

Assignment #6: The Argument Paper (Position) (Drew University, New Jersey)

<http://users.drew.edu/msanyal/Spring2005English1/Assignments.htm>

In your argument paper, your previous practice of summary, comparison, synthesis, use of rhetorical strategies, source citation and documentation etc. will begin to come together. You will take a clear position in your introduction and thesis for this argument paper.

1. Beginning research for the argument paper. You will use your academic and online sources to establish a clear, original thesis, with claim and evidence in the introduction, development of the evidence in the body, and a clear conclusion. Remember to use topic sentences and transitions to keep the organization and development of your argument clear and logical.
2. Initial requirement: For the outline, read, skim, print and bring 3 academic essays and 3 online sources to class. Bring notes and sources to class, to start your argument outline.
3. Final paper should have 3-5 academic essays (each min. 5 pages long), and 2-3 online news sources. For your academic sources, you can use books as well as academic journals.
4. Argument outline: The main assignment in the outline (2+ pages) is to have a specific thesis/claim, have a basic argument body set up, and contain enough documentation to be able to substantiate your claim. You must refer to 3-4 sources for the outline.

**15 Requirements:**

1. 3-5 academic sources including essays or books. 2. 2-3 online news sources. 3. 4 - 5 pages long. 4. Title. 5. MLA [Modern Language Association] format for in-text citation. 6. Works-cited page. 7. Proof-read.

**Guidelines to Writing and Editing the Argument Paper**

Rule 1: Feel powerful about writing an argument paper. You have to believe in what you are saying in order to be able to make any impact. If you are unsure or disinterested in your paper, it will show through and will not make an impression on anyone. If you are bold, and so your research thoroughly, your conviction about the topic will come through, and make your argument successful. Writing is about power, your power to influence others.

1. Introduction – Your introduction is one of the most powerful sections of your paper, where you can make a huge impact. Obsess over it, because this is the part where you either catch the attention of the reader, or you lose him/her.
2. State the thesis statement clearly and strongly at the beginning or in the initial part of your introduction. Your thesis should have a claim, where an opinion and/or a solution to a certain controversy...the opinion YOU think is valid, and a solution YOU think is possible, stated boldly. Do not let the audience feel that you are unsure about your own thesis and claim, because that undermines your paper.
3. Once you have stated your thesis, in the rest of the introduction, provide a brief but clear overview of what the paper is about, and what it is going to bring to the reader. If you are building a step by step argument toward a certain claim, state each of those main topics you are going to use as evidence for your claim. This way, the audience knows what to expect and looks for it while reading the paper.
4. Counterargument - Avoid mentioning any counterargument in the introduction. That should come later in the paper, and only so that you can refute it and show why the opposing argument is invalid. If you cannot refute the counterargument that an opposing party may make, do not bring it into the paper. Your paper should not have anything that will undermine the validity of its own claim.
5. Topic sentences – a topic sentence is the introductory sentence of the paragraph. Each paragraph needs a clearly stated topic sentence that introduces what you are going to discuss in that paragraph. At the same time, since your paragraph is aimed at developing the claim you have made at the beginning of your paper, it logically follows that each and every topic sentence is directly related to your claim.
6. Organization of paper / paragraphs– think about the development of your paper. Each section must be related to and developing from the previous section. The more you focus on whether the organizational buildup of the paper is effectively driving the point of your argument home at every paragraph, the more powerful your paper will be. Read every paragraph and see if that is the best place for it in the overall structure of the paper, or whether you could place it somewhere else. Your main goal is to convince the reader that your viewpoint is the most valid one. You need to think about how to develop the paper to achieve this goal. Every paragraph should serve a specific purpose, be a mini argument that furthers the entire argument along.
7. Grammar – Look out for: a) noun-pronoun agreement Avoid: b) comma splices c) short forms d) Use of “I.”
8. Source citation format for online news-sources: – (Article name 2 of 5) or (Author’s last name 2 of 6).
9. Avoid confusion of who is writing and saying what. You need to be clear in your paragraphs about which part of the writing is your own and which part has been taken from a source. While paraphrasing, start by being specific about who is giving the information. Use variations like “According to Cohen...” “As Cohen points out...” “In his article Cohen addresses the issue of...” “Cohen explains how...” “In the article such and such..., Cohen claims that...” There are multiple ways that you can introduce the author or a source, but you actually have to spend some time thinking how you can avoid being repetitive. Do not use “As Cohen says” throughout your paper, because that not only makes the paper extremely boring to read, it also shows a lack of initiative in you, because the message being sent is that you don’t care about the response of the reader at all.
9. Audience – Remember, you are trying to convince someone or some people of something. Think about who would read this paper, and then think about what rhetorical strategies you would use to convince the various audience who might be potential audience. If you forget your audience, your paper will not work, because it will not find effective proof for specific people.

