Writing About Texts

Writing About Texts

FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE AT JACKSONVILLE

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Module One: Approaches to Argument and Critical Reading

Module Introduction

> *Beware of his false knowledge; it is more dangerous than ignorance.*
> ~ George Bernard Shaw, *Maxims for Revolutionists*

Regardless of one's political leanings, the 2016 U.S. Presidential election represents an instructive case study in our culture's complex and evolving relationship with credible information. In the weeks following the election's final outcomes, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg felt compelled to defend his company's content-mediation practices and dispel the notion that the many fake news stories circulating widely on various social-media platforms materially influenced the election. In her article "From Hate Speech to Fake News: The Content Crisis Facing Mark Zuckerberg," NPR reporter Aarti Shahani examines the substantial influence that Facebook has on shaping public opinion. Her piece explores an important component of what has been a difficult paradigm shift from the print culture of the twentieth century to our present digital environment—the flood of false or misleading content now freely available on the Internet.

Technology's influences on human growth and development can be complicated, and digital technologies in particular have dramatically altered American culture in just two short decades. The maps that once crowded our glove compartments have given way to automated directions linked to the Global Positioning System (GPS). The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has had to develop guidelines for regulating unmanned aircraft systems—otherwise known as "drones" in broader culture. Encyclopedias are now freely available online, travel agencies have ceded ground to digital companies such as Kayak and Travelocity, and entire libraries have been made portable via tablets and digital reading devices. Print subscriptions to newspapers are waning as consumers now turn to social media for updates from friends, relatives, and a wide variety of news agencies.

Therein lies a critical paradox of our time: Americans have access to more information than at any other time in human history, and yet we are perhaps less informed as a nation. As Shahani notes, many of the stories circulating on social media are patently false. These stories now surface with such regularity that Slate has developed a browser extension that helps readers identify news that is "intentionally misleading, [and] intentionally false." The dissemination of such damaging information is now ubiquitous in American culture, and it represents a serious impediment for our society in successfully navigating important collective issues.

This course, English Composition II, covers elements of modern rhetoric and research composition. Simply put, these learning modules build on the work of English Composition I by exposing students to the fundamental tenets of rhetorical studies while providing them with practice in developing perceptive, credible texts. Greek philosopher Aristotle defined rhetoric as the art of advancing the best means of persuasion for a given situation. The art of rhetoric, or providing your audience with sound reasons to agree with you, is founded on a variety of factors, including the needs of the audience, the purpose of the communication activity, and the environment in which that communication takes place.

In the twentieth century, information was most commonly conveyed through newspapers, magazines, and books. Physical print media required linear thinking, careful attention, and a fairly sophisticated vocabulary. In the twenty-first century, digital media is truncated, brief, and hypertextual. Contemporary students often experience greater difficulty in focusing on complex texts and complicated subjects. Theorists such as Nicholas Carr ("Is Google Making Us Stupid?") and Sven Birkerts ("Terminal Reading: Into the Electronic Millennium") argue that digital technology is contributing to widespread cognitive atrophy, the waning of the private self, and an inability to make sense of situated knowledge. In his informative text The Economics of Attention: Style and Substance in the Age of Information, UCLA scholar Richard Lanham compares the activity of conducting digital research to drinking from an informational fire hose. In short, digital technologies provide us with immense opportunities while simultaneously inhibiting some of the critical skills that we must develop to excel both in our work and as productive, informed members of society. [1]

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Compare and critically assess the features of the argumentative models advanced by Aristotle, Carl Rogers, and Stephen Toulmin.
- Apply elements of these formal approaches to rhetorical studies to their own arguments.
- Apply critical reading strategies to their analysis of complex texts in the interests of developing thoughtful, well-researched arguments. [1]

Readings

- Online Learning Content

3. Rhetorical Approaches

Rhetorical Approaches

There are numerous approaches that writers can adopt in attempting to convince an audience that an argument is sound. These formal approaches date back to as early as 400 B.C.E., when Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle began developing theories on how best to mediate important public issues.

In this course, the term “argument” can refer to a variety of persuasive texts that attempt to sway audiences toward taking action on matters of public controversy. Throughout the term, you will be asked to evaluate numerous arguments, take up your own positions on important contemporary subjects, and advance your own lengthy (ten-page) set of proofs on a subject that is important to you.

Argument need not be agonistic in nature, and the term “rhetoric” has developed negative connotations in recent years as a tool meant to confuse or obfuscate meaning in important collective issues. Rhetorical studies and argumentative discussions—from the recent Presidential debates to the kinds of colloquial conversations that we engage in at backyard cookouts—form the foundation for creating awareness, developing civility, and productively deliberating the issues that influence us as members of society. Fortunately, we live in an egalitarian society in which many of these issues are settled through the democratic process; therefore, we can disagree with each other on these important issues and still move forward as a healthy and productive nation. Always remember that it is the mark of an agile mind to be able to entertain viewpoints that you might oppose with civility and grace. [(1)]

Aristotelian Rhetoric

Aristotle correctly perceived a potential for abuse when the few unilaterally make decisions for the many. Such a circumstance might be productively mediated through including an element of discourse—or the ability to advance arguments from multiple perspectives in public settings—to help identify the best plans of action on collective issues.

While Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is certainly complex, its core tents of ethos, pathos, and logos retain a sense of elegance in their simplicity. Aristotle defined rhetoric as the best means of persuasion for a given situation, which meant that rhetoricians must make a careful assessment of the communication act and keep these rhetorical qualities in mind in advancing their cases. [(1)]

Ethos

Ethos was Aristotle's term for establishing the speaker's credibility, and he considered this the most critical element in the communication act. Ethos is comprised of "intelligence, character, and goodwill" (Rottenberg and Winchell 7). These qualities take various forms in various contexts, of course. Intelligence flows from circumstance, our lived experiences, and our formal educations. Character takes the form of truthful and just intentions and arguments based on dependable and ethical information. Goodwill flows from argumentative intent and a careful understanding of the needs of others. If a communicator can establish that he or she is worth listening to, has credible things to say, and is speaking from a place of ethical intent, then he or she has a much better chance of making a persuasive case.

Pathos

Pathos refers to the capacity to appeal to the emotional needs of the audience. Satisfying the pathetic burdens of an argument is often a product of understanding the communication purpose (*exigence*) and the target audience. Developing a feel for the audience's needs often comes down to asking a few simple questions: What am I trying to prove? Who is my audience, and what are their expectations surrounding this communication activity? Developing an understanding of such demographic components as age, race, gender, income level, and educational attainment can also shape our appeals to diverse audiences.

An instructive fictional example of this concept surfaces early in Gus Van Sant's powerful 2012 film *Promised Land* . Steve Butler (Matt Damon) is a corporate salesman hoping to secure the leasing rights to drill for natural gas on a number of family farms in rural Pennsylvania. His first act upon arrival is to stop at a local general store to purchase blue jeans, work boots, and a couple of flannel shirts. His task compels him to enter the living rooms of potential lessees that are far removed from corporate America, and his understanding of his audience's needs requires that he adjust his appearance to make the best possible case for his company's interests.

Logos

Logos refers to the logical components of an argument. These components include evidence, facts and figures, expert testimony, and the grounds for argumentation itself (induction and deduction will be explored at greater length later in the term). Providing compelling support to your audience serves a number of important purposes. Opening your argument with a compelling case study, for instance, can serve to explain the heart of the argument. If that case study includes a human element, it can aid in personifying your argument. Providing a human face to such abstract concepts as child abuse or environmental degradation, for instance, can make these complicated subjects easier to grasp for your audience. As noted in the introduction to this learning module, locating and advancing credible, relevant proof is becoming increasingly difficult in the digital era. Ideally, at the conclusion of this course, you will have developed a variety of habits and identified some productive resources in your own approach to advancing logical proofs.

Aristotle's theories seem simple enough. One should illustrate credibility early in the argumentative process. One should carefully examine the intended audience and the purpose of the communication act prior to developing an argument. And one should find credible, relevant resources upon which to base an argument.

It is important to note that Aristotle's rhetorical approach is neutral. He notes that these principles of sound argumentation can be used by both virtuous and depraved individuals, and that persuasive rhetoric can yield both positive and negative outcomes for a given society (Rapp). Developing a stronger understanding of basic logic, the logical fallacies, and the intentions of the communicator helps us identify flawed arguments so that we can attempt to refute them, ignore them, or expose them to greater culture. [1]

Rogerian Argument

The Rogerian argument, inspired by the influential psychologist Carl Rogers, aims to find compromise on a controversial issue.

If you are using the Rogerian approach, your introduction to the argument should accomplish the following tasks. Your introduction should:

Introduce the author and the work

Usually, you will introduce the author and the work early in your analysis, as in this example:

> *In Dwight Okita's "In Response to Executive Order 9066," the narrator addresses an inevitable byproduct of war—racism.* The first time that you refer to the author, refer to him or her by his or her full name. After that, refer to the author by last name only. Never refer to an author by his or her first name only.

>**Provide the audience with a short, concise summary of the source material**

Remember, your audience has already read the work you are responding to. Therefore, you do not need to provide a lengthy summary. Focus on the main points of the work to which you are responding and use direct quotations sparingly. Direct quotations work best when they are powerful and compelling.

State the main issue addressed in the work

Your thesis, or claim, will come after you summarize the two sides of the issue.

The Introduction

The following is an example of how the introduction of a Rogerian argument can be written. The topic is racial profiling.

> In Dwight Okita's "In Response to Executive Order 9066," the narrator—a young Japanese-American—writes a letter to the government, who has ordered her family into a relocation camp after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In the letter, the narrator details the people in her life, from her father to

> her best friend at school. Since the narrator is of Japanese descent, her best friend accuses her of "trying to start a war" (18). The narrator is seemingly too naÃ¯ve to realize the ignorance of this statement, and tells the government that she asked this friend to plant tomato seeds in her honor. Though Okita's poem deals specifically with World War II, the issue of race relations during wartime is still relevant. Recently, with the outbreaks of terrorism in the United States, Spain, and England, many are calling for racial profiling to stifle terrorism. The issue has sparked debate, with one side calling it racism and the other calling it common sense.

