To be especially clear, students and teachers of debate need to have a common understanding of concepts that are central to debate. Some concepts have common meanings used in ordinary language and others do not. The following sections are intended to ensure that all readers of this text share a common understanding of some of the most important concepts.

**Two Sets of Related Concepts**

A clear understanding of key concepts is necessary prior to a more in-depth discussion of the general process of debating. Sometimes people use terms and concepts loosely and such lax use of those terms leaves debaters and judges alike confused. Persuasion and debate are two of the most important concepts that need to be defined. These two constitute the first of the two sets of related concepts. The second set of concepts includes arguments and argumentation.

**Persuasion and Debate**

The first of these two sets of related concepts is persuasion and debate. Persuasion and debate have much in common yet they are different in certain ways. Persuasion is a symbolic process that people use to convince others to change their position (or sometimes to reinforce
their own current position) about some issue, idea, or action. Debate is a process in which at least two persons who are engaged in some kind of a conflict over ideas or actions use persuasion to try to resolve their disagreement.

Persuasion is the broader of these two related concepts. All persuasion does not include debate but all debate involves persuasion. Consider for instance, the case of a corporation advertising a product to the general public. Apple, for example, tries to convince consumers to purchase the iPhone, the iPod, or a Macintosh computer. Such an advertising campaign is clearly an example of persuasion, but hardly can be considered a debate. On the other hand, if a lawyer tries to convince a judge that her client is not guilty of a crime, the lawyer is directly engaged with another lawyer in a conflict of ideas and thus the two lawyers are in a debate. These two lawyers are trying to persuade the judge to resolve the disagreement (guilty or not guilty) in their favor. So, persuasion sometimes, but not always includes what is called debate but sometimes includes symbolic acts that are not in the category of debate.

Both persuasion and debate take place in a variety of situations using different forms. Situations that are described as persuasion include circumstances such as a wife trying to persuade her husband to take a holiday, a child trying to persuade a parent to purchase a toy, or a lawyer trying to persuade a judge that a client is guilty (or innocent) of a charge. Although all of these three examples can be accurately described as persuasion, only the example of the lawyer and the judge can reasonably be described as a debate because it involves two persons engaged in a conflict of ideas. Debate always includes persuasion, however persuasion frequently exists outside of debate.

In addition to existing in a variety of situations, persuasion comes in many forms. For example, narrative can be used as a form of persuasion. An advocate may narrate a story to convince someone else to behave in ways that are prescribed in the story. A child trying to convince a parent to purchase a toy might tell a story about a friend who already has a similar toy. The story might include how the friend not only has fun with the toy but how the toy makes the friend seem important to other friends. Another example of persuasion involves the use of an extended metaphor. In such an extended metaphor, a person talks about a familiar example to convince the other person of the wisdom of an idea or course of action. A wife talking to her husband about a holiday that the two of them took years ago to reveal why they ought to take a holiday this year would constitute an example of an extended metaphor. So, narrative and metaphor are just two examples of persuasion—argument (another key concept to be explained later) is another. As will be shown in the upcoming section, argument is the central form of persuasion that is used in what will be called debate.

Thus, both persuasion and debate exist in various situations and use different forms. One of the key features that generally differentiate persuasion in general from debate in particular is the presence of an external adjudicator. When two parties engaged in a conflict are unable to reach an agreement, those two take the conflict to an adjudicator who is not a party to the conflict. That requirement may be voluntary in that the two persons agree to seek adjudication of their conflict, or it may be compulsory whereby the two parties are compelled by law to seek adjudication. In either event, the two parties must take their positions to an
adjudicator who has or is given the right to decide which position should prevail. Debate is the process that the two parties use to convince the adjudicator that their position is best.

In summary, persuasion is a symbolic process where by people try to convince others to change their ideas about ideas, issues, or actions. Debate is one kind of persuasion, but debate is limited to situations where at least two participants are directly engaged with one another about some conflict. In most cases, debates include external adjudicators whose role is to decide the outcome of the conflict. Thus, persuasion is the broader of the two concepts and debate is one kind of persuasion.

