

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

April 2019

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## From the Editor

Hello all,

In this issue you'll find a statement from the President regarding the eagerly-anticipated new volume, *Studies in Critical Thinking*. Following that, you will also find a description of the volume provided by its editor, J. Anthony Blair. Many thanks and congratulations to the editor and contributors for their very fine work!

Details about the recent AILACT @APA sessions are included below, as well as some plans for next year's events.

There is a new Call for Papers for the AILACT Essay Prize for 2019 up on the AILACT website. A copy of it is included below. Deadline: September 1<sup>st</sup>.

As always, there is a Membership Form at the end of this document. 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.

In case you haven't seen it yet, here is Cate Hundleby's recent TEDx presentation on the meaning, purpose, and methods of argument and argumentation: <https://youtu.be/XXKu5Cqijnc>. Nicely done, Cate!

Finally, please send me details regarding any news, events, or calls for papers that would be of interest to the AILACT readership by August 1<sup>st</sup>, for potential inclusion in the next newsletter.

Best,  
Pat Bondy  
[patrick.bondy@wichita.edu](mailto:patrick.bondy@wichita.edu)

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### **From the President**

It is my pleasure to announce that one of AILACT's most expected projects, the Critical Thinking Resource Book, has recently been accomplished: *Studies in Critical Thinking*, J. Anthony Blair (ed.) has been published by the Windsor Studies of Argumentation (WSIA) series, and is available as an Ebook free in the link provided below.

Many people are to be acknowledged for their work in this project. Anthony Blair has done an invaluable labour as leader and editor, joint with, Ralph Johnson, the consulting editor, Michael Scriven, and the members of the AILACT advisory committee: Patrick Bondy, Frank Fair, Steve Patterson and Dona Warren. To all of them, thanks so much for this important step towards the consolidation of Critical Thinking.

Lilian Bermejo-Luque  
President of AILACT

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### ***Studies in Critical Thinking***

The "Supertext" that was discussed by an AILACT committee and later at the 2016 OSSA conference has finally been appeared, called *Studies in Critical Thinking*, edited by Tony Blair, and published as No. 8 in the Windsor Studies in Argumentation Ebook series. The 473-page book is available free on-line as an Ebook, or chapters can be downloaded free. An inexpensive paperback can be ordered from Amazon.

<https://windsor.scholarsportal.info/omp/index.php/wsia/index>

Designed for use by critical thinking course instructors (and their bright students), the book's premise is that critical thinking deserves both imaginative teaching and serious theoretical attention. *Studies in Critical Thinking* assembles an all-star cast to serve both. Besides five exercises teachers may copy or adapt, by Derek Allen, Tracy Bowell, Justine Kingsbury, Jan Albert van Laar, Sharon Bailin and Mark Battersby, there are chapters on: what critical thinking is, the nature of argument, definition, using the web, evaluation, argument schemes, abduction, generalizing, fallaciousness, logic and critical thinking, computer-aided argument mapping, appealing to sources and experts and more—by such illustrious scholars as John Woods, Sharon Bailin, Douglas Walton, Sally Jackson, Dale Hample, Robert Ennis, Beth Innocenti, David Hitchcock, Christopher Tindale, G. C. Goddu, Alec Fisher, Michael Scriven, Martin Davies, Ashley Barnett, Tim van Gelder, and Mark Battersby.

## **AILACT @ APA**

### **Eastern Division**

The topic of the AILACT Group Session at the Eastern APA on January 8, 2019 in NYC was: “Methods to Determine How Well the Premises of an Argument Support Its Conclusion.” The format was a panel of six speakers—Susana Nuccetelli (St. Cloud State University), David Godden (Michigan State University), Alina Reznitskaya (Montclair State University), Phil Washburn (New York University), James Freeman (Hunter College, CUNY) and Jeff Buechner (Rutgers University-Newark and The Saul Kripke Center, CUNY GC) and the chair—Sarah Donovan (Wagner College). The discussion was lively and interesting and continued beyond the three hours allotted for the session. For the first time, the APA charged each group session (\$150) for the use of projection equipment. In 2020 AILACT will not use projection equipment for the Eastern APA group session.

### **Proposed topic for AILACT group meeting 2020 Eastern APA**

#### **Argument diagrams: what are they and how should they be taught?**

Many textbooks in critical thinking feature the topic of argument diagrams and counsel students in their use. There is evidence that those who diagram arguments achieve a better understanding of arguments, *ceteris paribus*, than those who do not. Argument diagrams are said to capture the inferential structure of arguments—revealing that structure and bypassing details of the argument that may have nothing to do with it. This raises a question—just what is the inferential structure of an argument, and can it be diagrammed? There are many inferential relations between the sentences in an argument, but not all of them should be represented in a diagram, since some of those inferential relations may have nothing to do with the argument. Should each sentence in an argument be represented in an argument diagram? Or should the argument diagram capture inferential relations between generalizations of the sentential content of sets of sentences? Must a student understand the intentions of the arguer in order to satisfactorily diagram their argument? Should teaching argument diagrams—if it can be satisfactorily taught—be limited to critical thinking courses?

