

Arguing with Multiple Semiotic Modes Theoretical Issues and Empirical Advances in Multimodal Argumentation Studies

CALL FOR PAPERS

BOOK PROPOSAL – Book Series ‘Pathways to Multimodality’
Editors: Hartmut STÖCKL & Assimakis TSERONIS & Janina WILDFEUER

1 | ‘Pathways to multimodality’: A New Book Series

The present call is for an edited volume of papers on topical aspects of multimodal argumentation to be published in a brand-new book series with de Gruyter (Berlin/Boston | Series Editors: John A. Bateman, Jana Pflaeging, Hartmut Stöckl and Janina Wildfeuer). “‘Pathways to multimodality’ offers an exciting new platform for innovative scholarship in multimodality studies, i.e., analyses of communications which combine multiple and diverse semiotic modes and resources such as speech, writing, image, sound and many others.” (Series Blurb).

2 | A Cooperation between Argumentation and Multimodality Studies

Facilitating the negotiation of viewpoints on all socially relevant issues, argumentative texts and discourses abound in modern deliberative democracies. Studying argumentation has long been the domain of logic and rhetoric, but a broader recognition of the fact that arguments may be deployed and conveyed in multiple semiotic modes, such as visual image, sound or gesture, has brought multimodality research into play (Kjeldsen 2015; Groarke/Palczewski/Godden 2016; Tseronis/Forceville 2017; Rocci/Pollaroli 2018; Gonzalves-Segundo/ Macagno/Azevedo 2021; Pflaeging/Stöckl 2021). While argumentation studies command expertise in reconstructing, interpreting and evaluating arguments (Walton/Reed/Macagno 2008; van Eemeren 2010; Rigotti/Greco 2019), multimodality studies are proficient in the differential discourse semantics of the modes and have the skills to analyse patterns of mode-combinations (Bateman/Wildfeuer/Hiippala 2017; Norris 2019; Kress/van Leeuwen 2021). Given the state-of-the-art in modern persuasive media and genre practices, it is only the strategic marshalling of the various semiotic resources that creates an effective and situationally appropriate argument. In order to devise tools and procedures for multimodal argumentation analysis, argumentation theorists and scholars of multimodality can benefit greatly from engaging more closely in each other’s work (Bateman 2018). It is this interdisciplinary discussion that the present volume seeks to promote and develop.

3 | Current Issues in Multimodal Argumentation

Despite the occasional reservations about the indeterminacy or lack of propositional meaning in non-verbal semiotic modes (Fleming 1996; Popa 2016; Champagne/Pietarinen 2020), the existence of multimodal arguments is now widely accepted. These are instances of argumentation where some of the argumentative semiotic work is taken over by visual images, sounds, gestures and the like. Reconstructions of arguments have generally adopted various theoretical perspectives, mainly rhetorical, dialectical or logical (cf. Van Rees 2001). To date, the most prominent approaches to the analysis of argumentation are Pragma-Dialectics (van Eemeren 2010; Tseronis

2017), the Argumentum Model of Topics (AMT, cf. Rigotti/Greco 2019; Serafis et al. 2020), and Informal Logic (Puppo 2019; Groarke 2018). Despite their differences, they all adopt a functional perspective, which pays due attention to how arguments depend on context and intentions, and on which a variety of proposals for the analysis of multimodal argumentation are currently grounded.

At the same time, multimodality research has provided useful frameworks and methods for the study of larger collections of texts from different genres and media (cf. Machin/Mayr 2012; Bateman et al. 2017; Norris 2019), opening up possibilities for a trans- and inter-disciplinary dialogue with argumentation studies. The critical strand of multimodal discourse analysis, for example, has drawn attention to how the use of semiotic resources calls up, shapes and reproduces ideologies (e.g., Serafis et al. 2020). A more cognitive and pragmatic strand has proposed tools for systematically accounting for the meaning-making processes in dynamic multimodal texts with a promotional character (e.g., Wildfeuer/Pollaroli 2018). Finally, non-verbal semiotic modes have been credited with special rhetorical powers. Visual images, for instance, are said to feature presence/evidence, realism/immediacy and semantic condensation (Kjeldsen 2012: 243). Especially the computer-generated images today present in many media have been shown to feature design operations that carry a rhetorical potential for facilitating multimodal argumentation (Stöckl 2021). Also, there is empirical evidence that rhetorical operations underlie mode-combinations (Tseronis 2021, Stöckl/Pflaeging 2022), so that “not only may figures materialize in different semiotic modes, but they can also be co-constructed from two modes” (Pflaeging/Stöckl 2021: 320).