Arguments and Argumentation

Argumentation can be defined as the process whereby an advocate uses arguments to advocate a position. During the process of argumentation, a person uses what are called arguments to communicate their views about the positions they advocate. Arguments includes specific claims, along with their supporting material, that a debater introduces during the process of argumentation. Specifically, when debaters want to convince an adjudicator to accept their side of an issue, they do so by engaging the process of argumentation, specifically by using arguments.

The process of argumentation also includes other elements such as refutation, delivery, etc. The illustration below shows the argumentation process along with some other elements included in the process. Those other elements of the argumentation process will be discussed later.

The fact that arguments constitute the basic tools of persuasion used in debate does not negate the usefulness of narrative, metaphor or other processes of persuasion. As the above illustration shows, narratives and metaphors can be a part of the argumentation process and, as will be discussed in later chapters, can be used as resources to support particular arguments. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the process that a debater engages to construct basic arguments when engaging in argumentation to convince an adjudicator of the wisdom of that debater’s position.
Components of Arguments

In subsequent chapters, this text will introduce four components of an argument. For the purposes of this chapter, those four components have been simplified and reduced to two components: a claim and supporting material. Fundamentally, an argument consists of a claim that is substantiated by some kind of supporting material: evidence, explanation, logic, another claim, etc. The following diagram illustrates that basic idea of an argument.

A claim is the main point or thesis of your argument. Chapter 15 will identify several different kinds of claims. However, for the purposes of this chapter, a claim is any controversial statement that a debater uses to convince the adjudicator that his or her position is worthwhile. Examples include statements like “capital punishment is immoral,” “China’s one-child policy is obsolete,” “A university education is unimportant,” etc. Each of these statements can become part of an argument.

Kinds of Claims

In Chapter 15, this text will differentiate four kinds of claims: descriptive, definitional, associational, and evaluative. Descriptive and definitional claims are about individual objects and concepts. A descriptive claim might state a way to look at a certain object or concept as it conforms to observed or observable reality. For instance, “Human development is best described by a process of evolution” is such a descriptive claim. A debater supporting this descriptive claim might argue that observation of the fossil record supports the idea that humans developed from other species. A definitional claim usually states that some word or group of words is an appropriate way to define an object or concept. For instance, “Members of ISIS (Islamic State in Syria and Iraq) are terrorists. This definitional claim addresses the question of whether the word terrorist is appropriately applied to ISIS. The preceding kinds of claims are about how we describe and define certain objects and concepts. Associational claims are about how certain objects and concepts are related to one another. Among the most common kinds of associational claims are claims about relationships of cause and effect, similarity, and coexistence. A claim of cause and effect implies that one object or concept is the cause (or effect) of another. A claim of similarity suggests that two or more objects or concepts are similar (or dissimilar) to one another. A claim of coexistence states
simply that two or more objects exist together in the same time and space. A claim of evaluation suggests that one or more objects or concepts possess some positive or negative value. Evaluative claims are the most common kinds of claims used in debate. As will be discussed later, descriptive, definitional, and associational claims are frequently used to support evaluative claims.

Because they are the most common kinds of claims used in educational debate, this chapter will focus on claims of evaluation. Claims of evaluation frequently are of three types: claims that order values, claims that assign values to objects or concepts, and claims that evaluate policies or actions.

Claims that order values typically state that one value is more important than another, for instance, “The value of community is more important than individualism.” This claim places the two values in a hierarchy so that when the two values come into conflict, one is considered more important than the other.

Other evaluative claims assign values to objects or concepts, for instance, “China’s ancient culture was among the most enlightened in human history.” Rather than simply ordering values into a hierarchy, this kind of claim applies certain values to objects or concepts in such a way to suggest that the object is good or bad.