Once you have written your introduction, you must now show the two sides to the debate you are addressing. Though there are always more than two sides to a debate, Rogerian arguments put two viewpoints in stark opposition with one another. Summarize each side, then provide a middle path. Your summary of the two sides will be your first two body paragraphs. Use quotations from outside sources to effectively illustrate the position of each side. [2]

The Claim

Since the goal of Rogerian argument is to find a common ground between two opposing positions, you must identify the shared beliefs or assumptions of each side. In the example above, both sides of the racial profiling issue want to ensure the safety of the American public. A solid Rogerian argument acknowledges the desires of each side, and tries to accommodate both. Again, using the racial profiling example above, both sides desire a safer society, and perhaps a better solution would focus on more objective measures than race; an effective start would be to use more screening technology on public transportation. Once you have a claim that disarms the central dispute, you should support the claim with evidence and quotations when appropriate. (2)

Quoting Effectively

Remember, you should quote to illustrate a point you are making. You should not, however, quote to simply take up space. Make sure all quotations are compelling and intriguing: Consider the following example. In "The Danger of Political Correctness," author Richard Stein asserts that, "the desire to not offend has now become more important than protecting national security" (52). This statement sums up the beliefs of those in favor of profiling in public places. (2)

The Conclusion

Your conclusion should:

- Bring the essay back to what is discussed in the introduction
- Tie up loose ends
- End on a thought-provoking note

The following is a sample conclusion:

> Though the debate over racial profiling is sure to continue, each side desires to make the United States a safer place. With that goal in mind, our society deserves better security measures than merely searching a person who might have a darker complexion. We cannot waste time with such subjective matters, especially when we have technology that could more effectively locate potential terrorists. Sure, installing metal detectors and cameras on public

transportation is costly, but feeling safe in public is priceless. (2)

The Toulmin Approach to Rhetoric

Stephen Edelston Toulmin (born March 25, 1922) is a British philosopher, author, and educator. Influenced by the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, Toulmin devoted his works to the analysis of moral reasoning. Throughout his writings, he seeks to develop practical arguments which can be used effectively in evaluating the ethics behind moral issues. The Toulmin Model of Argumentation, a diagram containing six interrelated components used for analyzing arguments, was considered his most influential work, particularly in the field of rhetoric and communication, and in computer science.

Stephen Toulmin is a British philosopher and educator who devoted to analyzing moral reasoning. Throughout his writings, he seeks to develop practical arguments which can be used effectively in evaluating the ethics behind moral issues. His most famous work was his Model of Argumentation (sometimes called "Toulmin's Schema," which is a method of analyzing an argument by breaking it down into six parts. Once an argument is broken down and examined, weaknesses in the argument can be found and addressed. (3)

Toulmin's Schema

1. **Claim:** conclusions whose merit must be established. For example, if a person tries to convince a listener that he is a British citizen, the claim would be "I am a British citizen."
2. **Data:** the facts appealed to as a foundation for the claim. For

example, the person introduced in 1 can support his claim with the supporting data "I was born in Bermuda."

3. **Warrant:** the statement authorizing the movement from the data to the claim. In order to move from the data established in 2, "I was born in Bermuda," to the claim in 1, "I am a British citizen," the person must supply a warrant to bridge the gap between 1 & 2 with the statement "A man born in Bermuda will legally be a British Citizen." Toulmin stated that an argument is only as strong as its weakest warrant and if a warrant isn't valid, then the whole argument collapses. Therefore, it is important to have strong, valid warrants.
4. **Backing:** facts that give credibility to the statement expressed in the warrant; backing must be introduced when the warrant itself is not convincing enough to the readers or the listeners. For example, if the listener does not deem the warrant as credible, the speaker would supply legal documents as backing statement to show that it is true that "A man born in Bermuda will legally be a British Citizen."
5. **Backing:** facts that give credibility to the statement expressed in the warrant; backing must be introduced when the warrant itself is not convincing enough to the readers or the listeners. For example, if the listener does not deem the warrant as credible, the speaker would supply legal documents as backing statement to show that it is true that "A man born in Bermuda will legally be a British Citizen."
6. **Rebuttal:** statements recognizing the restrictions to which the claim may legitimately be applied. The rebuttal is exemplified as follows, "A man born in Bermuda will legally be a British citizen, unless he has betrayed Britain and become a spy of another country."
7. **Qualifier:** words or phrases expressing how certain the author/speaker is concerning the claim. Such words or phrases include "possible," "probably," "impossible," "certainly," "presumably," "as far as the evidence goes," or "necessarily." The claim "I am definitely a British citizen" has a greater degree of

force than the claim “I am a British citizen, presumably.”

The first three elements, or the “claim,” “data,” and “warrant,” are considered as the essential components of practical arguments, while the 4-6 “Qualifier,” “Backing,” and “Rebuttal” may not be needed in some arguments. When first proposed, this layout of argumentation is based on legal arguments and intended to be used to analyze arguments typically found in the courtroom; in fact, Toulmin did not realize that this layout would be applicable to the field of rhetoric and communication until later. (3)

Examples of Toulmin's Schema

Suppose you see a one of those commercials for a product that promises to give you whiter teeth. Here are the basic parts of the argument behind the commercial:

1. **Claim:** You should buy our tooth-whitening product.
2. **Data:** Studies show that teeth are 50% whiter after using the product for a specified time.
3. **Warrant:** People want whiter teeth.
4. **Backing:** Celebrities want whiter teeth.
5. **Rebuttal:** Commercial says “unless you don't want to attract guys.”
6. **Qualifier:** Fine print says “product must be used six weeks for results.”