4 | Range of Subjects to be Covered

For the projected volume, we invite papers that engage with multimodal argumentation in the widest possible sense of employing all kinds of semiotic modes and their combinations in diverse media and genres for the purpose of convincing, deliberating, changing opinions, manipulating, or managing disagreement. The papers may be oriented towards one or more of the foci listed below, assuming a specific theoretical framework or perspective within argumentation studies and/or rhetoric (see van Eemeren et al. 2014).

1. *Theoretical Issues*: Papers may engage with the conditions under which non-verbal modes such as visual images or sounds, among others, may become arguments or compare the specific potentials for argument in the different semiotic modes. Also, contributions may want to engage with the disciplinary history, tracing stages in the development of theories of multimodal argument(ation) or raise criticisms regarding the theoretical or analytical underpinnings of the study of multimodal argumentation so far.
2. *Argument Reconstruction and Evaluation*: Given the variety of approaches to the reconstruction and/or evaluation of multimodal arguments, it is expedient to test or compare their explanatory powers. Special emphasis might be put on which approach is most suited to which mode or mode-combination. Pertinent questions to ask for the evaluation of multimodal arguments would be about their cogency or effectiveness and their proneness to fallacies.
3. *Case Studies and Corpus-Based Work*: Methodological issues centre around the material basis for studying multimodal argumentation. How do we select, compile, arrange and annotate the data? What questions can we reasonably ask about the data? What interpretations about the discourse topic and the social domain at issue can be derived

from the study of the argumentative patterns? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches to the multimodal discourse analysis of argumentation.

4. *Genres and Media*: Multimodal argumentation happens in diverse rhetorical situations, which are largely determined by the communicators, their tasks and thematic orientation, but also by their media and genres. What are the constants in multimodal argumentation and how are multimodal arguments constrained by the patterns resulting from the medial affordances and the stylistic regimes of the genre?
5. *Rhetorical Underpinnings*: A rhetorical take will focus on the realization of various persuasive appeals (logos, ethos, pathos) in instances of multimodal argumentation. Rhetorically, the cognitive operations (figures) that underly multimodal arguments become a central object of study. Also, one may enquire into the special rhetorical potential of a given semiotic mode.

5 | Procedure and Timeline

We invite you to submit a proposal to be considered for inclusion in the edited volume as described above. The text should be of maximally 500 words including a provisional title, accompanied by some key references and keywords.

>> PLEASE submit your proposal by **30th of September 2023 at the very latest**.

Your proposal should be for a chapter that has not yet appeared or is scheduled to appear in some other publication. The ambition of the volume, as stated in its provisional title, is to *show-case advances* made within the booming research field of multimodal argumentation. Please indicate in the proposal how the envisaged chapter will fit in the edited volume as described above. Would you also specify at this stage (if known) whether you intend to make use of images, figures, and other printed material that may require copyright and/or special reproduction methods (use of colour, etc.)?

We will review the submitted abstracts in order to make a selection of those that best fit the general themes of the volume, have the potential to increase its coherence, and can make a substantial contribution to the field.

Acceptance or rejection of the proposed abstract will be communicated by the end of October 2023.

Upon acceptance of our proposal by de Gruyter, we expect the **full chapters to be submitted by the end of March 2024**. The submitted papers will be reviewed by the editors as well as by a second reviewer. **Revised versions of the chapters are due in October 2024.**

Please feel free to contact the editors if you have any specific ideas that fit the spirit of the book but seem not to be accommodated in the above text:

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