The third kind of evaluative claim advocates that some action or policy should be undertaken. This claim is similar to assigning a value to an object or concept, but is specific to actions or policies. Thus, a claim of action or policy ordinarily says that some actor should engage in some action: A should do B. For instance, Western countries should adopt the principles of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Because evaluative claims are the most common, and, some may say, the most interesting, this chapter will focus exclusively on those kinds of claims. The next section will discuss two of the means by which evaluative claims are supported.

**Claims and Supporting Material**

To be an argument, the claim needs some kind of support. A statement without any kind of support is merely an assertion. When support for the claim is added to the claim itself, it becomes an argument. As stated earlier and as will be further developed in later chapters, many different kinds of materials can be used to support claims. In this chapter, a few examples are presented to clarify the ways that supporting material can be tied to a claim to create an argument.
Claim Supported By Evidence

The simplest way to think of an argument is that it involves a claim supported by evidence. Evidence is supporting material that has been observed or is potentially observable. The following diagram illustrates a claim supported by evidence.

![Argument Diagram]

The above argument consists of evidence and a claim. The evidence is about observed data regarding the fossil record. The debater making this argument probably did not observe this data directly but read about the observation that was made by others, probably scientists.

Claim Supported By Explanation

Explanation is another way to support an argument. Sometimes an explanation is offered to reveal why the claim is a correct one. The following diagram illustrates this kind of claim.

![Argument Diagram]

The claim that Robert is afraid of snakes becomes more believable when an explanation is offered to answer the question “why is Robert afraid of snakes.”

Claim Supported by Analogy

An analogy is a form of supporting material where an advocate begins with an object or concept for which the audience already has a positive (or negative) evaluation, then compares that object or concept to another for which the audience has no such existing evaluation. The diagram below illustrates this kind of argument.
In the above argument, the advocate presumes that the audience has a positive evaluation of Mao Zedong. In particular, the advocate presumes that the audience considers Mao one of China’s greatest leaders. Then the advocate makes an explicit comparison of Mao and Xi Jinping. By making this comparison, the advocate creates an analogy that becomes supporting material for the claim that \textit{Xi Jinping is one of China’s greatest leaders}.

\textit{Claim Supported by Other Claims}

Frequently, claims are supported by other claims. Chapter 20 of this text will describe in greater depth the process of combining claims coherently to support other claims. This chapter will introduce the process of using claims to support other claims. The diagram below illustrates the basic process of using two claims to support a third.

As this text will discuss more fully in Chapter 20, a frequent pattern of using claims to support other claims involves combining a descriptive claim with an associational claim to support an evaluative claim. The diagram below illustrates this basic pattern.
Using this pattern, an advocate begins by describing (descriptive claim) some feature of the object or policy to be evaluated, then relates that feature to some effect or value (associational claim). Having described the feature and related the feature to an effect, the advocate is then in a position to evaluate the object or policy (evaluative claim).

An example of this pattern of using a descriptive and an associational claim to support an evaluative claim is shown in the following diagram:

![Argument Diagram]

Although the argument is incomplete, it illustrates how two claims can be used to support a third. In this case, one claim describes current laws (allowing smoking in public places) and a second claim associates that description with an effect (subjects non-smokers to health risks). Those two claims are then combined to support an evaluative claim about the current laws: Smoking should not be allowed in public places.
So far, this chapter has focused on the basic components of arguments: a claim and its supporting material. In the process, this chapter has noted four kinds of claims, focusing on claims of evaluation. In the final section, this chapter will emphasize the means by which evaluations are made, especially two methods that we will call principles and consequences.

**Principles and Consequences as Means of Evaluation**

Two methods of evaluating actions, and thus of creating arguments of evaluation, are what this text will call, principles and consequences. Philosophically, these two methods of evaluating actions are consistent with deontology and utilitarianism, respectively. Constructing arguments by principle is consistent with deontology; constructing consequential arguments is consistent with utilitarianism. Principles and consequences are related methods that sometimes lead to the same evaluation, yet they have important differences.