Notice that those commercials don't usually bother trying to convince you that you want whiter teeth; instead, they assume that you have bought into the value our culture places on whiter teeth. When an assumption—a warrant in Toulmin's terms—is unstated, it's called an implicit warrant. Sometimes, however, the warrant may need to be stated because it is a powerful part of the argument. When the warrant is stated, it's called an explicit warrant. (3)

Additional Examples

Example 2:

1. **Claim:** People should probably own a gun.
2. **Data:** Studies show that people who own a gun are less likely to be mugged.
3. **Warrant:** People want to be safe.
4. **Backing**: May not be necessary. In this case, it is common sense that people want to be safe.
5. **Rebuttal:** Not everyone should own a gun. Children and those will mental disorders/problems should not own a gun.
6. **Qualifier**: The word "probably" in the claim.

Example 1:

1. **Claim:** Flag burning should be unconstitutional in most cases.
2. **Data:** A national poll says that 60% of Americans want flag burning unconstitutional
3. **Warrant:** People want to respect the flag.
4. **Backing**: Official government procedures for the disposal of flags.
5. **Rebuttal:** Not everyone in the U.S. respects the flag.
6. **Qualifier**: The phrase "in most cases"

Toulmin says that the weakest part of any argument is its weakest warrant. Remember that the warrant is the link between the data and the claim. If the warrant isn't valid, the argument collapses. (3)

Conclusion

In many instances, you will use elements of these rhetorical approaches in combination with each other as you formulate your own arguments. Elements of the Rogerian method can be useful in persuading hostile audiences to move toward compromise. Aristotle's teachings on three important tenets of the art of persuasion remain important to modern discourse, many centuries after he first recorded them in the *Rhetoric* . And Toulmin's schema provides modern rhetoricians with a valuable model consisting of the claim, warrant, and support. While each of these approaches has considerable merit, we will be using the Toulmin framework most frequently in this section of ENC 1102. [(1)]

4. Critical Reading and Rhetorical Analysis

Critical Reading and Rhetorical Analysis

Introduction

Good researchers and writers examine their sources critically and actively. They do not just compile and summarize these research sources in their writing, but use them to create their own ideas, theories, and, ultimately, their own, new understanding of the topic they are researching. Such an approach means not taking the information and opinions that the sources contain at face value and for granted, but to investigate, test, and even doubt every claim, every example, every story, and every conclusion. It means not to sit back and let your sources control you, but to engage in active conversation with them and their authors. In order to be a good researcher and writer, one needs to be a critical and active reader.

This section of the first learning module concerns the importance of critical and active reading. It is also about the connection between critical reading and active, strong writing. Much of the discussion you will find in this chapter is fundamental to research and writing, no matter what writing genre, medium, or academic discipline you read and write in. Every other approach to research writing and every other research method and assignment offered in other courses is, in some way, based upon the principles discussed in this chapter.

Reading stands at the heart of the research process. No matter what kinds of research sources and methods you use, you are always reading and interpreting text. Most of us are used to hearing the word "reading" in relation to secondary sources, such as books, journals, magazines, Web sites, and so on. But even if you are using other research methods and sources, such as interviewing someone or surveying a group of people, you are reading. You are reading their subjects' ideas and views on the topic you are investigating. Even if you are studying photographs, cultural artifacts, and other non-verbal research sources, you are reading them, also, by trying to connect them to their cultural and social contexts and to understand their multiple meanings. Principles of critical reading, which we are about to discuss in this chapter, apply to those research situations as well.

I like to think about reading and writing not as two separate activities, but as two tightly connected parts of the same whole. That whole is the process of learning and the creation of new meaning. It may seem that reading and writing are complete opposites of one another. According to the popular view, when we read, we "consume" texts, and when we write, we "produce" texts. But this view of reading and writing is true only if you see reading as a passive process of taking in information from the text and not as an active and energetic process of making new meaning and new knowledge. Similarly, good writing does not originate in a vacuum, but instead is usually based upon, or at least influenced by, other ideas, theories, and stories that come from reading. So if, as a college student, you have ever wondered why your writing teachers have asked you to read books and articles and write responses to them, it is because writers who do not read and do not actively engage with their reading, have little to say to others.

Life presents us with a variety of reading situations which demand different reading strategies and techniques. Sometimes, it is important to be as efficient as possible and read purely for information or "the main point." At other times, it is important to just "let go" and turn the pages following a good story, although this sometimes means not thinking deeply about the story you are reading. At the heart of writing and research, however, lies the kind of reading known as critical reading. The critical examination of sources is what makes their use in research possible and what allows writers to create rhetorically effective and engaging texts.[4]

Key Features of Critical Reading

Critical readers are able to interact with the texts they read through carefully listening, writing, conversation, and questioning. They do not sit back and wait for the meaning of a text to come to them, but work hard in order to create such meaning. Critical readers are not made overnight. Becoming a critical reader will take a lot of practice and patience. Depending on your current reading philosophy and experiences with reading, becoming a critical reader may require a significant change in your whole understanding of the reading process. The trade-off is worth it, however. By becoming a more critical and active reader, you will also become a better researcher and a better writer. Last but not least, you will enjoy reading and writing a whole lot more because you will become actively engaged in both.

Critical reading, then, is a two-way process. As reader, you are not a consumer of words, waiting patiently for ideas from the printed page or a web-site to fill your head and make you smarter. Instead, as a critical reader, you need to interact with what you read, asking questions of the author, testing every assertion, fact, or idea, and extending the text by adding your own understanding of the subject and your own personal experiences to your reading.

