

**ASSOCIATION FOR INFORMAL LOGIC
AND CRITICAL THINKING
(AILACT)
NEWSLETTER
APRIL 2017**

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From the Editor

I begin with a request from Derek Allen seeking information for AILACT's website:

AILACT's website provides a list of universities that offer one or more degree programs concerned with critical thinking and informal logic beyond a basic course; for each university information is given about the program(s) offered (<https://ailact.wordpress.com/service/degree-programs/>).

The listed universities are: University of Amsterdam; University of Illinois, UC; University of Massachusetts Boston; McMaster University; University of Nevada, Las Vegas; University of Northern Arizona; Simon Fraser University; a group of five universities in Spain; University of Windsor.

We are in the process of updating the list and the program information, and have learned that the University of Illinois, UC and Simon Fraser University no longer offer a degree program of the indicated type.

If you know of any university not included in the above list that offers one or more degree programs of that type, please send the name of the university and, if possible, a contact email address to derekallen@trinity.utoronto.ca.

In section 2, Jim Freeman provides a summary of AILACT board actions and discussions along with an update on the progress of the *Critical Thinking Book* project.

This year sees a changing of the guard in two out of the three APA program coordinators. Ben Hamby begins a term as the Eastern Division coordinator, Frank Fair as Central Division coordinator, and Peter Tan continues as the Pacific Division coordinator. In section 3, calls for papers for upcoming sessions, along with a report by outgoing coordinator Kevin Possin on the just finished 2017 Central Division meeting, are included.

This year's call for papers for the AILACT Essay Prize is printed below in section 4 or available at: <https://ailact.wordpress.com/essay-prize/>. Those interested in posting hard copies of this year's poster of the Essay Prize should get in touch with Ben Hamby, at bhamby@coastal.edu.

As usual, 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. Please note that new members are now required to register on AILACT's online Member Area website.

Finally, if you have any news relevant to the general AILACT membership, send it to me via email by August 1st, 2017 for potential inclusion in the August edition.

Geoff C. Goddu
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From the President

The AILACT Board held its Annual Meeting for 2017 on January 18. It first filled the three committee vacancies. Kevin Possin volunteered to join the CT Assessment Committee and the Board approved. Don Hatcher volunteered to join the Grant Proposal Writing Committee and the Board approved. The Appointments Committee had already put forward Ian Dove for the Textbook Review Committee, and the Board approved the nomination. The Board also approved charges to the Textbook Review Committee, the Recruitment Committee, and the Proposal Writing Committee. More about these charges in the December Newsletter.

Work is continuing on the Supertext Project to produce *The Critical Thinking Book* under the editorial direction of Ralph Johnson and Tony Blair, editors, with Michael Scriven as consulting editor and Pat Bondy, Frank Fair, Steve Patterson, and Dona Warren as the AILACT Advisory Committee. Ralph and Tony reported that they had developed a prospectus and circulated it widely, receiving suggestions and making modifications. The prospectus begins with a brief abstract of the project, which succinctly describes its contents. The project "is a collection of two kinds of material. In Part I there is a selection of model lesson plans, exercises and testing instruments designed for use in a stand-alone college-level critical thinking course. These cover all the principal topics usually found in such a course, as well as some topics in specialized areas not always covered. The lessons take up a week or two each, or 3-8 class hours. In Part II there is a selection of theoretical articles discussing the theoretical background of the material and skills covered in the lesson plans." The editors have turned their attention first to Part II on the theoretical background and to the general introduction. The hope is to have all the chapters in Part II in hand by June. The call for contributions should have gone out earlier this year.

Regarding the proposal to redesign the web site, which has been part of the innovation

proposals, Frank Zenker, our webmaster, advises against it, unless we have new high quality content. Adding new content is definitely in the interest of AILACT. Adding links to other web sites can increase visibility as will beefing up content in general. Derek Allen has suggested that the website could include an updated statement on graduate programs in the informal logic/critical thinking area and a collection of definitions of "informal logic." Also in connection with the website, Derek Allen has reported that there is a new web address for the Member Area of the site: <https://forum.ailact.org>. The Member Area links on the website have been updated with the new address allowing access to the Member Area from the website.

Otherwise, some Board members at the meeting expressed concern over how few AILACT members are paying dues. So let me remind you of the form at the back of this Newsletter. If you have not yet paid your dues for this year, please let receiving the Newsletter this time remind you to take care of it. In Fall 2017 we shall be having our biennial election of officers. Those who have not paid dues recently will not have the privilege of voting. You'll be hearing more about the elections over the summer.

James Freeman
AILACT President

AILACT @ APA

Eastern Division:

Call for Papers for the AILACT session at the APA East, in Savannah Georgia, from January 3-6, 2018.

Session topic: "Four decades of Informal Logic and Critical Thinking"

Session agenda: Square number anniversaries (especially those divisible by 10), make for obvious, but important opportunities to reflect on the past, present, and future. Therefore, on the occasion of AILACT's 40th anniversary, panel discussants will offer reflections of the "where have we come from, where are we now, where are we going" kind. Instead of full length papers, 4 panel participants will each deliver a brief 10-15 min presentation, followed by a 10-min audience discussion. Any presentation regarding the evolving state of practice of our specialization will be considered. Abstracts of proposals (200-300 words) should be emailed to me by August 31st.

For more information contact Ben Hamby, bhamby@coastal.edu.

Central Division:

Report on the Central Division AILACT Meeting, March 3, 2017, Kansas City, MO

The topic of the meeting was "Richard Paul's Impact on Critical Thinking."

