

Contending & Competition

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

It is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern, since our most basic task is to evaluate the reasons and evidence that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Pruitt, D. G., & Kim, S. H. (2004). Contentious tactics. In *Social conflict: Escalation, stalemate, and settlement* (3rd ed., pp. 63–84). McGraw-Hill.

Optional: Winter, J. (2013, August 14). *The kindly brontosaurus*. Slate. https://www.slate.com/articles/life/culture-box/2013/08/the_kindly_brontosaurus_the_amazing_prehistoric_posture_that_will_get_you.html.

Questions

1. What are the various tactics of contending? What are the advantages and problems with each tactic?
(See the optional article about the “Kindly Brontosaurus” to learn about a contentious tactic that hides its contentious nature quite well.)
2. What are the similarities and differences between promises, threats, and warnings?
3. According to Dean Pruitt and Sung Hee Kim, persuasive argumentation can be a contentious tactic.
Why is this? Does this surprise you?

When responding to question 1, fill out the table posted on UB Learns. I’ve already done the first row for you. Please print out and bring this table to class, so we can discuss it together as a group.

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.