The idea behind the rhetorical theory of reading is that when we read, we not only take in ideas, information, and facts, but in the process we also “update our view of the world.” This is what it means to be a monitoring citizen. You cannot force someone to update his or her worldview, and therefore, the purpose of writing is persuasion and the purpose of reading is being persuaded. Persuasion is possible only when the reader is actively engaged with the text and understands that much more than simple retrieval of information is at stake when reading. [4]

The following are key features of the critical approach to reading:

- No text, however skillfully written or authoritative, contains its own, pre-determined meaning. Audiences bring their education, situated knowledge, and experience to bear on texts in order to better understand their meanings.
- Readers must work hard to create meaning from every text. All complex texts contain surface meaning and subtext. Often, readers have to think of the bigger picture in making sense of how a subject can influence broader culture.
- Critical readers interact with the texts that they read by questioning them, responding to them, and expanding them, usually in writing.
- Critical readers actively search for related texts to place these works in conversation with each other to advance important ideas. Consider how subjects from your other courses and experiences connect to the sources you are reading. [5]

From Reading to Writing

As stated earlier in this chapter, actively responding to difficult texts, posing questions, and analyzing ideas presented in them is the key to successful reading. The goal of an active reader is to engage in a conversation with the text that he or she is reading. In order to fulfill this goal, it is important to understand the difference between reacting to the text and responding to it.

Reacting to a text is often done on an emotional—rather than on an intellectual—level. It is often quick and shallow. For example, if we encounter a text that advances arguments with which we strongly disagree, it is natural to dismiss those ideas out of hand as flawed and unworthy of our attention. Doing so would be reacting to the text based only on emotions and on our pre-determined opinions about its arguments. It is easy to see that reacting in this way does not take the reader any closer to understanding the text. A wall of disagreement that existed between the reader and the text before the reading continues to exist after the reading.

Responding to a text, on the other hand, requires a careful study of the ideas presented and the arguments advanced in it. Critical readers who possess this skill are not willing to simply reject or accept the arguments presented in the text after the first reading right away. To continue with our example from the preceding paragraph, a reader who responds to a controversial text rather than reacting to it might apply several of the following strategies before forming and expressing an opinion about that text.

Strategies

- Read the text several times, taking notes, asking questions, and underlining key places. Look for "starring sentences," or those phrases or passages that use language in creative, memorable ways to underline key points.
- Study why the author of the text advances ideas, arguments, and convictions, so different from the reader's own. For example, is the text's author advancing an agenda of some social, political, religious, or economic group of which he or she is a member?
- Study the purpose and the intended audience of the text.
- Study the history of the argument presented in the text as much as possible. For example, modern texts on highly controversial issues such as the death penalty, abortion, or euthanasia often use past events, court cases, and other evidence to advance their claims. Knowing the history of the problem will help you to construct a more comprehensive

meaning of a difficult text.

- Study the social, political, and intellectual context in which the text was written. Good writers use social conditions to advance controversial ideas. Compare the context in which the text was written to the one in which it is read. For example, have social conditions changed, thus invalidating the argument or making it stronger?
- Consider the author's (and your own) previous knowledge of the issue at the center of the text and your experiences with it. How might such knowledge or experience have influenced your reception of the argument?

Taking all these steps will help you to move away from simply reacting to a text and towards constructing informed and critical response to it. (6)

Strategies for Connecting Reading and Writing

If you want to become a critical reader, you need to get into the habit of writing as you read. You also need to understand that complex texts often require multiple close readings. During the second and any subsequent readings, however, you will need to write, and write a lot. The following are some critical reading and writing techniques which active readers employ as they work to create meanings from texts they read.

Students should get into the habit of composing extended responses to readings. Writing students are often asked to write one or two-page exploratory responses to readings, but they are not always clear on the purpose of these responses and on how to approach writing them. By writing reading responses, you are continuing the important activities of critical reading which you began when you compiled notes on the salient points of the text you are analyzing. You are extending the meaning of the text by creating your own commentary to it and perhaps even branching off into creating your own argument inspired by your reading. Your teacher may give you a writing prompt, or ask you to come up with your own topic for a response. In either case, realize that reading responses are supposed to be exploratory; they are designed to help you delve deeper into the text you are reading than mere note-taking or underlining will allow.

When writing extended responses to the readings, it is important to keep one thing in mind, and that is their purpose. The purpose of these exploratory responses, which are often rather informal, is not to impress your classmates and your teacher with "big" words and complex sentences. On the contrary, it is to help you understand the text you are working with at a deeper level. The verb "explore" means to investigate something by looking at it more closely. Investigators get leads, some of which are fruitful and useful and some of which are dead-ends. As you investigate and create the meaning of the text you are working with, do not be afraid to take different directions with your reading responses. In fact, it is important to resist the urge to make conclusions or think that you have found out everything about your reading. When it comes to exploratory reading responses, lack of closure and presence of more leads at the end of the piece can actually be a good thing. Of course, you should always check with your teacher for standards and formatting with regard to reading responses. (6)

Guidelines for Writing a Successful Response

Try the following guidelines to write a successful response to a reading:

1. Remember that your goal is often exploration. The purpose of writing a response is to construct the meaning of a difficult text. It is not to get the job done as quickly as possible and in

as few words as possible.

