Summary: Probably the most important claim made in this reading is that argumentation is relative to the audience at which it is aimed. What the speaker knows of his audience shapes the development of the argumentation, and the effect that it has on the audience is what determines whether or not the argument is good. Argumentation aims at gaining the adherence of minds to some position or other; good argumentation succeeds in gaining such adherence, and bad argumentation does not (although an arguer is free to stop arguing if, in order to succeed, he will have to employ means that he finds repugnant, such as lying, for example).

The audience for whom an arguer constructs her arguments is always a construct in the speaker's mind. It is therefore crucial for the success of an argument (i.e. for gaining the adherence of the concrete audience to the position being advocated) that the mental construct of the audience that the arguer has in mind when she formulates her arguments is adequate to the occasion; argumentation is not likely to succeed if the arguer does not know her audience, because if she does not know her audience, the reasons that she selects to present and the way that she presents might not be appropriate for the audience at hand. Facts and the logically good reasons do not speak for themselves; the audience must be engaged, the arguer must make it clear why the issue matters, the audience must be amenable to the reasons that the arguer chooses to present, and the argument must be presented in such a way that the audience can follow along.

The last point that I want to draw attention to is the concept of a universal audience (UA). The UA is the image that an arguer has of a reasonable audience; it is a concept that regulates what an arguer takes to be legitimate and illegitimate moves in an argument. It therefore helps shape the development of the argumentation, and it is the universal audience that determines whether an argument is good or not. Everyone has a conception of a UA, transcending what we know of the differences between particular audiences. The UA with whom we engage on any particular occasion is constituted by what we know of the concrete particular audience with whom we are arguing – which provides us with the kinds of position to argue for that are appropriate for the occasion, and the kinds of reasons that our audience will understand and be inclined to accept – along with what we know to be common across different audiences, which gives us the conception of reasonableness that we have in mind in constructing our arguments. The Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca do not endorse the traditional philosophers' conception of the UA, though, which is something like a god, that only assents to truths. A better way to think about the UA, they hold, is by considering the image of the UA that individual arguers have constructed.

Reflection: I take the concept of the universal audience to be adequate for the purpose of providing normative constraints on the production of an argument. However, the notion that argumentation is *entirely* relative to the audience seems unacceptable to me; audiences are sometimes persuaded by bad arguments, and they are sometimes not persuaded by arguments that they ought to accept. Even the *universal* audience can sometimes accept what ought to be regarded as bad arguments, because the universal audience is constituted *by what the arguer knows* about the concrete audience at hand and about what is common to different concrete audiences (about what is reasonable), and an arguer can be mistaken both about the audience at hand and about what is reasonable. Furthermore, the reaction of the particular audience at hand is an important indicator of whether the universal audience would accept the argument presented, but the particular audience can fail to be reasonable. The reaction of either the particular, concrete audience or the universal audience, then, fails to be sufficient for the evaluation of an argument. I take it that argumentation therefore cannot be entirely relative to the audience.