Format: a panel discussion consisting of 4 or 5 speakers. If you are interested in being a panelist, please e-mail Jeff Buechner [buechner@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:buechner@newark.rutgers.edu)

### **Central Division**

The AILACT session at the 2019 APA Central Division meeting in Denver was held on Friday night, April 22, from 7:30-10:30. The title of the session was “Critical Thinking in the ‘Post Truth’ Era: The Need for ‘Re-enlightenment.’” The topic that animated the discussions in the session was summed up this way:

*Increasingly there is reason to be concerned about the quality of our public discourse, and so there are calls for “Enlightenment Now” (Pinker) and worries about “Post Truth” (McIntyre) and “Truth Decay” (Kavanaugh and Rich). What contribution can those of us involved in critical thinking education make in these circumstances?*

We had a lively session, led off by Lee McIntyre who commented on the notion of “post-truth” and, among other things, shared with us his experiences while attending a national conference of the true believing members of the Flat Earth Society. One of Lee’s main concerns is

contemporary challenges to scientific findings, challenges not based on new evidence, but rather on a difference in attitude toward the truth and how to determine it. His new book, *The Scientific Attitude: Defending Science from Denial, Fraud, and Pseudoscience* (MIT Press, 2019), discusses the topic in greater detail.

Next up was Jon Haber. Jon was a successful tech entrepreneur, and that success enabled him to pursue his passion for education by working as an educational researcher and writer in the field of technology-enabled learning and teacher education. One of his recent research projects was the “Degree of Freedom One Year BA,” which involved trying to learn the equivalent of a BA in just twelve months using only Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and other forms of free learning. One thing Jon focuses on is the need for critical thinking for citizens, and he has written a “how to book,” the *Critical Voter* (2016), on the subject, a book which covers such fundamental topics as modes of persuasion, argumentation, and information literacy.

The third presenter was Ted Greenhalgh who also was a successful tech entrepreneur. Ted related how he used that experience and his experience with gaining a Ph. D. in environmental science to create challenging critical thinking assignments for his students at UNLV. Many of the assignments involve team problem solving and feature real world connections with the Las Vegas environment. His 2017 textbook *Knowing: Critical Thinking in the Modern Era* gives a good introduction to his perspective.

There were a number of questions and comments from the small but spirited audience, and discussions continued over drinks after the official end of the session at 10:30.

Frank Fair  
Session Organizer

### **Pacific Division**

Our two presentation teams presented two separate approaches to critical thinking that overlapped in one important regard: they both noted the need for a new model of critical thinking that is not ‘logic lite’ and not based on deduction, a model that both teams identified as being related to critical thinking more by accident rather than by course design. Sharon Bailin and Mark Battersby presented their dialectical inquiry based approach, and Neal Tognazzini and Robert Sanchez presented their interrogative model, which is the basis for the 3rd edition of Larry Wright's text that they are developing. The dialectical inquiry model comes with a useful discussion rubric meant to apply critical thinking techniques to any topic, while the interrogative model stresses the internal structure of arguments and focuses on analytical reading and the importance of the context of the argument. Conveniently, neither model obviates the other, and the strongest points of both can be incorporated into either.

Attendance was light, but we made a virtue of that and directly engaged with the audience.

\*\*Editor's note: Peter Tan's term as Program Chair for AILACT @APA Pacific expires this year. Many thanks to Peter for his good work these past years!\*\*

## 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 2019 AILACT Essay Prize. This will be the 15th year in which the prize has been offered.**

- Value: \$700 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, 2016 and September 1, 2019 are eligible. Maximum length: 6,000 words (exclusive of footnotes and references). Authors may not submit the same paper, or a similar paper, more than once following the first submission.
- 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 2019 AILACT essay prize, approved by the AILACT Board of Directors, are Marianne Doury, Researcher at the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris; Hans Hansen, Professor of Philosophy, University of Windsor; David Sherry, Professor of Philosophy, Northern Arizona University. The jury's decision is final.
- To submit a paper, attach a PDF 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](mailto:derekallen@trinity.utoronto.ca)) with a covering note giving your name, a mailing address, and the word-length of your paper exclusive of footnotes and references. 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, 2019.*** The winner will be announced by December 15, 2019. AILACT will publicize the name of the winner on its web site and at AILACT sessions held at APA divisional meetings in 2020.
- For further information about the essay prize, contact Gilbert Plumer ([plumerge@gmail.com](mailto: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 2019

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.

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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](mailto: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](mailto:dhatcher@bakeru.edu)>