2. As you write, “talk back to the text.” Make comments, ask questions, and elaborate on complex thoughts. This part of the writing becomes much easier if, prior to writing your response, you had read the assignment with a pen in hand and marked important places in the reading.
3. If your teacher provides a response prompt, make sure that you understand it. Then, try to answer the questions in the prompt to the best of your ability. While you are doing that, do not be afraid to introduce related texts, examples, or experiences. Active reading is about making connections, and your readers will appreciate your work because it will help them understand the text better.
4. While your primary goal is exploration and questioning, make sure that others can understand your response. While it is sometimes fine to be informal in your response, make every effort to write in a clear, error-free language that is amenable to academic writing at the collegiate level.
5. Involve your audience in the discussion of the reading by asking questions, expressing opinions, and connecting to responses made by others.

Many of the weekly assignments in this section of ENC 1102, which include quizzes and class-wide discussions, have a minimum guideline of at least eight paragraphs in length. For most student writers, this roughly equates to composing a two-page essay. Students should become comfortable with composing sufficiently insightful, clearly written analyses in this format, as the two-page document is a common length for writing outside of the classroom and in the workplace.

Now, it is time to practice what you have learned concerning the formal approaches to rhetorical theory and critical reading. Before you take this week’s quiz, critically read and analyze the following essay on the prevalence and consequences of fake news. When you feel that you have a stronger understanding of what Professor Pablo

Boczkowski is saying about our contemporary information culture, navigate to the quiz and record your response to the questions in the prompt. (7)

5. "Fake News and the Future of Journalism" by Pablo Boczkowski

"Fake News and the Future of Journalism" by Pablo Boczkowski

> "Every public has its own universe of discourse andâ€¦humanly speaking, a fact is only a fact in some universe of discourse."

Writing those words three quarters of a century before the Oxford Dictionaries named "post-truth" the 2016 word of the year, Robert Park—a former newspaper journalist and one of the founders of the Chicago School of sociology—understood fake news to be an intrinsic element of any information ecology. Long before Mark Zuckerberg started to be treated as a rapacious business man, noted real and fictitious publishers such as William Randolph Hearst and Charles Foster Kane aimed to exploit the commercial potential of fake news, as did others who predated and succeeded them. On top of intentional attempts to distort or misinform, many unintentional mistakes caught by the public—and a suspicion that there might exist more unidentified ones—have further reinforced a certain stance of skepticism among media audiences over the inherent veracity of the news report.

Yet it is not an overstatement to say that the main story about journalism in the first month after the election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States has been a sense of collective shock, outrage, and despair over the prevalence of fake news. Why has this been the case? And what does this mean for the short-term future of journalism?

Most post-election reports on fake news have focused on production side issues, such as the location and potential motivations of the various purveyors of fake news; the changing geopolitical landscape of information warfare; the economic benefits for social media and search engine platforms; and the need and desirability to implement technical and/or financial restrictions that could minimize the spread of misinformation, among others. A production side focus is important and these are all valid instantiations of it. However, this piece examines the other side of the coin by concentrating on some reception dynamics that might undergird the greater prevalence of fake news in the contemporary setting than in the past.

Setting aside discussions about echo chamber and filter bubble effects, which have been analyzed profusely, I want to address three concurrent trends in our media reception practices related to the rising presence of fake news. First, there is ambivalence toward an information infrastructure in which the barriers of access to having one's voice heard are lower than in the past, and where the reach is potentially much broader. Second, there is a growing perception of limitations in the ability to detect bias in a media environment in which editorial selection increasingly relies on algorithms. Third, there is a crisis in the cultural authority of knowledge that affects not only journalism but other key institutions of modern life, including science, medicine, and education.

Fake news stories have been around for as long as truthful ones. One element that distinguishes the contemporary moment is the existence of a fairly novel information infrastructure with a scale, scope, and horizontality of information flows unlike anything we had seen before. Facebook, for instance, reaches more than 1 billion users daily. This infrastructure enables people to create content alongside established media institutions, and not merely consume it. This, in turn, has allowed previously silent voices to be heard, not just in their localities but all over the world. We have credited these changes with contributing to the breakdown of authoritarian regimes such as in the case of the Arab spring. But these are the same changes that have made it possible for a fake news story about Pope Francis endorsing Donald Trump to be shared hundreds of thousands of times.

We celebrate the new infrastructure when it helps undermine information practices of oppressive governments, and denounce it when it contributes to misinforming the citizens of liberal democratic states. But unfortunately, it seems unrealistic to have one without the other, since they are the two sides of the same coin. This does not mean that truthful accounts of oppressive governments are equivalent to untruthful accounts about democratic candidates, but that the information infrastructure that contributes to the spread of both types of accounts is one and the same. Ambivalence about this infrastructure might tempt us to call for policing its destabilizing capabilities in some cases, but this might have the unintended consequence of curtailing its emancipatory potential in others.

This ambivalence is related to a second trend, namely a growing perception in the limitations of detecting bias in algorithmic editing in comparison to human editing. Traditional journalistic outfits have been around for a long time. Over the years, the public has collectively developed ways of identifying bias, and also for distinguishing truthful accounts from parodic or satirical ones. The Watergate investigation was taken to be truthful, the Swift Boat story was initially lent some credibility but discredited later, and the ingenious headlines of publications such as The Onion are not normally interpreted literally.