### Common Logic Fallacies

**Oversimplification:** Implies an oversimplification of the situation and choices.

Examples: a) *What's wrong with this country? Just one thing. There are 11.5 million women who started but never finished high school.* b) *Love it or leave it.*

- 5 **Hasty Generalization:** Usually a conclusion based on: insufficient or unrepresentative evidence; words like always, never, all, stereotypes. Examples: a) *All required university courses are boring.* b) *Science fiction books are not worth the time it takes to read them.*

**False Analogy:** Usually the case when the writer assumes that because things are similar in one respect, they must be alike in others.

- 10 Example: *If we can put humans on the moon, we should be able to find a cure for the common cold.*

**Non Sequitur:** A conclusion that doesn't follow logically from preceding statements or that is based on irrelevant data. Example: *Mary loves good food; therefore she will be an excellent chef.*

**Circular Reasoning and Begging the Question** The first implies merely stating the conclusion in different words, whereas the second, saying the same thing in two different ways.

- 15 Example: *Faculty and administrators should not be permitted to come to student council meetings because council meetings should be for students only.*

**Appeals to Emotion:** The case of arguments aiming at winning sympathy rather than intelligent agreement.

Example: *This progressive proposal to build a large ski resort in the state park has been carefully researched by Fidelity, the large bank in the state; furthermore, it is favored by the majority of the local merchants. The only opposition comes from narrow-*

- 20 *minded, do-gooder environmentalists who care more about trees than they do about people; one of their leaders was actually arrested for disturbing the peace several years ago.*

**Bandwagon:** Attempts on the part of the writer to urge readers to believe something because others believe it or do it.

Example: *Drink New York Seltzer. Everyone else does.*

- 25 **Charged Words:** Words that produce irrational emotional reactions in American readers rather than appeal to logic as we want to do in an academic argument.

Examples: a) *Positively charged words: motherly love, patriotic.* b) *Negatively charged words: communism, drugs.*

### Supporting Your Arguments

#### Legitimate Authority and Writer Credibility

- 30 You can establish your credibility by showing that your knowledge of the subject is based on:

a) Education, training, or both b) Extensive personal experience or observations c) Reading or other contact with authorities on the subject

Because writer credibility is so important, ask yourself as you write or prepare to write what makes you enough of an authority on the subject to convince an audience to believe you. ...

- 35 If your expertise comes from reading, you must consider the source of your information. Who can be considered an authority on a given issue? A legitimate authority would have education, training, or experience in the subject. Also, a legitimate authority's point of view is objective, not biased by self-interest. Finally, a legitimate authority must be reliable, not known to distort the truth.

Think about it: What kind of person would you consider an authority on the following subjects?

Animal rights, AIDS, arranged marriages, etc.

- 40 **Signal Words and Phrases**

Cue words that signal **reasons**

since, in view of, for, first, second, because, in the first (second) place, as shown by, may be inferred from, as indicated by, may be deduced from, given that, may be derived from, assuming that, for the reason that

Cue words that signal **conclusions**

- 45 therefore, then, thus, it follows that, hence, thereby showing, so, demonstrates that, (which) shows that, allows us to infer that, (which) proves that, suggests very strongly that, implies that, you see that, points to, leads me to believe that, as a result, consequently (Constructing Arguments)

Transitions to introduce **counterarguments**

Opponents of this position argue that ..., Another argument against X is ..., Critics of this position point out that ..., It may be

- 50 objected that ..., Several questions come to mind: ..., At this point, one may wonder ..., Certain objections must, of course, be considered ...

### Models of Essay Organization

#### OPTION A

I. Introduction (+ thesis statement of intent) II. Background paragraph about topic\* (\*optional: depends on assignment, audience

- 55 and available material) III. Pro argument #1 (weakest argument that supports your opinion) IV. Pro argument #2 (stronger argument that supports your opinion) V. Pro argument #3 (strongest argument that supports your opinion) VI. Con

(counterarguments and your refutation) VII. Solution to the problem\* (\*optional: depends on assignment, audience and available

material) VIII. Conclusion (summary + solution, prediction, or recommendation)

#### OPTION C

- 60 I. Introduction (+ thesis statement of intent) II. Background paragraph about topic\* (\*optional: depends on assignment, audience and available material) III. Counterargument #1 + Pro argument to refute it IV. Counterargument #2 + Pro argument to refute it V.

Counterargument #3 + Pro argument to refute it VI. Counterargument #4 + Pro argument to refute it\* (\*optional: depends on

available material) VII. Solution to the problem\* (\*optional: depends on assignment, audience and available material) VIII.

Conclusion (summary + solution, prediction, or recommendation)