According to the philosophy of utilitarianism, one action is better than another if that action creates the greatest good for the greatest number of people\(^1\). Using this kind of evaluation, an action is evaluated based on its consequences. In other words, an action is good if its positive consequences outweigh its negative consequences. In contrast, according to the philosophy of deontology\(^2\), one action is better than another to the extent that the action conforms to universal principles. These principles are ordinarily about rights and duties.

Thus, arguments of evaluation can be constructed by using consequences or by using principles. A simple example can be used to illustrate the difference between those two methods of constructing arguments to evaluate an action. A variety of arguments can be constructed to urge college students not to cheat on exams. For instance, one might argue, “Cheating on exams violates the fundamental principle of honesty.” In that case, a duty not to cheat is invoked as a fundamental principle. Regardless of whether or not cheating has positive or negative consequences for the student, cheating should not be condoned because it violates a universal principle. On the other hand, one might argue, “Cheating on exams puts a student at risk of being expelled from college.” This argument appeals to the negative consequences of cheating, not to a fundamental or universal principle. In that case, as in others, principles and consequences lead to the same conclusion: that cheating is an inappropriate action. But the arguments differ and flow from different philosophical bases.

Depending on the arguments put forward, arguments and principles sometimes lead to different evaluative conclusions. For instance, if someone argued that a student sometimes should cheat because to do otherwise would risk the student’s educational record and ultimately the student’s employment prospects, such an argument would be based on the

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\(^1\) For an example of an early utilitarian thinker, see Bentham, Jeremy. *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. London: 1789.

\(^2\) See for instance, Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*. 1785
positive consequences of cheating.\(^3\) That consequential argument would stand in contrast to the earlier argument based on the principle of honesty. The consequential argument supports cheating, while the principled argument condemns cheating. The point is not that one type of argument usually points in one direction while the other type points in a different direction. The point is that these are different methods of making evaluative arguments.

**Summary**

This chapter has introduced the concepts of argumentation, arguments, and debate. Argumentation is a process of persuasion in which arguments are presented to persuade a judge or an audience. Thus, arguments are particular claims, along with their support, that are used to persuade a judge or audience to adopt a particular point of view or to maintain and reinforce the current point of view. Arguments are the fundamental tool used in debate to accomplish this process of persuasion.

This chapter noted that an argument consists of four elements, but it focused on only two of them: claim and supporting material. Claims can be divided into four types (definitions, descriptions, associations, and evaluations) and this chapter focused on claims of evaluation because they are the most interesting and the most common in debates. A variety of different kinds of supporting material are available to debaters, including evidence, explanation, analogy, and other claims. In particular, claims of description and association can be used to support claims of evaluation. Finally, this chapter introduced two different methods of arguing for or against a claim of evaluation. Those methods are principles and consequences. Principles and consequences frequently lead to the same evaluative conclusions, but they are different from each other in important argumentative ways.

The terms and concepts introduced in this chapter are important to students who are preparing to study and practice the principles of debate. The second part of this text will focus specifically on worlds-style debate and will use the concepts of argumentation, arguments, claims, support, principles and consequences to illustrate how this or other types of debate function.

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\(^3\) Of course, the counter argument is that by enhancing one’s own educational and employment prospects, one is diminishing these same prospects of other students who do not cheat.
Terms and Concepts From Chapter 3

Check your memory and comprehension by describing or defining these key terms and concepts:

- Debate
- Persuasion
- Argumentation
- Arguments
- Support for an argument
- Four kinds of claims
- Principles
- Consequences

Discussion Questions For Chapter 3

- Compare and contrast the concepts of persuasion and debate.
- Compare and contrast the concepts of argumentation and arguments.
- What two basic components of an argument are introduced in this chapter? What is the relationship between those two components and an argument?
- How can an evaluative claim be supported through the combination of a descriptive and associational claim?
- Why are arguments based on principles different from arguments based on consequences?