On the contrary, platforms like Google and Facebook are much more recent additions to the media ecosystem, and their selection procedures are far less known by the public. In addition, their reliance on algorithmic curation has endowed these procedures with a certain opacity that makes it even more difficult for the public to come up with strategies that successfully identify bias. Algorithms do not come from out of the blue: They are written by people who often work for complex organizations. These people and organizations go about their business with conscious and unconscious biases that result in, as Larry Lessig and others have argued, politics in code. However, we feel less capable of deciphering the politics embedded in code than those embodied primarily by people and organizations.

The issues of ambivalence and limitations in bias detection converge with a deep crisis in the cultural authority of knowledge. Trust in the media as an institution has been fairly low for a long time. In an ongoing research project on the consumption of news, my collaborators and I have found, for instance, that the same news item is attributed a higher level of credibility if it is shared by a contact on a social media platform than if it is read directly on the news site that originates it. When asked about this difference, interviewees say it is because they often distrust the media since they are inherently biased, and, on the contrary, their default stance towards their contacts is one based on trust.

This crisis in the cultural authority of knowledge is not an exclusive property of the news. It also applies to other key institutions of modern life, such as medicine, science, and education. We find expressions of this crisis in the debates over the role of vaccines in the rise of autism, which has been echoed in the media and has led to many concerned parents, despite the repeated statements to the contrary by leading medical experts. We also see traces of this crisis in science. For instance, the controversy of evolution versus creationism is still alive and affects the teaching of biology in many schools, in spite of the lack of support for creationism from reputable scientific sources. Social institutions like the media, medicine, science, and education had the capacity to effectively moderate the notion advanced by Robert Park that "a fact is only a fact in some universe of discourse," and thus create a stronger common ground among disparate constituencies. But this capacity seems to be less effective these days than in the past.

What does this mean for the future of journalism, at least in the short term? Despite the widespread cry for technical solutions and commercial sanctions, it is unlikely that things will change drastically until there are concurrent transformations in reception practices. It may be possible to develop algorithms that identify sources that have repeatedly propagate false information and automatically impose restrictions on their ability to get advertisement revenues. That might bring a temporary fix to centralized attempts to maliciously misinform. But I suspect that those perpetrators could easily dismantle a given operation and quickly launch another one. In addition, this would not necessarily stop decentralized sources of fake news that either intentionally or unintentionally create and/or spread false accounts on social media. These policing procedures could also have an unintended negative effect on parody and satire, which have long had a healthy role in the quality of democratic discourse, and raise the specter of censorship more generally.

If my short-term prediction about the limitations of production-side remedies is right, what we might see alongside with these attempts to algorithmically curtail the spread of fake news is that mainstream journalistic organizations would increasingly have to demonstrate to the public the veracity of the news—and denounce the falsity of alternative accounts—rather than take for granted that aspect of the reception experience. This might possibly not reduce the reliance on fake news stories among those predisposed to believe what these stories state, but it could raise awareness among the less committed segment of the public.

Beneath the surface of many post-election discussions about fake news lies a certain collective unease about the mismatch between the 20th-century routines associated with print and broadcast media, and the 21st-century information practices of our increasingly digital lives. Maybe it is no longer feasible to assume that the delegation of editorial processes to mainstream media suffices to yield accounts about current events that form the basis of common decision making among the citizenry. This is not a normative claim about whether this is desirable or not, but an empirical observation based on the information practices of large segments of the population. We can feel nostalgic about a media world slowly but steadily waning, or instead imagine that perhaps a more decentralized and effective everyday culture of critique and argumentation might emerge over time. As Leonard Cohen wrote in “Anthem”:

> Ring the bells that still can ring Forget your perfect offering There is a crack in everything That’s how the light gets in. (8)

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6. Module 1 Assessments

Greetings and Introductions Discussion

This is a course link to the Greetings and Introductions Discussion Board.

Please take a moment to drop in and introduce yourself. Also, please answer the following questions so we can all begin to get know each other a little better:

- What are some of your professional or personal goals in life, and how do you expect your experiences in higher education to influence those goals?
- What is a topic of American public controversy that you are passionate about, and why does this subject interest you?

This is my first chance to evaluate your writing skills, so make sure that you edit your work for punctuation, phrasing, and grammar.

In the interests of keeping these forums orderly and ensuring that all of our discussion posts have the potential of being reviewed here in Blackboard, I've disabled the ability to create new threads. You can post your own introduction by simply clicking on the "reply" button beneath the parent thread inside of this forum.

I am looking for a writing sample of at least three to five fully developed paragraphs in length, and I look forward to learning more about each of you! (1)

Quiz One: Critical Reading and Rhetorical Analysis

Instructions:

To complete this quiz, you will need to read and study this module's Learning Unit, including the article, "Fake News and the Future of Journalism" by Pablo Boczkowski.

In a fully developed short essay (minimum of eight paragraphs in length), please answer all of the questions below. Your work should include an introduction, a body of supporting evidence, and a conclusion. Please take some time to edit your work for punctuation, usage, and clarity prior to submission.

