Final Call for the 2019 Alta Argumentation Conference
August 1-4, 2019
Snowbird Lodge

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This is the final call. It differs from the preliminary call because it says how to submit the paper and also has liberalized the length expectations for submissions.

Our keynote speaker will be Ron Greene. We will have a special session to commemorate Mal Sillars, one of the conference founders and a big Alta presence for decades, who has recently passed away. If you have stories or remarks to share about Mal, please contact me. We will also recognize others we have lost, including Bob Scott, John Reinard, Walt Fisher, and perhaps others. Please let me know who we should mention, and who might speak briefly.

Theme: Local Theories of Argument?

Though we know better when we stop to think about it, most of us casually think of ourselves as having inherited coherent traditions of rhetorical and argumentation theory. The combination of an Aristotelian idea with a remark by Kenneth Burke is received without blinking. The theme of this year's conference is the possibility of local theories of argument, work that calls into question the historical and global coherence of the theories we work with. The idea is that it may be necessary to generate local theories – local to a particular time, or place, or group identity. That the content of rhetorical practice differed along those dimensions is obvious. The question we will confront is whether the ordinary understandings or formal theories of argument were different as well.

The simplest way to exemplify the potential issues is to consider vertical and horizontal coherence/incoherence. The vertical dimension is historical: should we consider that we have had different theories over time, given similar geographic and linguistic circumstance? The horizontal dimension moves across cultures or groups in approximately the same time period. For instance, does it make sense to approximate Japanese rhetorical thought as a Western system? A scholarly showing that we have coherence over vertical or horizontal variance will be welcome, as will an argument suggesting that we need to acknowledge or develop local theories in respect of different histories or cultures.

Some vertical distinctions are well known. For example, Cicero gave considerable attention to the order of the parts in a speech, along with specific directions as to desirable

argumentative content in each part. But when sermon models and instructions were written in the Middle Ages, quite a different pattern was specified. What happened to Cicero's organizational teachings, which were well known in Europe at that time? Closer to our own era, Richard Weaver contrasted the conciseness and simple expressiveness of then-current rhetorical practice with the expansiveness and "spaciousness" of American rhetoric from earlier times. He considered that one rhetoric could depend on an homogenized system of values and knowledge but the other could not, and that this generated different valuings of embellishment and reasoned celebration of the uncontroversial.

Examples of horizontal distinctions seem somewhat less common in our scholarly community, but we have several of those as well. Interest in Asian public talk has been both assimilated to and distinguished from modern Western rhetoric in book-length treatments by Robert T. Oliver and Xing Lu, as well as work by other scholars. Does Chinese argumentation theory differ from Western thought in kind or degree? Is it perceptive or presumptuous to call what the ancient Pharaohs did "rhetoric?" When we compare contemporary American and Lebanese orientations to interpersonal arguing, are we sure we are looking at the same phenomenon in both nations?

Horizontal distinctions might also be available when examining different identity groups within the same time and nation. Bowers and Ochs long ago distinguished between the rhetorics of agitation and control. Are the same base understandings of public argument used by opponents of different standings, or are they implicitly working from different rhetorical theories? Were Protestant and Catholic pamphlets in the early Reformation simply using different premises or did they have contrasting understandings of what would count as legitimate argumentation?

Another sort of horizontal analysis might focus on argument channels. Some scholars have already debated whether the explicit linear models appropriate to propositional verbal arguments are also suitable to what appear to be visual or narrative arguments. Should we apply the same argumentation theories to elaborate edutainment stories and to abrupt tweets? Should we have been theorizing mass/social media messages from unknowable sources in the same way we theorize the remarks of an easily identifiable public speaker or conversational partner? If we need channel-local theories of argument, how can we understand which features of a medium require such treatment?

