

**ASSOCIATION FOR INFORMAL LOGIC
AND CRITICAL THINKING
(AILACT)
NEWSLETTER
April 2023**

Contents

- 1. From the Editor**
- 2. From the President**
- 3. AILACT @APA**
- 4. Membership**

From the Editor

Greetings, Newsletter readers!

In this issue you'll find a statement from the President, updates on some of the AILACT @APA sessions, and a Membership form for 2023.

Any news or items of interest to the AILACT readership can be sent to me by August 1st for inclusion in the August Newsletter.

Best,
Pat Bondy
patrick.bondy@wichita.edu

PS. Here's a fun nonsense riddle to try to tease some sense out of:

Why is a raven like a writing desk?
—Mad Hatter, in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Any interesting or entertaining or Carrollian answers? Send them to me for inclusion in the next Newsletter! Here's one to start:

Because no raven is shaped like a non-raven-shaped writing desk!

From the President

Dear Members,

The Board of Directors has met twice since my last report in the December *Newsletter*. But I regret that we have made modest progress on only a couple of our projects, with other projects suffering major setbacks.

1. We continued to work on hosting the monthly **AILACT speaker series**. Dona Warren is organizing the facilities at her university and has the first presenter lined up: a representative from ThinkerAnalytix will discuss the latest research on using argument diagramming to teach critical-thinking skills and argumentation. The AILACT speaker series is open to various formats, such as lectures, panels, and debates. Likewise, a wide variety of topics is encouraged, both theoretical and pedagogical, in critical thinking, informal logic, and argumentation theory. It's a perfect way to share and test ideas. If you would like to be a presenter or panelist, please contact Dona [dwarren@uwsp.edu], Frank Fair [PSY_FKF@shsu.edu], or me [kpossin@winona.edu].

2. The **AILACT Website** needs updating, as I detailed in my last report. Unfortunately, our Webmaster of five years, Steve Oswald, is retiring. So we desperately need a new Webmaster, who knows a bit about the WordPress platform or a similarly basic content management system. WordPress is very user friendly, and Steve promises to help you become familiar with the AILACT site until you are comfortable flying solo. This is a vital service you would be providing for the Association. So please consider making this contribution, or perhaps volunteering someone you think would do a nice job.

3. Board Member John Casey investigated creating an **AILACT Facebook** page. After a very interesting discussion, the Board decided against creating such a page: Monitoring the page would be onerous in these times of Internet trolls. As old school as email is, our AILACTD-L discussion list is still serviceable for announcing research, posting articles and critical reviews, and making announcements about publications and conferences, for example. AILACTD-L was our platform for some memorable debates and protests, not too many years ago. And it can still serve that function today. All we need to do is post and reply. So please do!

4. Thank you to those of you who paid your **Membership dues**. And an extra thank you to you fine folks who also added a donation. However, there are still too many members who have yet to pay. Please take a moment to do so—directions are on the Membership Form at the end of this *Newsletter*. And please recruit your colleagues to join. Without funds from our members, we can't maintain our current level of support for activities such as the Essay Prize Award and the divisional meetings at the American Philosophical Association. So please chip in.

As you can see, we have some challenges. So please consider helping the Association in any way you can.

Please contact me with any questions or suggestions. Wishing you the very best,

Kevin

AILACT @ APA

Eastern Division

2023 AILACT Eastern APA meeting in Montreal January 5th, 7-10 PM

Social justice and argumentation

What does argumentation have to do with social justice? In answering this question, there are (at least) two basic matters that can be addressed. The first concerns how argumentation can be used to discuss and evaluate problems of social justice. That, in turn, divides into two areas of concern: (a) which specific problems of social justice can be addressed by the methods of argumentation? Here specific problems of social justice need to be described and how problems each raises can be evaluated by methods of argumentation. (b) Can argumentation help to define and clarify problems of social justice?

