

# Engaging Diverse Voices:

Bridging Opposing Views  
to Build Commonality  
IRL and Online

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# Building Commonality: Pedagogy

Rogerian argument can be applied and assessed by students in real-world and online settings to foster empathy for opposing viewpoints.

- In “Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation,” Rogers states, “[I]t is just when emotions are strongest that it is most difficult to achieve the frame of reference of the other person” (86).
- According to data published in “What Makes Online Content Viral,” “Content that evokes more anger . . . is more likely to be shared” (Berger and Milkman 200).

# Building Commonality: Objectives

Apply and assess Rogerian argument to:

- Increase rhetorical knowledge of audience
- Question underlying assumptions
- Broaden perspective
- Compose multimodally:
  - Essay
  - Online Discussion
  - Presentation

# Building Commonality: Assignment

## Part I: Survey of Student Politics

President Trump is going to make America great again.

The Trump administration is leading the country in the wrong direction.

Trans people should use the bathroom of the gender they identify as.

Trans people should use the bathroom that agrees with their assigned gender at birth.

Racial injustice is still a big problem in America.

Racism is no longer a large contributing factor to inequality in America.

Healthcare should be paid for by individuals or their employers.

The government should provide free healthcare to everyone.

We need stricter immigration policies.

We need more welcoming immigration policies.

We don't really need feminism in this country anymore.

Women in America still aren't equal to men.

# Building Commonality: Assignment

## Part 2: Partners Workshop I

### Stereotypes, Refutation, and Clarification

(adapted from [Better Angels](#))

- Stereotypes: What are the most common stereotypes that your opponents believe about you?
- Refutation: Why are those stereotypes mistaken or exaggerated?
- Clarification: What questions would you ask your opponents in order to better understand the experiences, feelings, and beliefs of those who differ with you?

# Building Commonality: Assignment

## Part 2: Partners Workshop 2 Summary of Partner's Opposing View

Students write a summary of their partner's position on their assigned issue, then revise their summary based on feedback from their partner.

“Each person can speak up for himself only after he has first restated the ideas and feelings of the previous speaker accurately, and to that speaker's satisfaction” (Rogers 85).

# Building Commonality: Assignment

## Part 3: Argumentative Essay

Students write a five-page essay supporting their position on the topic assigned to them and their partner.

The essay uses five sources, including their partner workshop materials and one source that supports their partner's opposing view.

# Building Commonality: Assignment

## Part 4: Using Rogerian Argument Online

“[C]ontent that evokes high-arousal emotions (i.e., awe, anger, and anxiety) . . . is more viral” (Berger and Milkman 197).

Using the “listening with understanding” principle of Rogerian Argument, students respond in an online forum to a post that represents the opposing view on their topic by:

1. Summarizing the post’s argument in an effort to demonstrate an understanding of the poster’s point of view.
2. Providing a counterargument to the post and stating their own position on the issue.

# Building Commonality: Assignment

## Part 5: Student Presentations

### Analyzing Rogerian Argument IRL & Online

Students present a PowerPoint to the class in which they:

- Discuss how their partner challenged their assumptions about those who disagree with them on a political issue
- Present the results of their online discussion
- Analyze the effectiveness of Rogerian Argument in-person versus online

# Building Commonality: Outcomes

## Survey of Student Politics Data:

- Healthcare was the most important issue to half the students, with 60% favoring government-funded healthcare.
- Immigration was the second most important issue, with 70% favoring more welcoming immigration policies.
- Highest consensus: 80% (including Trump supporters), agree that racial injustice is still a large contributor to inequality in the U.S.
- 60% think the Trump administration is leading the country in the wrong direction, but the issue was ranked second lowest in overall importance.

# Building Commonality: Outcomes

## Student Findings: Challenges to assumptions

- “At first I believed that people with the opposing viewpoint would be completely against the idea of the border, but I learned this is not always true. People who support more open borders feel passionate about immigrant families seeking better opportunities.”
- “My opinion of people with the opposing view was challenged because usually, people who agree with transgender men and women using the bathroom of their choice are seen as more liberal and those who do not agree with that are more conservative and religious. My partner directly told me that she is religious but that it is a main reason why she believes what she does; she wants to love others and treat them equally.”


