Dear readers,

This is the first issue of the *Amsterdam Argumentation Chronicle* prepared by the new editorial staff: Eugen Popa, Jacky Visser and Renske Wierda. We hope you will enjoy reading about events that have taken place in our department over the last months. In the interviews with students and (guest) researchers you read about their interest in the study of argumentation. In view of the news that you find in this issue, two dates should be highlighted. The first one is **April 1**: anyone who wants to start in one of our Master’s programs in the academic year 2014 - 2015 should apply before this date. The second important date is **July 1**: the start of the 8th ISSA conference. We very much hope to welcome you as a student in one of our MA programs, or as a guest at the ISSA conference.

Kind regards,
José Plug

*International Learned Institute for Argumentation Studies (ILIAS)*
Every now and again we make decisions in full confidence. Typically, however, we harbor some doubt right until the last moment. The tough decisions in one’s life are no exception: A chef? A writer? Something else? Once this already knotty decision has been made, the next one presents itself: your education.

I had decided upon studying European languages or archeology and went on to study Humanities at a Liberal Arts College, with a minor in rhetoric and argumentation. During this time, by studying rhetorical citizenship, my interest for rhetoric and argumentation took over. I decided that doing an MA which addressed rhetoric and critical thinking was the way to go.

While looking for such a program I came across Rhetoric, Argumentation Theory and Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. Its content and study schedule really appealed to me, so I applied and received an acceptance letter. Once everything started, I was pleased to discover that the program effectively tapped into what I had wanted: theories of rhetoric, argumentation and philosophy. I have since become more and more familiar with the pragma-dialectical theory for analyzing and evaluating argumentation in the many contexts and variations in which it occurs.

When describing my master’s program to family and friends, they usually ask me about its significance. Why does studying argumentation matter? I respond by explaining that argumentation and rhetoric can be found in everyday discourse, whenever you try to get a point across. The utility of pragma-dialectics becomes clear when we try to understand one’s argumentation and determine whether someone argues well (‘reasonably’) or tries to get around with tricks. However, there’s more to it than technical matters of analysis and evaluation. By doing this master’s program, you gain confidence to do your own research, especially as the result of the individual tutorials you have with some of your professors. The freedom to pursue your own interests allows you to “personalize” the program and identify yourself as a scholar.

I have the intention to do a PhD, probably in political communication, mostly because of what I have experienced in following this...
master’s. It has given me the confidence, preparation and confirmation necessary for pursuing a career in academia. All in all, I am very happy with the choice of not being a chef or anything else.

**Dissertation Defense**

Lotte van Poppel

In 2013, dr. Lotte van Poppel successfully defended her PhD dissertation at the University of Amsterdam. Prior to that, she studied Languages and Cultures of Latin America at Leiden University and completed the Research MA program Rhetoric, Argumentation Theory and Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. Currently, she works as a lecturer at the University of Amsterdam, Leiden University and the Technical University of Eindhoven.


“Getting the vaccine now will protect you in the future” is an example of pragmatic argumentation in a health brochure aimed at convincing the reader of a piece of health advice in which certain behavior is advocated. Pragmatic argumentation is used to justify a piece of advice by pointing to the advantageous or disadvantageous effects of that behavior. A brochure writer can be expected to attempt to convince the reader in a reasonable way, while he will also try to select the most convincing arguments and formulate them in the most appealing way. This dissertation aims to explain why a health brochure writer, considering his goals, might choose pragmatic argumentation and how a writer might design this argumentation to convince people to accept his advice.

Based on the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation and the notion of strategic maneuvering, the study first characterizes health brochures as a specific argumentative activity type to explain how the conventions of health brochures affect the strategic maneuvering. For example, the type of issue under discussion affects the maneuvering in the sense that arguments that point at beneficial effects of adhering to the advice for the reader’s health are particularly relevant in this context.

Since a writer can only reach his goals if potential doubt and criticism is removed, the study examines what types of doubt and criticism the writer can expect. On the basis of contextualized correctness conditions of the speech act of advising, a systematic overview of the various types of doubt in this context is provided. With the help of examples from actual brochures it is shown that each of the distinguished types of doubt can actually play a role in the argumentation in health brochures. Pragmatic argumentation appears to be systematically connected with the first preparatory condition of advising (which concerns the usefulness of the advice): does the act A benefit the reader’s health and the health of (part of) the population by preventing, treating, or detecting a health problem?

