

**ASSOCIATION FOR INFORMAL LOGIC
AND CRITICAL THINKING
(AILACT)
NEWSLETTER
APRIL 2014**

Contents

- 1. From the Editor**
- 2. From the President**
- 3. A Very Short Reasoning Quiz**
- 4. AILACT @ APA**
- 5. 2014 AILACT Essay Prize Call for Submissions**
- 6. Membership Form**

From the Editor

The AILACT Essay Prize jury selected "Critical thinking and debiasing" by Tim Kenyon, Department of Philosophy, Waterloo University and Guillaume Beaulac, Rotman Institute of Philosophy, University of Western Ontario as the 2013 AILACT Essay Prize Paper. Congratulations, Tim and Guillaume! A call for submissions for the 2014 prize, with a return to a \$500 value this year, is included later in this newsletter.

The 2013/14 sessions of AILACT at the three APA meetings have almost all been completed. Details of the Pacific division meeting which happens next week, along with information about the upcoming Eastern division meeting and the recent Central division meeting are available in section 4 below.

Also included is round five of an experiment to see how well the purveyors of logic and thinking do on a brief quiz. Results from the fourth round are available.

A Membership Form is available at the end of this newsletter. Dues, which continue to be \$10.00, may be paid by check or credit card or PayPal; the form should be completed and sent (with a check if payment is by check) to our treasurer, Don Hatcher.

Geoff C. Goddu
Department of Philosophy
University of Richmond
ggoddu@richmond.edu

From the President

The past months have seen several AILACT offices filled which had been open. Susana Nuccetelli and Gary Seay have become the program co-chairs for the APA Eastern Division, and Harvey Siegel and David Hitchcock have joined the Recruitment Committee. All of these appointments have been approved by the AILACT Board, and I want to thank the Appointments Committee, Maurice Finocchiaro, Dan Boone, and Mark Battersby for their work in identifying these members, who have now completed filling the roster of AILACT offices. On a sadder note, I have just learned of the death of Steven Norris. He contributed much to the study of critical thinking and its testing. I hope to have a memorial minute for him in the next issue of the AILACT Newsletter.

James Freeman
President, AILACT

A Very Short Reasoning Quiz

From December: You are the most senior instructor of a group of five instructors for advanced critical thinking. The group has received 100 final exams to grade. To divide up the exams, the group uses the following scheme. The highest ranking instructor, (that's you!) makes a proposal on how the exams should be divided amongst them. Then all the instructors (including the one who made the proposal) vote on the proposal. If the proposal gets 50% or more of the votes, it passes and the exams are divided up according to the proposal. Otherwise, the other instructors lock the one who made the proposal in with the graduate students grading the 1000+ introductory critical thinking exams, and repeat the process with the next most senior instructor. Each instructor will vote to minimize the number of exams he or she receives. However, any instructor will also vote against a current proposal if they justifiably believe they will get at most the same number of exams on a future proposal.

What is the fewest advanced critical thinking exams you could grade? (And not have to help grade any introductory exams, of course!)

Solution: I received just one response to this puzzle. After a brief clarification, the response correctly argued that zero exams is the fewest you could grade.

Suppose you are the fourth highest instructor and the top three have had their proposals rejected. Given that 50% approval is all that is required, you can propose 0 exams for you and 100 for the fifth highest instructor and the proposal will pass on your vote alone.

Now suppose you are the third highest instructor and the top two have had their proposals rejected. The fifth highest instructor will do better with any offer between 0 and 99. The fourth most will reject any proposal you make, since he or she will be guaranteed 0 exams if your proposal fails. Hence, you could propose 0 exams for yourself, any number between 0 and 99 for the fifth and the remaining exams between 100 and 1 for the fourth and the proposal would pass, since both you and the fifth instructor would vote for this proposal.

Now suppose you are the second highest instructor and the top instructor's proposal has been rejected. The third instructor will vote against any proposal since he or she can be guaranteed 0 in the next round. The fourth justifiably believes he or she will get at least 1 exam in the next round, so offering the fourth 0 exams will guarantee a vote for the proposal. Hence the second instructor can propose 0 for him or herself, 0 to 100 for the third, 0 for the second, and the remaining 100 to 0 exams to the fifth and be guaranteed the two votes necessary to get 50% of the votes. [Note that there are plenty of other possible proposals as well.]

