



What Is the Argument?: An Introduction to Philosophical Argument and Analysis (MIT Press)

By Maralee Harrell

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The best way to introduce students to philosophy and philosophical discourse is to have them read and wrestle with original sources. This textbook explores philosophy through detailed argument analyses of texts by philosophers from Plato to Strawson. It presents a novel and transparent method of analysis that will teach students not only how to understand and evaluate philosophers' arguments but also how to construct such arguments themselves. Students will learn to read a text and discover what the philosopher thinks, why the philosopher thinks it, and whether the supporting argument is good.

Students learn argument analysis through argument diagrams, with color-coding of the argument's various elements -- conclusion, claims, and "indicator phrases." (An online "mini-course" in argument diagramming and argument diagramming software are both freely available online.) Each chapter ends with exercises and reading questions.

After a general introduction to philosophy and logic and an explanation of argument analysis, the book presents selections from primary sources, arranged by topics that correspond to contemporary debates, with detailed analysis and evaluation. These topics include philosophy of religion, epistemology, theory of mind, free will and determinism, and ethics; authors include Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Ryle, Fodor, Dennett, Searle, and others. *What Is the Argument?* not only introduces students to great philosophical thinkers, it also teaches them the essential skill of critical thinking.

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Editorial Review

Review

Harrell's book nicely combines the craft of argument construction and analysis with essential primary source material -- both indispensable to any Intro to Philosophy course. Her first-person writing style presents an easy read and it is evident that her years of classroom teaching experience shaped and molded an interesting, thorough curriculum that she unselfishly shares with us in this book. Harrell's book is an excellent resource that conveniently gathers all the information students need in one smart package. It could be used at both the university and college preparatory levels.

(Joyce Lazier, Philosophy Instructor, The Canterbury School)

Finally! An Intro to Philosophy textbook that teaches students to *read*! While most introductory textbooks include only cursory instruction in logic, and most critical thinking texts are not designed for philosophy students, this book contains the best of both worlds -- serious consideration of canonical primary texts and sustained instruction and practice in rigorous argument analysis.

(Kaija Mortensen, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Randolph College)

At long last, in Mara Harrell's *What Is the Argument?* we have an introductory philosophy text that makes systematic use of argument-diagramming techniques proven to enhance students' philosophical and critical thinking skills. It is the delightfully clear, engaging, and competence-building introduction to core arguments in philosophy that I've been waiting for.

(Brendan Lalor, Philosophy Coordinator and Associate Professor, Castleton University)

About the Author

Maralee Harrell is Teaching Professor of Philosophy at Carnegie Mellon University.

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