If analysis supports our casual assumption of a coherent intellectual inheritance, that will be comforting. But if reflection and study suggest that we have more traditions than we commonly recognize, how can that be handled by our community? Can local theories of, say, Korean argumentation be generated by native Dutch, American, or Canadian scholars? If not, how can we recruit local scholars, with their intuitive appreciation of their own culture and history, to the intellectual projects that we value? Do we in fact need local theories, constructed by local scholars? Are we sure that they need them?

Contributors will probably find it most natural to apply historical and rhetorical methods to the vertical questions, but social scientific methods easily suggest themselves for contemporary horizontal questions. In any event, all of our methodologies are welcome in service to analysis of any of these issues. Nor should anyone feel constrained by this simple vertical/horizontal metaphor.

Naturally, some preference will be given to submissions that address the general theme. However, quality work using any methodology, on any aspect of argumentation, will be welcome, as it always has been.

Finally, here are two cautions for submitters: (1) Rhetorical theory is broader than argumentation theory. Please remember that our community's special focus is argumentation. (2) It will be natural for many Alta veterans to extract apparent theory from observed practice. This is a reasonable methodology. However, remember to emphasize the theory component in your paper.

Details for Submission

We invite completed papers, panel proposals, and paper abstracts written from any of the available methodological approaches to argumentation.

- *Completed papers:* Papers should not be longer than 3,000 words, excluding notes and references or no longer than 3,200 words, including notes and references.

- *Panel proposals:* Panel proposals should provide a title, names and addresses (including e-mail) of participants, an abstract of each paper, and a brief explanation of the importance of the panel (500 words or less). Given that the tradition at Alta is active member-presenter engagement, if respondents are included, then their role should be explained. Panel proposals with participants from multiple institutions are preferred.

- *Paper abstracts:* Extended abstracts of paper proposals (500 words or more) should be substantial enough to indicate the scope, direction, approach, and merit of proposed papers. Assessment will be based on the evaluators' understandings of the projected paper as presented in the abstract.

- *Audio-Visual:* Please indicate AV needs that you may require should your submission be accepted.

Submissions will be due February 28, 2019. They will be evaluated by peer reviewers. For accepted proposals, full papers will be due on July 10, 2019, and these papers will again be peer reviewed, but for publication. In the early years of the Alta conference, virtually all presented papers were published in the proceedings, but this is no longer the case. For the last several conferences, we have published a volume of selected papers instead of proceedings.

Abstracts can be difficult to write. Sometimes smart people with good ideas still write weak abstracts. I have experience with evaluating abstracts for several argumentation conferences and I have noticed some common failings. First, some abstracts do not explicitly (or plausibly) say what the paper has to do with the conference's content aims. Second, many abstracts promise attention to some theme or analysis of some artifact, but do not say how that will be accomplished or whether the work has started. Third, some abstracts do not mention any key literature, leaving reviewers to wonder if the author is well-read and up to date. Fourth, even if the author has in fact figured out generally what his/her conclusions will be, these are not mentioned or their evidence is left out. Fifth, sometimes the abstract contains simple errors of composition, leaving a poor impression about the author's ability to carry out the project.

Eventual papers should be in a file format conveniently readable and editable in Microsoft Word. The **American Psychological Association's style manual** should be used by everyone. Some of you may not realize that when Google Scholar gives an "APA citation," it is never correct. For relatively unusual sources (e.g., blogs, films, photos, or songs) you may have to search a bit to find out how these are to be cited in APA.

Instructions for Submitting

Submit your abstract, paper, or proposal to me as an email attachment. Please use the conference email address: altaconference2019@gmail.com. Please name your file this way, to facilitate our filing: YourName-PaperTitle-Date. So for example, perhaps we will receive Dumbledore-LogosAndOtherDarkArts-2-7-2019.docx.

Graduate Student Submission

Financial assistance is available on a competitive basis for papers solely written by graduate students. Please indicate to me if you qualify for consideration. We have sometimes been able to provide some support for international scholars as well.

In Conclusion

Alta has always been a very open-minded intellectual community, welcoming to many theoretical and methodological approaches. We very much hope you will join us.