"Richard Paul and the Philosophical Foundations of Critical Thinking", Donald Hatcher (Baker University)

Don began the session with a wonderful tribute piece, recounting the importance of Paul's views on CT, his impact on the incorporation of CT across the curriculum across the nation, and the cultivation of many of today's scholars in CT who attended and collaborated at Paul's annual conferences at Sonoma State, since they began in 1980.

"Transformational Instruction: How Teaching Paulian Critical Thinking Fosters Authentic, Fair-minded, Student Research", Amanda Hiner (Winthrop University)

Amanda then reported on how practicing Paul's analysis and methods of CT in her English composition courses helped her students transform their research writing from mere reports and position statements, guilty of confirmation biases, into robust argumentative papers that display more intellectual honesty by adopting positions with argumentative support, acknowledging and criticizing competing positions, in a sincere effort to pursue the truth. Hiner's students improved their CT skills using readings from Paul, Nosich, and Travis & Aronson's *Mistakes Were Made (but not by me)*, demonstrating enhanced intellectual honesty and self-awareness of their cognitive biases.

"Thinking Critically about Paul's Critical Thinking", Kevin Possin (Winona State University)

Kevin was a bit of a turd in the punch bowl at the Paul Party by critically reviewing Paul's analysis of CT as being minimal and unclear, his curriculum as being ultra-light-weight, his pedagogical recommendations as being unhelpful, and his expectations that instructors across the curriculum have the required expertise to teach CT across the curriculum simply by, e.g., attending Paul's conferences or on-campus workshops as being unjustifiable. While Paul provided his share of insights into the substance and nature of CT and some insights into how to cultivate the dispositions to employ CT skills, and while Paul deserves his share of credit for initiating the CT movement, he also deserves his share of the blame for CT's being plagued by a chaos of mushy definitions and curricula.

"Reflections on the Paul/Elder Approach to Critical Thinking", Frank Fair (Sam Houston State University)

Frank, the consummate diplomat, sympathized with some of Possin's criticisms regarding Paul's analysis of CT and lack of pedagogical materials, but Frank was also impressed by Amanda Hiner's and Robert Niewohner's perspectives on the practical uses of the Paulian approach: Hiner's application in the classroom and Niewohner's application in organizational contexts, especially ones involving teams, where Paul's "elements of thought" and "intellectual standards" provide a vocabulary of concepts that allow one to lead discussions by formulating an array of relevant questions. Using Keith Stanovich's conceptualization of rationality, Frank offered a way to situate the various perspectives on Paul's work, proposing that Hiner and Niewohner were giving people "an education in caring" about "intellectual standards" and reflecting on the "elements of thought."

Discussions continued long after the meeting, as participants adjourned for drinks. At that time, David Wright (Sam Houston State University), our Chair, relayed a summary of his research on the Dunning-Kruger effect, which in essence is the tendency for one's cognitive competence to

be inversely propositional to one's confidence in that competence. While this has been amply demonstrated in the psychological literature regarding various subject matters, David's research indicates that the effect is even stronger in his students regarding their competence in CT.

In sum, it was a lively and enlightening evening, if I do say so myself--Kevin Possin, Retiring Central Program Director (2007-16)

For information about upcoming AILACT sessions at the Central APA, please contact the new Central Program coordinator, Frank Fair, PSY_FKF@SHSU.EDU.

Pacific Division:

Currently underway, April 12-15 at the Westin Seattle. AILACT will have an Affiliated Group Session Program at the Pacific APA, Saturday, April 15 from 6-8pm, featuring Stephen Phillips' paper "Critical Reasoning in the Service of Knowledge: Nyaya According to the Nyaya School of Classical Indian Philosophy." Phillips is professor of Philosophy and Asian Studies at UT Austin. Commentators will be Purushottama Bilimoria, professor of Philosophy at UC Berkely, and Anand Vaidya, professor of Philosophy and director of the Center of Comparative Philosophy at SJSU. Should be a good discussion and of interest to anyone trying to diversify the Critical Thinking curriculum.

Call for Papers for the 2018 AILACT session at the Pacific Division APA.

I hope to schedule a 3-hour panel regarding current best practices for teaching critical thinking and informal logic to underrepresented students. This can include teaching foreign students, experience in teaching critical thinking and/or informal logic in foreign countries; instructing first generation college students, non-traditional students, or students with disabilities. I'm hoping for a panel of 5-6 participants.

Please contact Peter Tan at ptan@msmu.edu

2017 AILACT Essay Prize Call for Submissions

The Association for Informal Logic and Critical Thinking (AILACT) invites submissions for the 2017 AILACT Essay Prize. This will be the 13th 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, 2014 and September 1, 2017 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 2017 AILACT essay prize, approved by the AILACT Board of Directors, are Marianne Doury, Researcher at the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris; Geoffrey Goddu, Professor of Philosophy, University of Richmond; Christopher Tindale, Professor of Philosophy, University of Windsor. 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). Each page after the first should be numbered.
- There is a limit of one entry per author.
- ***The deadline for receipt of submissions is September 1, 2017.*** The winner will be announced by December 15, 2017. AILACT will publicize the name of the winner on its web site and at AILACT sessions held at APA divisional meetings in 2017 and 2018.
- For further information about the essay prize, please contact Ben Hamby (bhamby@coastal.edu). For information about AILACT, visit our web site: <http://ailact.mcmaster.ca/>

*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.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR INFORMAL LOGIC & CRITICAL THINKING

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL FOR 2017

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.

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: _____

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.

New members: To complete the process of becoming a member of AILACT, you will need to register on AILACT's password-protected Member Area website: <https://forum.ailact.org>. Click on "Register" and complete the listed fields. (These include "User name" and "Password." Make up a user name and a password.) Click on "Register." When your registration has been validated, you will receive an email saying that this has been done and explaining how to enter a profile for yourself on the site.

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