior to the start of class each day. Students turning in late work will earn a 10% penalty for each day the assignment is late; once we're finished with a unit, any missing work will remain a zero. Students may submit their work in the following formats: Word documents, or PDFs. *Nota bene:* Photographs of assignments are often unclear, and will not be accepted.

### **STUDENT EVALUATION: GRADING**

While pursuing The Art of Argument through Scholé Academy will be “restful” (I’d also like to say it’s going to be a lot of fun!), we also recognize the need to provide grades for students who will be using this course as part of their prepared college transcript. It’s a delicate balance to achieve both restful learning and excellent academic performance. Earning a specific grade should not overshadow achievement goals for mastery of this discipline. Logic, like the studies of Grammar and Rhetoric, is a “core” discipline in classical education and learning to own the concepts introduced in this class will be a necessary and significant component of future success in upper-level classical education. In that sense then, attaining a mastery of Logic is its own reward. In my course, I use the following Latin categories to assess your student’s level of achievement: *magna cum laude* (with great praise), *cum laude* (with praise), *satis* (sufficient, satisfactory), and *non satis* (not sufficient).

Ideally, every average student working diligently should do praiseworthy work (*cum laude*). Those who excel beyond this expectation will be the *magna cum laude* students. Students who do adequate but not praiseworthy work will be designated *satis*. *Non satis* means lacking sufficiency or adequacy.

### **STUDENT EVALUATION: MASTERY PORTRAIT**

Mastery portrait: Students who are prepared to take this class are typically early to late teens, adolescents approaching young adulthood. This developmental stage is an interesting one, brimming with lots of new characteristics. It’s imperative, then, that this

course not only provide the academic components necessary to achieve mastery of the content of the class (knowledge) and skills associated with analytical thought; but also help engage the student in development of their moral virtues. These three aspects of the course would comprise the “learning target.”

- At the completion of this course, *cum laude* students will be able to name, define, and categorize the 28 informal fallacies listed in *The Art of Argument*.
- Additionally, they will have attained the skills necessary to identify those fallacies both from text examples and from external sources either presented to them by their teacher, or identified independently and presented to the class. Similarly, students should also be cultivating the ability to craft arguments without employing the use of these informal fallacies.
- Students will also be guided in development of the virtues of Truth, Goodness, and Wisdom. Ideally, students will employ wisdom in governing self, refraining from unnecessary and petty argumentation and instead developing discernment in conflict and resolution.

By the end of the course, students should understand that knowledge, rational argumentation, and reason are not complete without a humble, teachable spirit—one that is responsible to appropriately engage skills and tools with generosity and respect for others, even their opponents (and their teacher).

### **STUDENT EVALUATION: ASSIGNMENTS, TYPES & WEIGHTS**

Mrs. Bell will communicate with students regarding assignment feedback and grading through the free online grading system Schoology. The teacher will provide students with more detailed information and access to the Art of Argument course page. Student’s assignments will fall into two categories:

1. Assessments (60%): tests and papers
2. Participation (40%): homework, quizzes, discussion boards, and other classroom activities.

### **STUDENT EVALUATION: ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Students will often take assessment tests and/or quizzes privately at home. Students are on their honor to abide by Scholé Academy’s Learning Philosophy, which assumes the personal cultivation of Student Virtues described in the Student-Parent Handbook. Additionally, plagiarism is a serious and punishable offense. Proper citation of all sources is essential to the academic endeavor.

Remember to cite any source if the information is not common knowledge or is an opinion obtained through any source. A plagiarized assignment will result in a failing grade. Students should consult their instructor or an MLA style manual for specific direction on obtaining, quoting, and paraphrasing sources.

## **THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM**

We will be using the free online “virtual classroom” software provided by Zoom, one of the leading companies that offers such software. The virtual classroom will provide students with interactive audio, text chat, and an interactive whiteboard in which texts, diagrams, video, and other media can be displayed and analyzed. We will e-mail students a link that will enable them to join the virtual classroom.

Specific information regarding the technology used by Scholé Academy (including required technology) can be found by visiting the Technology in the Classroom section of the Student-Parent Handbook.

Students will submit documents (perhaps also needing to scan and upload them) as a .pdf or Word .doc to the Art of Argument Schoology assignment page (access granted after enrollment is secured).

## **ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR**



**Weslea Bell** holds a MA in English from Mississippi State University and has taught Language Arts courses, including Literature, Composition, Mythology, and Logic, for almost thirty years. She has written for various publications and venues and homeschooled her own children from kindergarten through twelfth grade. She enjoys gardening, coffee dates with friends, training her horse, playing piano, and – most of all – spending time with her husband and two daughters.