Next, it is determined what types of doubt and criticism can be addressed in health brochures with pragmatic argumentation. Four variants of pragmatic argumentation are introduced that each can address a possible countermove concerning the standpoint or the argumentation. The function of these variants is summarized in a simplified dialectical profile, representing four dialectical routes. Based on an analysis of actual health brochures, it is then determined what the rhetorical advantages are of using a particular route with pragmatic argumentation. It is shown that addressing anticipated countermoves has, for instance, the advantages that the reader’s concerns regarding the advice and the argumentation are taken into account and that it can contribute to the defense of the writer’s initial standpoint.
Finally, it is examined what the rhetorical advantages are of using a particular design of pragmatic argumentation to support an advisory standpoint in health brochures. As a case study, a 2012 British brochure about vaccination against the human papilloma virus (HPV) is used. It is argued that the choices in the design contribute to achieving the writer’s goals in two ways. Firstly, they emphasize the desirability of the effect and represent the causal connection in the strongest way. Secondly, the designs of the pragmatic argument help to create the (false) image that the HPV vaccine is a vaccine against cervical cancer. Brochure writers can thus strategically address anticipated criticism to get the advisory standpoint accepted, both by choosing a variant of pragmatic argument and by choosing a particular design of that argument.

Lotte van Poppel’s dissertation can be accessed online through the following URL: http://dare.uva.nl/document/499726.

CAREER STORY

Bert Meuffels

Dr. Bert Meuffels is an Associate Professor in the Department of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory and Rhetoric at the University of Amsterdam, specialized in the methodological and statistical aspects of empirical research into speech communication.

When did it all start?

I began my studies in 1970 at the University of Amsterdam, at the Department of Dutch Studies. I chose the program Dutch Language and Culture, and in the second year I also started a second program at the Department of Psychology. I did these two in parallel until 1976, when I obtained my “doctoraal”, which would be an MA diploma nowadays, with a specialization in speech communication (Dutch Language and Culture) and a specialization in mathematical statistics and methodology (Psychology).

What influenced your decision to study these two programs?

My first passion had been mathematics, so I visited various universities in The Netherlands which offered some Bachelor’s programs in that area. I couldn’t find anything interesting so I came back to Amsterdam and decided to somehow focus on my second passion at that time - literature. Unfortunately, within a year, I realized that the whole literary affaire was rather strange. On the bright side, within Dutch Language and Culture you could choose for a minor in speech communication, which seemed like a viable option for someone who now wanted to avoid literary criticism. I eventually went for speech communication and decided to combine it with methodology and mathematical statistics from the Psychology department. This meant going back, even if slightly, to my first passion.

How did you start teaching?

I began as an assistant in 1976, and one year later, unexpectedly, there was a free position as a docent in the department of Dutch Studies. I applied immediately and was accepted. In 1980 I obtained my PhD, and this was something of an exception because at that time teaching and research were two separate things. Some people did not obtain a PhD until they were in their fifties or sixties. There was no incentive; you could literally spend your whole life in academia without having written a PhD dissertation or something equivalent.

How did you start working within pragma-dialectics?

Well, of course, pragma-dialectics did not exist when I first started teaching. It is indeed the merit of Frans van Eemeren - the first of many
merits - that he managed to bring all of us together to work consistently as a research group. I started working with the “Amsterdam School” around 1995 and one of our first research projects concerned the identification of argumentation by language users. Once this project was completed, our interest shifted towards the empirical study of fallacies, which finally resulted in the publication of the book *Fallacies and Judgments of reasonableness* in 2009.

*What were the most challenging parts of these projects?*

For the project on the identification of argumentation, the main challenges were the *ceiling effect* and the *bottom-up effect*. The fact is, after a certain age, everybody can identify a standpoint, an argument, a starting point. Which means that only by “zooming in” with very precise tools you can see your variables at work. For the fallacies project, as expected, the most challenging issue was the exclusion of alternative explanations. In everyday situations people associate norms of reasonableness with all kinds of norms (politeness, fairness etc.) But that is what’s nice about such research projects that stretch over many years and many countries: when you carry out 50 to 60 experiments, you need not jump from fact to fact, you have enough time to correct whatever you need to correct.

*You also collaborated with the University of Lugano on argumentation within health communication.*

Yes, Prof. Peter Schulz and I are on the brink of completing a research project that has been going on for more than 10 years now. This project is focused on the argumentation directed at women who are predisposed to breast cancer due to their age or other factors. The situation is quite delicate because scanning for cancer is of course a sound choice for women above a certain age, say 50, but a rather hazardous one for women below this age. So then the question is, to simplify slightly, how do you adapt your argumentation so that you reach these two groups in a different way? That is what we are interested in. A book on this subject will appear within the next 3 years.