# Building Commonality: Outcomes


## Student Findings: Challenges to assumptions

- “My opinions of those who hold the opposing view were challenged as I found that many in opposition provide valid reasons and address concerns that those in support tend to look over. I came to realize that not everyone who opposed universal healthcare were selfish and lacked empathy towards those in a difficult position.”
- “Prior to this assignment I believed someone on the other side of this issue was a specific type of person, someone who is racist but pretends they are not, or an over privileged white man who refuses to see the unequal opportunities a black man is offered. . . . I believed we would not agree on other major topics of today such as freedom of religion, women’s rights to abortion and the bathroom use of transgender people, I was wrong. This assignment helped me to discover I am just as guilty of stereotyping and assuming I know someone based on their beliefs. It was refreshing to know although my partner and I disagreed on this particular topic, we shared views on other topics.”

# Building Commonality: Outcomes


## Student Findings: Using Rogerian Argument Online

 [-] [m4012](#) [S] 1 point 2 hours ago


 interesting point. I am all for allowing immigrants to come to the country but I personally feel strict borders and laws are needed due to threats such as ISIS. People should be allowed to come to America to live here but still strict borders are needed.

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 [-] [guildedsquirtle](#) 1 point 2 hours ago


 I understand that perspective completely since we do live in a crazy time where anything can go wrong at any moment.


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 [-] [m4012](#) [S] 1 point 2 hours ago

# Building Commonality: Outcomes


## Student Findings: Using Rogerian Argument Online


 **aldaroz** 1 point 28 minutes ago

 I see where you are coming from in your argument here. Government has proven itself to sometimes be incapable when running an agency, especially one of this volume. Taxes are also a very real concern, the amount that will be needed in order to put every doctor on payroll and to pay for everything that a hospital needs is enormous. As for diversity and values, I agree with you. With such a broad range of ethnicity and race, it is hard to think that all people will be in support and share the same values regarding this issue, but I do believe that a majority of people, regardless of race, do acknowledge and share the value of human life, and that everyone has the right to live healthily. And for the few stragglers who do not value this, universal healthcare will help them realize the importance of it.


I am in support of universal healthcare as I believe it is a basic right of all humans to live healthily, and have access to the resources they need to do so. While there may be negative effects, the positives of the situation and the number of people who will be greatly helped outweigh them. One should not have to worry about how their bank account will look after they have been injured or struck ill. All they should be worrying about is their recovery and getting back on their feet as soon as possible.


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 **dangerdangertop** [score hidden] 18 minutes ago

 Yes, on a moral level, those in need of assistance do in fact deserve the assistance they need regardless of their financial situation. To think otherwise most would say is cold hearted. The world in which we live in today has become exactly that, cold hearted. Nowadays everything is about individual achievement, with little regard to those around us who may be suffering. To tell someone that they must pay for someone else's health care, after working so hard to obtain their own, would be a slap in the face. Doesn't matter what the other is going through. Society does not approve as handouts as much as they once did, and surely with how high taxes will be, the established members of society will not approve of this either. Why would anyone want to pay for someone else's healthcare when they do not need any help paying for their own.

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 **aldaroz** 1 point 3 minutes ago

 And this mentality here is exactly what universal healthcare will help get rid of, and be replaced with a mentality where one is more eager to help their fellow citizen in need of assistance. Aside from the direct benefits that will occur on a personal level from treatment being received, universal healthcare will create social benefits. Our mentality as a society will become more accepting and inclusive of those less fortunate, rather than how we look down upon those in difficult positions now.

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# Building Commonality: Outcomes

## Student Findings: Effectiveness of Rogerian Argument

- “[Rogerian argument] is very good to online because it is hard to understand the tone of the argument unless you are in person. This way, you start off the argument with restated feelings that help give the other person an understanding, and it reduces the conflict and tension.”
- “Using Rogerian Argument and relaying their beliefs and statements back to them definitely helped to create a more friendly conversation than the ones I had seen in reading previous comments on the same post. I still believe, though, that talking in-person is a much smarter and effective way to argue with someone on a specific topic.”

# Building Commonality: Outcomes

## Student Findings: Effectiveness of Rogerian Argument

- “Sitting down and discussing president Trump with one of his supporters really opened my eyes and I was able to rise above my preconceived biases and see the world a little more clearly than I used to. I would like to imagine that my partner who I worked with on the subject was able to have an effect similar to this happen to his self. This form of argumentation has actually helped me recently with disagreements that I have had with my friends and family about various subjects from politics, current events and even to, ‘Whose doing the dishes tonight?’”
- “For the first time I really sat down with someone and got the opposite point of view, something that rarely happens in a face to face conversation. I now see and understand more about Trump and why people dislike him than what people were saying in the last 3 years of his campaign and protests against him, because I heard the opposing point and the opposing point heard me back. Rogerian argument is in my opinion one of the most valuable and useful things we have learned.”

# Works Cited

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