

International Ph.D. Programm Argumentation and Communication

Subject matter of the Program – Argumentation

People develop argumentation in numerous purposeful activities: to make sound and well-thought decisions, to critically found their opinions, to persuade other people of the validity of their own proposals and to evaluate others' proposals. These activities are bound to the contexts in which they take place and are significantly determined by these contexts; thus argumentation too, as the bearing structure of these activities, moulds its strategies in connection with these very different contexts: from family to social and political institutions, from financial markets to media, schools, factories and courts.

Purpose and organization

The program has two main objectives.

The first of them is to provide PhD students with advanced training in the field of philosophy of language and communication. The training will be focussed on a branch of applied Philosophy and also of Communication Sciences, that is, Argumentation Theory, which deals with the structures of reasoning in different communication contexts, ranging from professional fields (law and economics) to political or everyday discussions. In order to give students outstanding education, the project has been organized in collaboration with some of the world top-level universities: University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands) University of Lugano (Switzerland), University of Windsor (Canada).

The student will have the opportunity to attend classes taught by the most important experts and professors in the field not only in Lisbon (FCSH/Universidade Nova), but also in Lugano, Amsterdam, Neuchatel, and Lausanne.

The second objective is to develop high-quality research project focussed on problems of argumentation in two domains of communicative activity: political and legal. The task of a PhD student will be to investigate in detail a theoretically challenging and empirically interesting phenomenon of argumentation in a chosen domain. In this process, the project will be supervised by (a) staff member(s) of the Philosophy of Language Institute (IFL) at the New University of Lisbon (UNL), with a relevant expertise. The Institute is currently carrying out a bigger research project on Argumentation, Communication and Context sponsored by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) PTDC / FIL – FIL / 10117 / 2009, and the PhD research will be part of this project. There are two PhD dissertations planned within the project:

1. Models of many-to-many argumentation in the virtual public sphere

The thesis will investigate the limitations and opportunities of argumentative interactions supported by the technologies for online communication. Various types of discussions in the virtual public sphere have lately drawn considerable attention as contexts for argumentation. Argumentation theorists investigate how reasonableness and strategies of argumentation are affected by the design of systems for online discussion (Aakhus 2002a, 2002b; Aakhus & Jackson 2005; Jackson 1998; Lewiński 2010; Weger & Aakhus 2003). The goal of the thesis is to narrow the gap between ideal models and actual practices of online argumentation. This will be done both by revising extant models of argumentation based on one-to-one interactions and by proposing improvements to online protocols for argumentative exchanges.

2. Strategies of legal argumentation

The thesis will investigate the dialectical and strategic dimensions of three crucial legal arguments, namely argument from classification, analogy, and authority. The first scheme is pivotal for the application of the legal principle to the particular case; the second is an implicit form of redefinition of legal concepts, while the third includes different types of grounding of a specific interpretation (argument from expert opinion, from original intention, etc.). The purpose of this investigation is to

analyze the reasoning structure of each scheme and underscore their presumptive nature, examining how each scheme can be used as an argument to support a conclusion or as a strategy to shift the burden of proof or alter the interlocutor's judgment.

The applicants are invited to apply for one of these projects. Flexibility in shaping the exact direction of research will be granted. The PhD research is supposed to culminate in a PhD dissertation defended at UNL.

Entitlements

A successful candidate will be eligible to a monthly doctoral grant of € 980 (netto) in accordance with the regulations of the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT). Initially, the grant will be offered for the period of 6 months, but an extension will be possible upon successful assessment of the student's progress

Additionally, the PhD grant will cover all the expenses for the project courses abroad, including course fees, travel and accommodation.

Required education and skills

The perspective student shall meet the following requirements:

1. Be already enrolled in a PhD Program at FCSH /UNL or intending to candidate next academic year (2011/12)
2. Master degree in Philosophy, Communication Sciences, Linguistics or equivalent.
3. Excellent educational record
4. Proficiency in English, both written and spoken
5. Preferential requisites

In order to assess the aforementioned prerequisites, holding one or more of the following records shall constitute a preferential title:

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Published articles in scientific journals

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CAE or Certificate of Proficiency in English (or other certificates, such as IELTS or TOEFL, with a score equivalent to the levels C1 or C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF)

Submissions

Candidates must submit their application till **31 May 2011**.

The application must include (both in pdf):

- 1 – The CV of the applicant;
- 2 – MA degree certificate or a letter confirming submission of the master's thesis;
- 3 – Academic record (MA studies grades);
- 4 – A sample of her / his writing (in English).

Applications must be send to:

- Doctor Fabrizio Macagno fabriziomacagno@hotmail.com;

And

- Doctor Marcin Lewinski m.lewinski@fcs.unl.pt