*Will that officially mark the end of your academic career?*

I think so, yes. That is the plan. I shouldn’t want to overstay my welcome in academia. It has been a wonderful road, but it’s now time for the “young dogs” to step in.

**VISITING SCHOLAR**

**Wu Peng**

Born in 1983, Wu Peng (PhD, Zhejiang University) is Senior Lecturer and Founding Director of the Center for Cultural Discourse Studies (CCDS) at Jiangsu University, China. He is also working as a postdoctoral research fellow at Nanjing University, China. His research interests are Discourse Studies and argumentation theory. In the past three years, he has published more than a dozen research articles in Chinese and English. He used to chair a research project on China-US trade dispute discourse studies sponsored by China’s Ministry of Education (MOE). From September 2013 to August 2014, he is a visiting scholar at the University of Amsterdam.

*Are you by any chance the Wu Peng who is a Chinese Olympic swimmer? If not an Olympic swimmer, how would you describe yourself professionally?*

Actually, we are two different persons with the same name. I have often heard similar questions since that Chinese swimmer became famous. “Peng” is a very common first name in China signifying a giant bird in the Chinese mythology that can fly very high with no limits.
I would label myself as a scholar of Discourse Studies, but I would like to be an argumentation theorist, a pragma-dialectician to be specific, in the future.

*What made you decide to come to Amsterdam as a guest researcher? Do you have a particular goal during your stay?*

I decided to come to Amsterdam for two reasons. First, I have been trying to develop a pragma-dialectical approach to Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) in the past two years, and I came here to discuss this approach with Prof. Frans van Eemeren – the founding father of pragm-dialectics – and his excellent colleagues. Second, I like Holland, and Amsterdam in particular, very much. During my one-year stay in Amsterdam, my goal is to write two research papers in Chinese (which are finished by now), and one paper in English (in progress), all of which are closely related to pragma-dialectics.

*How would you describe the research project that you are currently working on?*

I am now working on a research project titled “investigating the argumentative discourse in China-EU political communication”. This project aims to analyze and evaluate the argumentative discourse, especially the typical modes of strategic maneuvering, employed by China and the EU respectively in different political communicative activity types.

*Why are you interested in Chinese political relations with the European Union in particular?*

Political discourse analysis has always been one of my research interests. In my current project, I would like to find out how China and the EU, two influential “giants” in the world, keep a balance between their economic interdependence and their socio-ideological conflicts – conflicts that can be very fierce sometimes. This is currently a heated issue in China’s academia.

*What did your academic training program in China look like? Did you become acquainted with the field of Critical Discourse Studies and the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation during your studies?*

I was admitted into Jiangsu university as an undergraduate, majoring in Business English. After graduation, I completed a Research Master’s study on conversation analysis of Chinese courtrooms. In 2008, I was accepted by Professor Shi Xu at Zhejiang University as his PhD student to research China-US trade dispute discourse and I got my PhD degree in 2011.

Generally speaking, nowadays the academic training program in China is quite similar to that in Western countries, except for the duration: it normally takes a student four years to complete a Bachelor’s degree and two and a half to three years for a Master’s degree. Also, Chinese PhD students are deemed to be “apprentices” to their supervisors, while in the West, especially in The Netherlands, PhD students seem to be treated as relatively independent researchers.

Both my Master’s thesis and my PhD dissertation use a CDS approach, and the notion of strategic maneuvering was included in the theoretical foundation of my PhD dissertation. So, yes, I was quite familiar with CDS and got acquainted with pragma-dialectics in my previous studies.

*One last question, not research-related at all: If you could choose anyone in the world, dead or alive, who would you like to be for one day?*

Maybe I can still make my answer research-related: I would want to be Aristotle for one day, because I would like to know how a seemingly ordinary man can “conjure” up so many great and systematic ideas.
NEWS

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

From July 1 to July 4, 2014, the 8th Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation (ISSA) will be held at the University of Amsterdam. The aim of the conference is to draw together scholars from a variety of disciplines that are working in the field of argumentation theory.

The keynote speakers are:

- Frans H. van Eemeren  
  (University of Amsterdam & ILIAS)
- J. Anthony Blair  
  (University of Windsor)
- Jeanne Fahnestock  
  (University of Maryland)

In the week preceding the ISSA Conference (June 23 to June 27), the International Learned Institute for Argumentation Studies (ILIAS) organizes the Summer School on Argumentation in Context 2014. The program focuses on the analysis and evaluation of strategic maneuvering in argumentative activity types from various domains, including the political, the medical, the legal and the academic domain.

