

## I. Introduce yourself to people at your table.

### II A. Individual/small group activity: Placing yourself on a continuum:

*Your comfort level with argumentation*

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I avoid argumentation  
whenever I can,

I am eager to engage  
in argumentation.

*Your belief in what argumentation accomplishes*

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Participants in  
arguments usually  
end up with the  
same beliefs they  
started out with.

Participants in  
arguments often  
end up more enlightened  
as a result of the  
experience.

1. Put a mark on each line, indicating where you stand.
2. Show the person(s) near your where you placed yourself and talk about the reasons for being in this place on each continuum.

### B. Plenary Group (class as a whole) discussion of activity

## III. Preview: Critical Reasoning as a 2-step procedure

(Step One) **Reconstruct:** If an argument is offered, identify the position being advanced (the *conclusion*) and the supporting reasons (*premises*).

(Step Two) **Evaluate:** Determine whether the conclusion follows and the premises are acceptable

**TASK 1. (Individually)** Read the editorial “No Right to Cause Death” below. What is the position (main point or conclusion) being advanced? Some candidates for main point of the editorial: *No Right to Cause Death*

- a. Smoking causes harm to bystanders.
- b. Smoking poses a risk to the health of bystanders.
- c. Smoking violates the rights of nonsmokers.
- d. Those who smoke around nonsmokers violate their rights.
- e. Smoking should be more tightly restricted.
- f. Smoking is wrong.

**(Small Group)** Discuss your understanding of the main conclusion of the column and try to reach agreement on a reading of the text)

**(Class as a whole)** Report the result of group activity.

### *No Right to Cause Death*

*(New York Times Editorial, Jan. 10, 1993)*

The rationale for granting smokers the “right” to spread their toxic fumes around has disappeared. Diehards, egged on by the tobacco companies that supply them, have long tried to cast their habit as a civil liberties issue, claiming they should be free to engage in a practice that harms no one but themselves.

But the evidence is now overwhelming that smokers endanger all those forced to inhale the lethal clouds they generate. That makes smokers at least a small hazard to virtually all Americans—and a fitting target for tighter restrictions.

Evidence that smoking can harm nonsmokers has been accumulating for the last decade. In 1986, two of the nation's most prestigious health authorities—the National Academy of Sciences and the Surgeon General—concluded that fumes generated by smokers can cause lung cancer in adult nonsmokers and respiratory problems in the children of smokers.

Now, in a comprehensive study covering more than twice the data available in 1986, the Environmental Protection Agency has concluded that smoking is indeed a serious and substantial health risk for non-smokers, particularly children.

Each year environmental tobacco smoke probably causes some 3,000 lung cancer deaths in the U.S., 150,000 to 300,000 cases of respiratory infections in infants and young children, and a worsening of symptoms in 200,000 to 1 million asthmatic children. Maternal smoking seems to be implicated in Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, a frightening condition in which babies die inexplicably in their cribs at night. And other studies not assessed by the E.P.A. have suggested that environmental tobacco smoke may cause heart disease and cancers at sites other than the lung.

The E.P.A. marshals an enormous array of evidence to build an overwhelming case that tobacco smoke is hazardous to innocent bystanders. The smoke that emanates from a smoldering cigarette contains virtually the same cancer-causing compounds as the smoke inhaled by the smokers. The inhaled smoke is known to cause cancer; it would be astonishing if the environmental smoke were not carcinogenic as well.

The main difference is that bystanders take in a more diluted mixture—and they have no choice in the matter. Smoking does, therefore, involve the violation of rights, and it is the smokers who are the violators.

The clinching evidence that environmental smoke causes lung cancer comes from studies of the health damage suffered by nonsmoking spouses of smokers. Seventeen of these studies were able to distinguish which spouses got the biggest doses of environmental smoke. In every study, the highest exposure group had an increased risk of lung cancer, and in nine the increase was statistically significant, or almost certainly meaningful. The odds of this happening by chance are less than 1 in 10 million, the E.P.A. says.

The Tobacco Institute, the trade group for the industry, has countered with sophistry. It contends that two-thirds of 30 or more studies reviewed by the E.P.A. show no “statistically significant” increase in lung cancer risk. That is true, but one-third of the studies do show significance, and the combined results are persuasive.

The Institute also complains that the E.P.A. has loosened its statistical standards so that it is only 90 percent confident of its conclusions instead of 95 percent confident, the standard often used. That, too, is true. But a panel of distinguished scientists endorsed the approach as appropriate given the enormous array of data on tobacco smoke and the certainty that the smoke is not beneficial. The continued effort of the Tobacco Institute to get Americans to ignore the best available science represents corporate irresponsibility of the rankest sort.

The only real issue is how serious one should consider the environmental hazard. The spouses of people who smoke at home might face a 1-in-500 chance of developing lung cancer, the E.P.A. suggests. That is far less than the 1-in-10 to 1-in-20 chance faced by the smokers themselves. But it is far more than society tolerates for exposure to other cancer-causing chemicals.

No one would grant his neighbor the right to blow tiny amounts of asbestos into a room or sprinkle traces of pesticide onto food. By the same logic, smokers have no right to spew even more noxious clouds into the air around them. The next step has to be a searching examination of how to tighten restrictions on smoking in all public places, and the workplace as well.

**Task 2 (Individually)** Read the Froma Harrop column below. What is the position (main point or conclusion) being advanced?

**(Small Group)** Discuss your understanding of the main conclusion of the column and *try* to reach agreement on a reading of the text). Once you have done so, identify some of the supporting reasons Harrop offers in support of this main point. Discuss whether you find them acceptable.

