

## Public Address in Argument Analysis

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The curriculum in rhetoric and social influence in our department requires that students take a 100 level class, "Argument and Critical Discourse," prior to taking the basic course in rhetorical theory. This course in theory is a prerequisite for our class in rhetorical criticism, and we assume that most students will have followed the sequence before they take our classes in social movements.

"Argument and Critical Discourse" is a lecture/recitation course. In addition to being required majors this class fulfills a basic requirement in the university's baccalaureate core. One of my objectives in directing this class is to incorporate contemporary examples of public address into lectures so that students can observe the application of principles in contemporary settings. An important outcome of these lectures is orientation to textual analysis of argument structure within public address. Students who major in speech communication become exposed to analysis that should, one hopes, and rich their approach to texts in later classes. Students not majoring in speech observe implications of argumentative technique.

Although I have used James Madison's 10th Federalist paper to illustrate disjunctive reasoning (one can control the causes of faction or the effects of faction . . . ), I have found that most students in this 100 level course have not read the work. The example demands too much background work in a 50 minute lecture for the objective I seek. I have been able to avoid providing detailed background by deploying examples from contemporary public address.

The textbook for the class is James Herrick's *Argumentation*.

**Example 1: Argument scanning, categorical syllogism, enthymemes:**

**(Excerpt from Gov. George Ryan's speech announcing his commutation of all of Illinois' death sentences. The Associated Press Saturday, January 11, 2003)**

“Our systemic case-by-case review has found more cases of innocent men wrongfully sentenced to death row. Because our three-year study has found only more questions about the fairness of the sentencing; because of the spectacular failure to reform the system; because we have seen justice delayed for countless death row inmates with potentially meritorious claims; because the Illinois death penalty system is arbitrary and capricious--and therefore immoral--I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death.

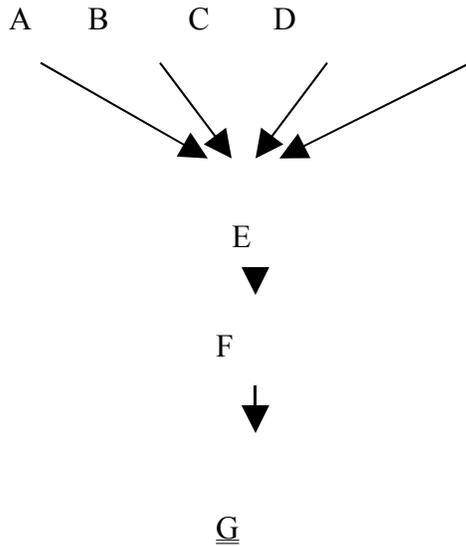
I cannot say it as eloquently than Justice Blackmun. The Legislature couldn't reform it. Lawmakers won't repeal it. But I will not stand for it. I must act.”

1. Example 1, scanned and diagrammed:

(A) [Our systemic case-by-case review has found more cases of innocent men wrongfully sentenced to death row.] Because (B) [our three-year study has found only more questions about the fairness of the sentencing;] because of (C) [the spectacular failure to reform the system;] because (D) [we have seen justice delayed for countless death row

inmates with potentially meritorious claims;] because (E) [the Illinois death penalty system is arbitrary and capricious] -- and therefore (F) [immoral] – (G) [I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death.]

Diagram for the excerpt from Ryan’s speech:



I point out to students the unstated premise between E and F that would be clearly stated if you standardized this argument: *“Legal systems that are arbitrary and capricious are immoral.”*

When students insert this unstated premise between E and F, the three statements work together to form a valid categorical argument. With the premise left unstated, as the Governor expressed it, this section fulfills Herrick’s account of an enthymeme, which I point out in lecture with an overhead:

ENTHYMEME: AN ARGUMENT WHERE ONE PREMISE OR THE CONCLUSION IS UNSTATED.

Gov. Ryan's argument between E and F, with the unstated premise made clear, would look like this:

P1: The Illinois death penalty system is arbitrary and capricious.

P2 [unstated] Arbitrary and capricious systems are immoral.

Conc: The Illinois Death penalty system is immoral.

I then point out that once it is set in this form, the argument illustrates the deductive root for the organizational pattern (an epicheireme) they must develop in their first speech.

Points a, b, c, and d would serve as supporting arguments for P1.

**Example 2: Excerpt from the President's Remarks to the United Nations, September 12th 2002:**

“The United States has no quarrel with the Iraqi people; they've suffered too long in silent captivity. Liberty for the Iraqi people is a great moral cause, and a great strategic goal. The people of Iraq deserve it; the security of all nations requires it. Free societies do not intimidate through cruelty and conquest, and open societies do not threaten the world with mass murder. The United States supports political and economic liberty in a unified Iraq.”

The underscored materials illustrate two categorical enthymemes:

Free societies do not intimidate through cruelty and conquest.

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P1: No free society is a society that intimidates through cruelty and conquest. (UN)

P2: Iraq is a society that intimidates through cruelty and conquest. (UA)

Conc: Iraq is not a free society. (UN)

Open societies do not threaten the world with mass murder.

P1: No open society is a society that threatens the world with mass murder.

P2: Iraq is a society that threatens the world with mass murder.

Conc: Iraq is not an open society.

In both enthymemes one premise and the conclusion are unstated.

Set out this way these excerpts illustrate serious applications of the principles that students in the basic argument must understand and deploy in their own assignments. They provide an entry point for discussing the implications of unstated premises in deductive enthymemes. Finally, they orient majors toward argument analysis in public address and rhetorical criticism.