

Argument Essay Option

“The purpose of research writing is not simply to show readers what you know. It is an effort to extend a conversation about a topic that is ongoing, a conversation that includes voices of people who have already spoken, often in different contexts and perhaps never together” (Ballenger 16).

Purpose: Take an explicit position in relation to a topic (or question) that you have been continuously researching/learning about through primary and secondary source work, and build a case for understanding or action.

Audience: an educated audience of scholars and stakeholders

Format: Formal academic essay, minimum 8 pages in length, using MLA format and citations

Final Draft Due: Last day of class

Grading: 25% of your course grade

USE THE WRITING CENTER * GET EXTRA CREDIT.
Make your appointment a week in advance—it gets busy.
Don't wait until right before the paper is due.

Source Requirements:

I would like you locate and use a range of sources:

- 1) Three-four substantial (in both *length* and *engagement* with the subject) secondary sources that offer an analysis or argument about your topic or issues related to your topic (I may allow more secondary sources, but you must get my individual approval for this). These should be from experts, stakeholders, or scholars interested in your topic.
- 2) Primary research specific to your topic. This can be any kind of primary data— anything from interviews to historical records.
- 3) Any informational sources (statistics, dates, names, data, facts) can also be cited in the argument, but these should be somewhat minimal; the focus should be on your argument and engagement with the above sources. If you use informational sources, cite them in the Works Cited page. You can also include a Works Consulted page for sources you used a lot in your background research but did not cite in your paper.
- 4) You are strongly encouraged to include images or media related to your argument if they are relevant—these can help emphasize your argument.

Product:

In your paper I'll expect you to:

- Identify and contextualize your issue, giving brief history and background information necessary to understand your argument. Early or appropriately in the draft you should define key terms and concepts, carefully introduce your sources, and make it clear what your argument is responding to.
- Argue a particular perspective in your thesis; that is, be explicit about how your ideas fit into the ongoing debate/conversation. Take a position that goes beyond a simple pro/con stance to provide a more complicated and nuanced argument. Persuade readers that your perspective on the issue is important, valid, and worth considering by creating a logical progression of your own claims throughout the draft.
- Assert why your issue matters at this particular historical moment.
- Synthesize, interpret, and analyze the arguments of important stakeholders and participants of the issue (that is, your primary and secondary sources) as you make your argument.
- Work effectively and accurately with sources by summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting properly. Give brief but comprehensive summaries of each text you are using the first time you introduce it; interpret all quotes; choose and include evidence effectively (refer to Harris' strategies for coming to terms and forwarding sources). Avoid plagiarism or misuse of sources.
- Use rhetorical appeals and strategies appropriate for your rhetorical situation, anticipate counter-arguments, and demonstrate awareness of the rhetorical situations of your sources.
- If you used images or media in the paper, all inserted sources must be cited, woven into the essay, contextualized and interpreted.
- Describe your primary research and skillfully integrate it into your paper.
- Conclude with your final thoughts on why your perspective on the issue is important, valid, and worth considering. Address or resolve any questions remaining. Explain what's at stake for our society or the global community, if your conclusions are accepted. (What real-life consequences might these conclusions have? How might these issues affect the well-being of our society?) Explain clearly what you want the audience to understand, think or do.
- The essay should be a minimum of 8 pages, 12 point font, double spaced. Be sure to use proper MLA citation, and to edit carefully for grammar, mechanics, and punctuation.