

**ASSOCIATION FOR INFORMAL LOGIC
AND CRITICAL THINKING
(AILACT)
NEWSLETTER
APRIL 2018**

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From the Editor

Greetings, friends and colleagues! I'm very happy to be starting as Newsletter Editor for AILACT. In this issue, you'll find a statement from our new President, a report on this year's Central APA session, information and a call for proposals for next year's Eastern APA session, and a call for submissions for this year's essay prize.

A Membership Form is also 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.

If you have any news, events, or calls for papers that would be of interest to the AILACT readership, please send me details by August 1st for potential inclusion in the next newsletter.

Pat Bondy
patrbondy@gmail.com

From the President

This is my first letter since I was elected as President of AILACT. So, first of all, I would like to thank the Nominating Committee and the members of AILACT for their confidence. I also wish to thank the Nominating Committee for assembling a great board of directors-at-large to work with: Steven Patterson (as Vice President), Donald Hatcher (Treasurer), James Freeman (as Immediate Past President), Dona Warren, Mark Weinstein, John Casey, Gabrijela Kišicek,

Michael Scriven, Dima Mohammed, and Maurice Finocchiaro. Finally, I wish to thank this board of outstanding scholars for joining efforts to make AILACT an even more vigorous endeavor.

In January, all the members of the Appointments Committee (Chair: Maurice Finocchiaro, Dima Mohammed and Dan Boone) agreed to serve one more term. Since then, they have been very busy and done a great job finding excellent substitutes for a few vacancies: Steve Oswald is our new webmaster, Gilbert Plumer is the new publicist for the AILACT Essay Prize and Jeff Buechner is the new AILACT Program Organizer for the APA Eastern Division

As you know, AILACT is the only international association in our field that works as an association proper. On the other hand, our field is no longer a “promising young star”, but a consolidated discipline that needs a continued impulse to get the place that it deserves in academia. In the forthcoming weeks, we are going to launch a debate in our AILACT-D distribution list in order to collectively decide how to make AILACT a key tool to this end. I hope to count on all of you!

With warm regards,

Lilian Bermejo-Luque
President, AILACT

AILACT @ APA

Eastern Division

The 2019 Eastern Division group session will be a round-table discussion (perhaps 6 speakers) of the following topic:

There are two important tasks in critically assessing arguments: (i) to provide a diagram or map of the inferential structure of the argument and (ii) to determine how well the premises of the argument support its conclusion. Many texts in critical thinking provide little guidance for (ii), other than to taxonomize arguments into deductive, inductive, and fallacious. This material is certainly important and useful, but it does not provide a general method for determining the support of any argument (of any kind). Of course, there are arguments that there cannot be an inductive logic—and so there cannot be any means of formalizing the criteria for good inductive reasoning. It is not clear, though, that these arguments would rule out an informal method for assessing inductive support. The question, then, is twofold: (i) what method do you use in determining how well the premises of an argument support its conclusion, and (ii) how do you teach this method in a course in critical thinking?

Each speaker will talk for approximately 20 minutes, after which questions from the audience will be addressed.

Please submit proposals for talks on this topic to Jeffrey Buechner, at buechner@newark.rutgers.edu.

Central Division

Report on the Central Division AILACT Meeting, February 23, 2018, Chicago, IL

The topic of the meeting was “Critical Thinking and Recent Psychological Findings” and the session was chaired by David Wright (Sam Houston State University).

The meeting featured the following speakers and titles:

Maralee Harrell (Carnegie Mellon University), “Incorporating Psychology and Data Science into Critical Thinking”

Jeffrey Maynes (St. Lawrence University), “Critical Reasoning, Cognitive Bias, and Ecological Rationality”

Haavard Koppang (BI–Norwegian Business School), “Critical Thinking and Groups: Group Argumentation Norms Are Relevant to Argument Evaluation”

Jack Lyons (University of Arkansas) and Barry Ward (University of Arkansas), “Dual System Psychology and *An Empirically Informed Introduction to Critical Thinking*”

A common theme from the presentations and discussions was the importance of connecting empirical findings in the domains of judgment and decision-making to critical thinking research and pedagogy. While each presenter had a different focus relevant to these concerns (e.g. Jeffrey Maynes highlighted the importance of developing an empirically informed conception of intellectual virtues in teaching reasoning classes, and Haavard Koppang explored the intricate dynamics of reasoning in groups), all showed different ways in which critical thinking instructors and researchers can have a nuanced and critical engagement with these areas of research. Maralee Harrell discussed how she makes thoughtful use in her classes of Cathy O’Neil’s recent book *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* in order to discuss how data science is relevant to students’ daily lives. In the final session, Jack Lyons and Barry Ward demonstrated how they use variations on tests like the Wason selection task to introduce students to the ways in which context informs our decision-making processes. Each session’s question and answer period included references to recent books and articles on these and related topics, including work from Thomas Gilovich, Hugo Mercier, Dan Sperber, Gerd Gigerenzer, Philip Tetlock and others.

Pacific Division

AILACT presentations went very well with our panel (which was minus Darin because of a family emergency). The issue of Critical Thinking in the age of Fake News was particularly timely and enlivened the panel discussion and audience comments as well.

Planning for next year’s session is well underway; details will be available in August. For information, please contact Peter Tan, at ptan@msmu.edu.

Essay Prize in Informal Logic/Critical Thinking/Argumentation Theory

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Association for Informal Logic and Critical Thinking (AILACT) invites submissions for the 2018 AILACT Essay Prize. This will be the 14th 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, 2015 and September 1, 2018 are eligible. Maximum length: 6,000 words (exclusive of footnotes and references).
- Entries will be assessed on the basis of their argument, scholarship, style, and importance to the field. There is a limit of one entry per author.
- The jury members for the 2018 AILACT essay prize, approved by the AILACT Board of Directors, are Marianne Doury, Researcher at the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris; Christopher Tindale, Professor of Philosophy, University of Windsor; David Sherry, Department of Philosophy, Northern Arizona University. The jury's decision 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.
- ***The deadline for receipt of submissions is September 1, 2018.*** The winner will be announced by December 15, 2018. AILACT will publicize the name of the winner on its web site and at AILACT sessions held at APA divisional meetings in 2019.
- For further information about the essay prize, contact Gilbert Plumer (plumerge@gmail.com). For information about AILACT, visit our web site: <https://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.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR INFORMAL LOGIC & CRITICAL THINKING

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL FOR 2018

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>