You are the most senior instructor. The second instructor will vote against any proposal you make since he or she can be guaranteed 0 exams in the next round. The remaining three instructors all have situations in which they can be offered 0 exams in future rounds, but also have cases in successful proposals involving getting more than 0 exams. Hence, while they can all justifiably believe that they *might* get at most 0 exams on a future proposal, none of the remaining three can justifiably believe that they *will* get at most 0 exams on a future proposal. Hence, offering 0 exams to yourself, 100 to the second highest instructor and 0 to the remaining three instructors will generate four positive votes and so pass. (Again, multiple other proposals exist that will both pass and involve your getting 0 exams.)

New Puzzle: Escaping the 334th level of Hell

You, for whatever reason, are trapped in the 334th level of Hell. The warden of this level, Belphegor, has become bored and decides to play a game with 197 of the current occupants of this level of Hell, you among them. The 197 occupants will be lined up, facing the same direction along the line, so that each occupant can see all the occupants in front of him or her but none of those behind him or her. A hat will be placed on each occupant's head, and each hat has a 50% chance of being white, and a 50% chance of being black. (The hats are all independent – there aren't a fixed number of white or black hats). No one can see his or her own hat, but can see the hats of all those in front of him or her in line. Perpendicular to the line of occupants (and visible to all of them) is a line of 197 unlit brimstone torches. Starting at the back of the line, with the person who can see all the remaining 196 occupants, each occupant will be asked what colour his or her hat is and answer such that only Belphegor hears the answer. Upon hearing the answer Belphegor will, with a snap of his claws audible to everyone, light the corresponding torch if the occupant said 'white' and, with a growl audible to everyone leave the torch unlit if the occupant said 'black'. Furthermore, if the occupant gets the colour of his or her hat correct, he or she instantly goes up to the 333rd level of Hell; otherwise, the occupant is instantly sent down to the 335th level of Hell. Belphegor will then repeat this process with the next person in line. While the occupants can't communicate with each other in any other way once they are lined up and the hats are placed, they can discuss and agree upon a strategy for guessing beforehand.

Assuming that any agreed upon strategy is perfectly implemented, what is the maximum number of occupants who can be guaranteed escape to the 333rd level of Hell?

Answers (or guesses), along with any justification you care to offer, should be sent to Geoff Goddu at ggoddu@richmond.edu by May 25th, 2014.

AILACT @ APA

Eastern Division: Initial Program Announcement (Philadelphia, December, 2014)

AUTHOR-MEETS-CRITICS

Margaret Cuonzo's *Paradox*

CHAIR: Dave Benfield, Montclair State

CRITICS: Russell Dale, Lehman College/CUNY, and the Brecht Forum
Maureen Eckert, UMASS Dartmouth
Mark Zelcer, Independent Scholar

AUTHOR: Margaret Counzo, Long Island University

Central Division: Report on the Central Division AILACT meeting, February 28, 2014:

The meeting was dedicated to the topic "Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum--If So, How?" The session began on a skeptical note, with Don Hatcher (Baker University) arguing that the success of such a project was very unlikely at the university level, based on his extensive experience developing and supervising a three-course critical-thinking program for the general education program at Baker University. According to Don, if such an ideal program achieved only meager improvements in the students' CT skills after 18 years of intense efforts, there is little hope for getting better results elsewhere where there is less support for the teaching of CT skills.

Linda Behar-Horenstein (University of Florida) had a slightly more optimistic perspective, based on her survey of empirical studies on designing curriculum and course activities so as to cultivate CT skills. She discovered that infusing CT into the major was not effective compared to using a more dedicated course in CT that is supplemented with active learning and frequent practice. She also found that one cannot count on faculty across the disciplines to have the requisite CT skills to teach it; faculty must be assessed as stringently as the students are.

Paul Green (Mount St. Mary's College) countered the view that CT is only content specific and argued that generic CT skills can be taught across all disciplines. Such a project is simply an instantiation of the more general learning phenomenon of "far transfer." Viewing the task of teaching CT from this broader psychological perspective, Paul discussed numerous strategies for instructing and motivating students so as to enhance their development of generic CT skills and their disposition to apply those skills across all subject matters and life activities.

With Wes Jorde (Dakota County Technical College) as chair and Frank Fair (Sam Houston State University) as commentator both adding helpful comments and anecdotes, and with an enthusiastic audience adding comments from the view points of various disciplines, there was plenty of insightful discussion. A good time was had by all!

Call for Papers and Panel Discussions for the AILACT Group Session at the American Philosophical Association meeting, February 18-21, 2015, in St. Louis, Missouri, at the Ballpark Hilton:

Please send your suggestions on any topic in informal logic, critical thinking, or argumentation, its instruction, assessment, or application to various disciplines and world events. Ideas regarding a guest speaker, author-meets-critic, or a joint session with another Group Meeting are very welcome. Please forward this invitation to anyone else you think might be interested in submitting or attending.

