



Final Argument

Throughout this course, you have been writing papers that included mathematical work focused on specific, real-world problems and issues. You have incorporated mathematical reasoning into your thinking, becoming better thinkers and writers as you did so. However, our last reading, *A Mathematician's Apology*, offers a very different rationale for mathematics than the one that has been implicit in this course. Just as painters, sculptors, poets, and novelists have argued for "art for art's sake," Hardy here argues for "mathematics for mathematics' sake." Both these ideas hold that a creative work needs no practical application or justification--that it has its own intrinsic value.

Hardy has constructed, in this little book, a beautiful example of a classical argument. He takes a very abstract issue, but develops it by offering many kinds of concrete examples, handling objections, defining concepts, making comparisons, and quoting experts. His strategies are worth studying.

However, you may or may not agree with him. Your last paper, your own demonstration of everything you know about good argument and writing, will be your response to his ideas. Do you agree or disagree? Do you think mathematical knowledge has practical value, intellectual value, or (if you dare!) no value to an educated person? Your thesis, of course, will be the precise answer to this question. Your body paragraphs will focus on reasons in support of your stand and objections that you should answer to strengthen your argument. You will want to support your ideas with very specific examples, quotations, definitions, etc.

Give some thought to your introduction and conclusion. Make them as effective as possible in winning your reader to your point of view.

You may bring a thesis/topic sentence outline to the final. You may also bring the book. A typed Works Cited page should be turned in along with your final. Take time to edit your writing carefully, as we will be judging all that you have accomplished over the semester in this paper.