For more information about the ISSA conference, please see [http://cf.hum.uva.nl/issa](http://cf.hum.uva.nl/issa).

HONORS AND AWARDS

On June 28, 2013, Frans van Eemeren was named Ridder in de Orde van de Nederlandse Leeuw [Knight in the Order of the Dutch Lion].

DISSERTATION DEFENSES


VISITING SCHOLARS

The Department of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory & Rhetoric is currently hosting the following guest researchers:

- Lindsay Ellis (August 2013 – August 2014), Associate Professor at Grand Valley State University, United States.
- Niilo Lahti (September 2014 – August 2014), PhD researcher at University of Eastern Finland, Finland.
- Wu Peng (September 2014 – August 2014), Senior Lecturer at Jiangsu University and Postdoctoral Researcher at Nanjing University, China.
- Chiara Pollaroli (February 2014 – August 2014), PhD researcher at University of Lugano, Switzerland (co-hosted as guest researcher at the Department of Media Studies, University of Amsterdam).
BOOK PUBLICATIONS


LINKEDIN GROUP

The LinkedIn Group “Argumentation Theory” is a platform for discussions and announcements on the Web. It brings together scholars working in the field of argumentation theory (logic, dialectic, rhetoric) and its primary aim is to share information by means of posting messages. These messages may contain conference announcements, announcements of upcoming or recent publications, new journals, bibliographies, etc. Messages may also contain information on specific subjects, for instance comments on an article that has just appeared.

The group currently consists of over 900 scholars working in the field of argumentation theory. The group is managed by dr. Jean Wagemans, Assistant Professor in the Department of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory, and Rhetoric. For more information on the group and membership requests, please visit [http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Argumentation-Theory-3701738/about](http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Argumentation-Theory-3701738/about).
The University of Amsterdam offers the following international Master's programs in Argumentation Theory:

**Rhetoric, Argumentation Theory and Philosophy**

Research MA; full-time; 24 months (120 EC)
Language of instruction: English
Start: September 2014
Application deadline: April 1, 2014

The Research Master's program Rhetoric, Argumentation Theory and Philosophy provides a solid theoretical and methodological foundation for understanding the diverse ways in which ordinary language is used in various types of discourse and texts as a means of convincing others of a given viewpoint or idea. Crucial concepts from the rhetorical, dialectical and logical approaches used in argumentative discourse analysis, evaluation and production are examined and discussed in a systematic fashion. Relevant insights from speech act theory, Gricean analysis of rational interaction, discourse analysis, and formal and informal logic provide a framework in this process.

All major classical and modern approaches to the reasonableness and rationality of institutionalized and non-institutionalized types of discourse are considered, from legal and political discourse to spontaneous everyday conversations. Students also become familiar with the methods and techniques of qualitative and quantitative empirical research in the fields of discourse analysis, argumentation theory, formal and informal logic, and rhetoric. This in turn enables them to carry out thorough and theoretically justified analyses, case studies and other types of investigations of real-life discussions and texts.

**Communication and Information Studies: Discourse and Argumentation Studies**

MA; full-time; 18 months (90 EC)
Language of instruction: English
Start: September 2014
Application deadline: April 1, 2014

The Professional Master's program Discourse and Argumentation Studies aims to provide students with a solid theoretical and methodological foundation for understanding the way language is used for informative and argumentative purposes. The program presents an overview of recent descriptive and normative research in language, and covers a broad range of topics, including conversational analysis, style, classical and modern rhetoric, informal logic, fallacies, and juridical and conversational argument.

Upon completion of the program, students will have acquired an adequate knowledge of and insight into the main normative and descriptive theoretical approaches to the study of argumentation. This includes: pragma-dialectics and the main theoretical approaches to the study of discourse, including speech act theory and conversation analysis. In addition, students gain the skills necessary for analyzing and evaluating argumentative discourse; for reading, analyzing, evaluating and conducting independent research; and for producing both written and oral reports on research findings. The program also offers students the possibility to put theory into practice in a specially selected internship, in which communicative and argumentative skills play a central role.

*Detailed information about these two Master's programs and their application procedures can be found at [http://www.uva.nl/en/masters](http://www.uva.nl/en/masters)*

*For more information, please contact the Graduate School for Humanities of the University of Amsterdam:*
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*Tel. +31 20 525 4481 (International students)*
*E-mail: graduateschool-fgw@uva.nl*