The second matter concerns the nature of argumentation and its effects and their relation to social justice. What features of argumentation either impede or promote socially just environments? Are they intrinsic to argumentation? If they impede social justice, what are the alternatives? If they promote social justice, how do they do it?

Chair

Lloyd Carr, Rivier University

Panelists

Catherine E. Hundleby, University of Windsor

Phyllis Rooney, Oakland University

Joseph Forte, Rivier University

Maira Howes, Trent University

Jeff Buechner, Rutgers University-Newark and The Saul Kripke Center, CUNY, The Graduate Center

The talks:

Catherine E. Hundleby, Fallacies and Social Bias

Phyllis Rooney, Argumentation as Social Practice

Joseph Forte, Teaching Informal Logic in a Contemporary Moral Issues Course

Maira Howes, Interpersonal Arguing, Social Biases, and Heuristic Adversariality

Jeff Buechner, Social Justice and Argumentation

Attendance was sparse, but the discussion was lively and informative. Some of the panelists believe attendance was sparse because the session was 7-10 PM, (rather than sometime between 9 and 5 PM). I scheduled the session for the evening because I thought it might conflict with the APA sessions during the day.

For the slides of Joe Forte's talk, send an e-mail to jforte@rivier.edu.

For the slides of Jeff Buechner's talk, send an e-mail to buechner@newark.rutgers.edu.

The topic for the 2024 AILACT session at the Eastern APA meeting in New York City is:

Are there teachable critical thinking skills that cannot be learned by Chatbots?

A worry for those who teach critical thinking is whether ChatGPT can learn all of the teachable skills for their course so that students could use ChatGPT to do their work for them. That would not happen if those teachable skills could not be learned by ChatGPT. Are there any such skills—say teaching students how to diagram argument structure or making simple inferences from facts and definitions? Are there teachable critical thinking skills that can be learned by both students and ChatGPT and ways for the student to use ChatGPT to augment those skills?

If you are interested in being a panelist for this session, please e-mail Jeff Buechner buechner@newark.rutgers.edu

Central Division

Check the August Newsletter for updates on the Central Division meetings.

Pacific Division

At the Pacific APA, held in San Francisco, we heard from two speakers (originally three that became two due to travel and funding problems):

Anthony, A.J. Kreider (Miami Dade College), "False Disjunction Revisited: A Reply to Tomić"
Barry M. Ward (University of Arkansas), "Mill's Methods and Analogical Inference"

AJ had some long-standing thoughts about disjunction, about the relationship between false disjunctive syllogisms and false dilemmas, for many years. When Taeda Tomić published "The Distinction Between False Dilemma and False Disjunctive Syllogism" [*Informal Logic* 41 (4), 2021] he was moved to write about them, concerned that she didn't take the distinction quite far enough and slightly missed the mark on unsound disjunctive syllogisms. Distinguishing between when the disjunctive premise is straightforwardly false and when it is incomplete provides more for consideration of different errors in reasoning. Barry argued that Mill's Methods can be reasonably construed as applications of analogical inference, first an argument *to* analogy and then an argument *by* analogy. With a clear articulation of the inferential steps taken in the method of agreement and the method of difference we can see connections between Mill's Methods and Inference to the Best Explanation.

We had the last session of the meeting, so it was a small – but engaged – group. There might be a little new energy for some west coast activities of the AILACT. But we could really use some help connecting with more west coast members.

Please contact Carolyn Cusick, ccusick@csufresno.edu, with ideas or requests for the 2024 Pacific APA meeting being held in Portland, Oregon March 20-23, 2024.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR INFORMAL LOGIC & CRITICAL THINKING
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL FOR 2023

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)

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: _____ CVC code _____

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: your first name, your last name, your email address, your user name (which you make up; don't use your email address), your password (which you make up), and "repeat password". Click on "Register." When you have registered, send an email to derekallen@trinity.utoronto.ca saying that you have done so. He will validate your registration and send you instructions for entering 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