**(Class as a whole)** Discuss the results of this task.

*Seattle Times*, Editorials & Opinion: Tuesday, July 20, 2004

## **Froma Harrop / Syndicated columnist**

### **Gay, straight: What's the deal?**

The U.S. Senate has blocked the proposed constitutional amendment that would ban gay marriage. In doing this, the senators have earned my gratitude — though for reasons not directly related to gay rights. Rather, the move will spare us all some of the repetitive back-and-forth that has characterized this debate. It has gotten boring, and both sides of the argument irritate me. About 82 million unmarried American adults will know of what I speak.

Gay advocates always note the thousand-plus federal rights and benefits that are available to married heterosexuals and not to committed same-sex couples. The guardians of traditional values then counter that marriage has always been a man-and-woman thing — letting gay couples in on the deal would harm whatever is left of the American family.

What really rankles me, though, is "the deal" itself. That hit home in a news story around the time that Massachusetts started recognizing gay marriages. The day after a lesbian couple wed, the women filed a medical-malpractice lawsuit. One of them suffered from advanced breast cancer, which the suit claimed, a doctor had failed to detect. The other wanted to collect for "loss of consortium." In other words, the doctor's alleged negligence was depriving her of the love and companionship of a mate, and she wanted monetary compensation for her pain.

You can't read this without thinking about similar hurts being felt all the time in non-marital relationships. People develop intense connections with old friends, neighbors and grandmothers. Why can't they sue for loss of companionship, also?

Quickie marriages get more legal respect than friendships lasting decades. An hour after Britney Spears gets hooked to her next husband, the federal government will shower her with all sorts of rights and benefits not available to the man who has spent eight years caring for a mother with Alzheimer's.

So here is the point: The push toward gay marriage doesn't threaten hetero marriages as much as it threatens "the deal." It puts light on the illogic behind handing a variety of goodies to certain people because some civil authority issued them marriage certificates.

There is a potent political issue here, which could complicate matters for candidates. They must do more than just choose between advocates of gay rights and those of so-called traditional values. They must consider the lot of single Americans, who could cause a ruckus if they ever woke up.

So much attention is paid to married couples that most of the public — including single people themselves — thinks of unmarried adults as a marginal minority. Actually, they account for half of America's grownups. Households headed by single people are now the majority in 13 states and 113 congressional districts.

These districts are wildly diverse. Some include the poorest black inner cities, while others are wealthy and mostly white. In the nation's richest congressional district — located on Manhattan's East Side — more than 70 percent of the households are headed by unmarried adults.

Government should have no interest in a citizen's marital status. It certainly has no business sending a bigger tax bill to cohabiting sisters than to a man-and-wife team reporting the same income and deductions as the sisters.

Marriage is a fine institution and a very important stabilizing force for the raising of children. Some purists will argue that even child tax credits are a kind of social engineering. Using the tax code to help people pay for child expenses seems OK to me. But giving tax breaks to Larry King and his seventh wife — and in the name of helping children — is outrageous.

Of course, stereotypes underpin these unfair policies. Married couples are seen as the moral backbone of America. Singles, on the other hand, are regarded as questionable citizens and possibly misfits. In truth, single America includes everything from 21-year-old serial daters and bachelor playboys to widowed grandfathers and divorced parents. And whose business is it, anyway?

Perhaps the diversity of the group helps explain why unmarried adults haven't made common cause. They should, and when they do, the whole conversation will change. The real issue will no longer be whether gays should get in on the same marriage deal as heterosexuals, but why the deal exists in the first place. *Providence Journal columnist Froma*

*Harrop's column appears regularly on editorial pages of The Times.*

**Task 3 (Individually)** Read the Passage What is the position (main point or conclusion) being advanced?

**(Small Group)** Discuss your understanding of the main conclusion of the column and *try* to reach agreement on a reading of the text). Once you have done so, identify some of the supporting reasoned offers in support of this main point. Discuss whether you find them acceptable.

**(Class as a whole, i.e. plenary session)** Discuss the results of this task.

.Honesty is on the decline in the United States. Increasing numbers of people admit that they lie on a regular basis at work and at home. These lies are not just minor omissions or trivial untruths designed to save another's feelings, nor even lies in the "traditional domain" of sexual behavior. Many workers indicate that they regularly lie at work. This change in American attitudes began with President Johnson's denial that he would expand the war in Vietnam, just before he did just that. It was fostered by the lies leading to Nixon's resignation as President. The belief that politicians at all levels of government will not tell the truth has only grown. Clinton's revelation that he did not tell "all the truth" about his sexual behavior just confirmed what was a widespread expectation that politicians and other public figures routinely lie. Why do public figures, as well as the rest of us, feel that they need to lie? The real reason is that Americans in their private, public and workaday lives are not willing to hear the truth. The voters don't want to be told that big tax cuts will result in decreased public service. Bosses don't want to be told that their favorite plans are likely to fail. And friends don't want to hear that their binge drinking is interfering in their lives. If this trend continues, the fabric of the country is in danger. We all need to be willing to face the truth as citizens, as employees, as friends. If we stop penalizing others for telling the truth, then they will be more willing to be honest in what they say

**Assignment** for Friday Morning Critical Reasoning Session:

Read CR Chapter 1, Chapter 2 to p. 38

Do Ex 1.1 #1 Ex 1.2 #1b, 1d , #3 applied to editorial "Truth about 'Assistance'"

Bring 4 copies of a short passage that contains an argument from the newspaper, a magazine, web document or some other source.