

Worksheet 1: Ethos and Argumentation

In a debate, the arguers (or *rheto*rs) are often called *opponents*. In a productive counter-argument, we prefer the term *interlocutors*. An interlocutor is one party in a conversation or dialogue whose ideas, questions, and arguments not only challenge those of their counterpart, but also drive the conversation forward.

The first step in Assignment 2 is identifying a worthy interlocutor for your productive counter-argument. Because the goals of Assignment 2 include finding common ground and building consensus, your interlocutor can't just be anyone who disagrees with you. They must be someone who you think is arguing *in good faith*, meaning that they share your intentions of seeking the truth, solving problems, and reasoning well.

For this worksheet, you will assess the *ethos* of the three potential interlocutors you have selected in advance. It's possible that you might not know much about the *situated ethos* (biography or reputation) of your interlocutors; but you can assess their *invented ethos* by analyzing the argument that they published or posted. Invented ethos is sense of trustworthiness created in the moment, and it has three components: *practical wisdom*, *goodwill*, and *virtue*. In what ways do these rhetors demonstrate these qualities (or the lack thereof) through their argument? Answer this question as comprehensively as you can for each one, using direct evidence from—and plausible inferences based on—their own words.

Your name: Nathan Soganich

Today's Date: 9/18/2025

Argument 1

Author, Title, and Place of Publication: Thomas Friedman, New York Times Opinion Column (Sept. 2025)

Describe your own position on the subject, explain the stakes of the disagreement, and identify subjects for further study:

I mostly agree with Friedman that A.I. is so powerful and widespread that the U.S. and China will have to find ways to cooperate on safety, even as they compete. I'm still skeptical, though, about how realistic his idea of a shared "trust adjudicator" is, and whose values would get built into it. The stakes are huge: without some shared rules, both countries risk mistrust, supply chain breakdowns, and tech-fueled security threats—but forcing cooperation too fast could also stall innovation or create weak safety standards. I'd like to learn more about how this kind of global tech oversight has (or hasn't) worked before, how open-source models fit in, and what legal or trade structures might actually support something like this.

Practical wisdom

- Friedman explains why A.I. is different from older tech—spreading "like vapor" and built mostly by private companies, not governments.
- He leans on expert voices (like Craig Mundie) and gives real examples (like TikTok data fears and reports of A.I. "scheming") to back up his points.
- He compares it to nuclear arms control but also points out why that comparison has limits.
- He suggests a clear plan: putting an independent "referee" inside A.I. systems and using legal and diplomatic groups to build rules.
- He's upfront that it might not work and spells out what could go wrong (deepfakes, rogue systems, runaway misinformation)

Goodwill

- He frames both the U.S. and China as facing the same risks, which shows he's not just trying to bash one side.
- He recognizes that both countries want to win the A.I. race, and he's not saying they should stop competing—just cooperate on basic safety.
- He speaks directly to skeptics on both sides, which makes it feel like he's trying to move the conversation forward.
- He stresses human benefits like helping small farmers, not just national power.

Virtue

- He's honest about the limits of his plan and warns against rushing ahead without safeguards.
- He's fair, calling out mistakes the U.S. has made before (like deregulating social media too much).
- He shows courage by arguing for cooperation with a rival because it might prevent bigger problems.
- One weak spot is that he leans heavily on one main expert's perspective and doesn't get into how we'd verify these systems.

Argument 2

Author, Title, and Place of Publication: Nikhil Sharma, "Regulating AI is a mistake," *The Emory Wheel* (Sept 7 2023)

Describe your own position on the subject, explain the stakes of the disagreement, and identify subjects for further study:

I don't fully agree with Sharma, but I think he raises fair concerns. He warns that strict rules this early could slow down U.S. progress, give China an edge, and make it harder for startups to compete with big tech companies. I think basic safety rules will be needed eventually, but I see why clamping down too soon could choke off new ideas or shift research overseas. The stakes are huge: get regulation wrong, and we risk either losing the innovation race or letting powerful tools develop with no guardrails. It would be worth looking more at how other countries (like in the EU) have handled regulation, how small companies are impacted, and how to design safety checks that don't smother new projects.

Practical wisdom

- He gives concrete examples, like how strict data laws in Europe slowed down tools like ChatGPT and Bard from launching there.

- He points out that big tech firms often *like* regulation because it raises the bar for smaller competitors, which shows he understands the industry's incentives.
- He explains that startups need flexibility to experiment, and how too many early rules could make that impossible.
- He admits regulation will be needed later but argues for waiting until AI is more widely used.

Goodwill

- He isn't dismissive of safety worries — he agrees rules will be needed eventually, just not right now.
- He sounds like he wants the U.S. to succeed, not just big tech — he mentions the risk of startups getting crushed by rules designed by huge companies.
- He brings up how regulation could hurt U.S. leadership and let other countries set the tone, which shows concern for the bigger picture.
- He frames it as a caution, not an attack on people who want rules, which makes it easier to engage with his argument.
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Virtue

- He's honest about both sides: regulation matters, but timing matters too.
- He shows fairness by acknowledging eventual safety concerns even while arguing against rushing rules now.
- He shows courage by pushing back on a popular idea (fast regulation) and focusing on long-term impact instead of short-term politics.
- He's careful not to exaggerate threats, which makes his argument feel grounded instead of alarmist.
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Argument 3

Author, Title, and Place of Publication: Springtide Research Institute, "Gen Z is our best hope for peaceful politics, so let's stop dismissing them," Chicago Tribune (May 21 2021)

Describe your own position on the subject, explain the stakes of the disagreement, and identify subjects for further study:

I don't fully buy the article's optimism that Gen Z will fix our politics. While it's true a lot of Gen Z say they want civil discussion, many also feel like the future is collapsing and nothing will change. Climate change, student debt, rising costs, and political gridlock make them feel powerless. That frustration shows up as anger, burnout, and disillusionment. The stakes are serious: if adults expect Gen Z to magically heal polarization while ignoring their sense of hopelessness, they could become even more disengaged or radicalized. It would be worth

studying how Gen Z's pessimism affects turnout, trust in government, and mental health, and what might actually give them reasons to believe in the future.

Practical wisdom

- The article points out youth feel dismissed, but it doesn't fully address how many are also deeply cynical or checked out.
- Quotes from young people show they're frustrated ("We are tired of being shut out"), which could also lead to anger rather than bridge-building.
- The piece treats their interest in hearing both sides as proof of hopefulness, but wanting to understand opponents doesn't mean they believe change is possible.
- By showing only the constructive side, the article misses how desperation can push people away from politics altogether.

Goodwill

- The author clearly wants to support Gen Z voices, which is good, but downplays their emotional reality.
- Ignoring their anger could make adults seem out of touch and leave young people feeling even more unheard.
- Acknowledging their fear that there *won't be a future* would show more empathy and might help build trust.
- Treating their frustration as valid could create a stronger starting point than just praising their potential.

Virtue

- The article is hopeful, but almost *too* hopeful — it feels like it's using Gen Z as a solution rather than listening to them.
- A more honest approach would balance their idealism with their anxiety, burnout, and anger.
- Giving them space to be angry would actually show more respect for their integrity.
- It takes courage to say "They might not save us — they might give up," but that realism is important.