Please send emails of interest by August 1, 2014. Papers and [confirmed] speaker/panelist lists should be submitted by September 30, 2014. Send papers as attachments in pdf or MS Word to the Program Director, Kevin Possin, kpossin@winona.edu<<mailto:kpossin@winona.edu>>.

Pacific Division: Upcoming session

AILACT session at the 2014 APA Pacific Division meeting, April 16 - 20, 2014, Westin Gaslamp Quarter, San Diego

Wednesday, April 16, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Speaker: Zenon Culverhouse (Stanford University)
“Critical Thinking the Age of MOOCs”

Commentator: Wanda Teays (Mount St. Mary’s College)

2014 AILACT Essay Prize Call for Submissions

The Association for Informal Logic and Critical Thinking (AILACT) invites submissions for the 2014 AILACT Essay Prize. This will be the tenth year in which the prize has been offered.

- Value: \$500 U.S.
- The prize-winning paper, and any “honourable mention” paper, will be considered for publication in *Informal Logic* upon the conditions listed below.*
- Papers related to the teaching or theory of informal logic or critical thinking, and papers on argumentation theory, will be considered for the prize.
- There are no restrictions on authorship. Authors need not be members of AILACT.
- Previously unpublished papers, and papers published or accepted for publication between January 1, 2011 and October 31, 2014, are eligible. Maximum length: 6,000 words.

- Entries will be assessed on the basis of their argument, scholarship, style, and importance to the field.
- The jury members for the 2014 AILACT essay prize, approved by the AILACT Board of Directors, are Sharon Bailin (Professor Emerita, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University), Alec Fisher (Department of Philosophy, University of East Anglia), and Larry Wright (Department of Philosophy, University of California, Riverside). The decision of the jury is final.
- To submit a paper, attach a PDF (preferred) or MS Word or RTF document to an email with AILACT ESSAY ENTRY on the “subject” line and send it to Derek Allen (derekallen@trinity.utoronto.ca) with a covering note giving your name and a mailing address. Please send the paper ready for blind-reviewing (the author not identified on the paper or file containing the paper or in the description of the document’s properties that is part of the file, and self-identifying references removed from the text, notes and references).
- There is a limit of one entry per author.
- The deadline for receipt of submissions is October 31, 2014. The winner will be announced by January 15, 2015. AILACT will publicize the name of the winner on its web site and at AILACT sessions held at APA divisional meetings in 2015.
- For further information about the essay prize, please contact Ben Hamby (hambyb@mcmaster.ca). For information about AILACT, visit our web site: <http://ailact.wordpress.com/>

*The prize-winning paper, and any “honourable mention” paper, will be eligible for consideration for publication in *Informal Logic* if it has not already been published or accepted or committed for publication elsewhere and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, and if the author consents to its consideration for publication in *Informal Logic*. The editors of *Informal Logic* will arrange for blind review of the paper if these conditions are met. The author will be expected to revise the paper in light of the reviewers’ suggestions, or to justify not doing so.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership Form The Association for Informal Logic and Critical Thinking

The Association (AILACT) was formed in 1983 to promote research on, and teaching and testing of, informal logic and critical thinking at all levels; to increase the extent and quality of such research, teaching, and testing; and to facilitate discussion among its members. AILACT sponsors sessions at each APA divisional meeting and other meetings; has a Web site, <http://ailact.wordpress.com/> that provides a wide variety of information about AILACT, informal logic, and critical thinking, and posts papers and other members' materials; has an e-mail discussion list for discussion of topics of interest to members; and holds an annual essay prize competition.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL FOR 2014

I would like to become a member of AILACT (US\$10 or equivalent)

I would like to renew my membership (US\$10 or equivalent)

I am a student and would like to become a member of AILACT (Fees waived)

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Institutional affiliation (if any): _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____ (Please print clearly. Much of our business is conducted electronically. However, you will not be disenfranchised if you do not have an e-mail address.)

Payment Options: **Check:** Make checks (US or Canadian only) payable to AILACT

Credit Card Payment: Please deduct US \$10 from

Credit Card: __Visa __MasterCard

Account Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

PayPal: log in to your account and send the payment to Don Hatcher's email address (dhatcher@bakeru.edu). PayPal will indicate that your payment is to AILACT.

What would you like to see AILACT do, or do better?

Mail to: Donald Hatcher, AILACT Treasurer, Department of Philosophy, Baker University, Baldwin City, KS 66006 USA. Email: <dhatcher@bakeru.edu>