

*Elements of Argument: A Textbook and Reader*, 4th ed.—Annette T. Rottenberg; Bedford-St. Martin's; 1994; 729 pp.; ISBN 0-312-0-7.

*The Structure of Argument*—Annette T. Rottenberg; Bedford-St. Martin's; 1994; 452 pp.; ISBN 0-312-09459-0.

Now in its fourth edition, *Elements of Argument* continues to be one of the most useful textbooks concentrating on argumentation. One of its chief virtues is its downplaying of much of the traditional baggage of argumentation—Venn diagrams, chains of syllogisms, long lists of fallacies, protracted discussions of induction and deduction. Rottenberg does touch on these topics in Chapter 7, but the discussion there is clear and sensible. Not only is it mercifully brief, but it also avoids the attempts at humor that so often mar such discussions. (Despite various authors' laudable intentions of providing comic relief, the facetious examples in many textbooks are neither amusing nor useful).

Above all, *Elements of Argument* is noteworthy for its handling of the Toulmin model. Concentrating on the three essential components of this model of argument (which she labels claims, support, and warrants), Rottenberg presents a lucid and easily grasped version that is immediately useable in classroom analysis and construction of arguments. Her treatment of the frequently confusing topic of warrants is especially praiseworthy, as is her attention to frequently overlooked role of appeals to the values and needs of an audience. An idea of the clarity of her approach is evident from a single glance at the endpapers, which outline the various types of warrants and provide critical questions for evaluating an argument that employs them.

Also useful is the second major section of the book, which focuses on using research to support argument. Here, however, one may have a few more reservations, most of them seemingly endemic in textbooks these days. Despite the proliferation of data bases, electronic searches, and photocopying in library research, *Elements of Argument* devotes almost no space to these developments but does spend several pages going over note cards and note taking. In presenting examples of MLA documentation formats, it contains a few minor errors, particularly in the sample paper. It should be stressed that in these respects *Elements of Argument* is neither better nor worse than other books of its kind.

As the subtitle indicates, *Elements of Argument* also contains a reader, one that seems quite similar to many other textbooks already available. This third major section is a substantial portion of the book, containing nearly seventy articles on nine topics: abortion, animal rights, children's rights, endangered species, euthanasia, freedom of speech, gay and lesbian rights, multicultural studies, and sex education. These thematically arranged

readings are supplemented by a group of nine "classic arguments," including familiar passages from Plato, Swift, Woolf, Orwell, and King. The readings are well chosen, and several respond directly to each other, providing an additional reminder that texts are part of an ongoing conversation. It cannot be denied that issues selected for special attention are of great importance or that students are often emotionally invested in them. Nor, on the other hand, can it be denied that the very familiarity of these topics may be a drawback. After all, arguments on these subjects have gone on for so long and on such similar grounds that students can adopt them ready-made without having to examine the issues. Indeed, arguments on most of these topics already exist ready-made in written form in fraternity/sorority files and at research paper mills across the country.

Clearly, the most valuable part of Rottenberg's textbook is the opening portion, the other two major sections proving much more ordinary or even unsatisfactory. Perhaps for this reason, the publisher has made the first two sections available separately under the title *The Structure of Argument*. It is identical to *Elements of Argument*, simply omitting the anthology of readings. This very sensible arrangement allows teachers access to Rottenberg's first-rate presentation of Toulmin-based argument without the burden of topics that some may feel hackneyed.

At first glance, the closest competitor with Rottenberg's text would seem to be Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor's *A Rhetoric of Argument* (2nd ed., McGraw-Hill, 1990), also distinguished by its commonsense clarity of approach. *A Rhetoric of Argument*, however, is not based on Toulmin's work but on the stases of classical rhetoricians. It would be more appropriate, then, to view each text as an excellent example of complementary approaches to argument. An instructor's choice between the two is more likely to be a matter of the approach with which she or he is more comfortable. Both remain exemplary and warrant serious consideration in argumentation courses.

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