You have **two hours** in which to complete this assignment. **Once you have opened the quiz, you cannot save your work and return to it at a later date** . It is recommended that you compose your work in a word processor and save a copy to your local computer in the event that you experience technical difficulties with your Internet connection or Blackboard. [(1)]

Questions for Analysis:

1) Of the three formal approaches outlined earlier in this learning module, which do you think is most effective for communicating in contemporary rhetorical situations? Be specific in supporting your answer.

2) What is Boczkowski saying about the influences of fake news on our current informational climate? What are the three effects that he sees as most damaging to our society, and is he optimistic or pessimistic about the near future of journalism?

3) As a consumer of information now taking college courses, how do *you* make sure that the sources you use to formulate your worldview and support your arguments are credible?

4) Finally, what do you feel are the consequences of fake news on American society? How have digital communication tools contributed to this problem?

Where applicable, feel free to use hyperlinks to connect your essay to a resource or two in support of your answers. (1)

PART III
MODULE 2: EXAMINING ARGUMENTS

7. Introduction

Module Two: Examining Multimodal Arguments

Module Introduction

Arguments surround us. Our daily experiences are filled with arguments that are communicated through a variety of media, including those transmitted through radio, television, Internet, and in public and personal conversations. While many of these rhetorical appeals—such as advertisements and other commercial messages—simply create the background noise of our daily lives, it is useful to develop some strategies for assessing these messages and writing about their features. This module will provide you with some rhetorical tactics and a practical vocabulary for analyzing and writing about visual and audio arguments. [1]

> *It's in our biology to trust what we see with our eyes. This makes living in a carefully edited, overproduced, and Photoshopped world very dangerous.*
> ~ Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Identify the rhetorical components of a visual argument.

- Identify prominent features of common communication genres.
- Write about how common communication genres influence the rhetorical situation.
- Identify prominent features of successful speeches and other verbal arguments.
- Write about how verbal arguments create a rhetorical impression with audiences. (1)

Readings

- Online Learning Unit
- Navigating Genres by Kerry Dirk (17)

8. Commercial Messages

The Power of Commercial Messages

The vast majority of rhetorical appeals that most of us encounter on a daily basis don't take the form of a written argument. Each of us is inundated on a daily basis with advertisements in the form of billboards, bumper stickers, vehicle wraps, marketing jingles, corporate logos, digital pop-ups, and print brochures. Multimodal arguments, or those messages that are conveyed through pictures, audio, video, digital, and other forms of media, comprise the bulk of persuasive appeals that we engage with, and many of these messages must also undergo a rigorous process of critical scrutiny as we work to understand their various meanings.

In his influential text *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* , media theorist Neil Postman argues that American culture underwent a passive phase shift in our relationship with critical information in the middle of the last century. He contends that television—a medium predicated on audio and visual presentations—became the dominant conduit for transmitting information in our culture, marginalizing what he views as the more sophisticated traditions of reading and writing. Two important components of Postman's argument are the notions that commercial sponsorship undermines informational credibility and that the brief, sensationalized nature of television programming leads to shallow, context-free reporting. He makes a compelling case for paying careful attention to the messages and media that surround us; developing a clearer framework for understanding these arguments is the overarching objective of this learning module.

Because of their immediacy and their diffusion throughout culture, it can be easy to dismiss many of these appeals as inconsequential. But advertising, from overt political attack ads to subtle product placement in films and television shows, surrounds us at all times, profoundly shaping our approaches to life and our participation in culture. In his essay "Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse," media theorist Dr. Sut Jhally assesses the powerful nature of advertising's influence:

> To reject advertising as false or manipulative misses the point. Ad executive Jerry Goodis puts it this way: "Advertising doesn't mirror how people are acting but how they are dreaming" (Nelson). It taps into our real emotions and repackages them back to us, connected to the world of things. What advertising really reflects in that sense is the dreamlife of the culture. Even saying this, however, simplifies a deeper process because advertisers do more than mirror our dreamlife—they help to create it. They translate our desires (for love, for family, for friendship, for sex) into our dreams. Advertising is like a fantasy factory, taking our desire for human social contact and reconceiving it, reconceptualizing it, [and] connecting it with the world of commodities and then translating it into a form that can be communicated. [(1)]

Analyzing Visual Arguments

In that sense, advertising, marketing, and propaganda are communication domains that are deeply ingrained into almost all aspects of human social culture. Because these arguments are plentiful, repetitious, and seemingly everywhere, we rarely pause to consider how they are shaping our relationships to the natural world and each other, what they say about important cultural ideals like love and family, or even why we can't stop humming those inane jingles when we are driving with the radio on. [(1)]

Consider this advertisement, first published in 1948 in the *Ladies' Home Journal* :

7-Up advertisement [Source Link] is available under public domain (circa 1889).

The original text that accompanies this advertisement states:

> DO THINGS TOGETHER! BE A FRESH UP FAMILY! With Dad as switchman, Sonny at the controls, Mom as gatesman, and Sis a make-believe passenger, there's bounds to be loads of fun aboard the All-Family Express! And with crystal-clear 7-Up at hand for everyone, the picture is complete. For wholesome 7-Up adds enjoyment to every family activity—whether it's work or play. See for yourself how lively 7-Up dances and sparkles on your tongueâ€¦how it really quenches indoor thirst. Order today where you see those eye-catching 7-Up signs. [9]

The advertisement positions 7-Up not as the fairly generic soft drink that it actually is, but instead as a "wholesome" beverage that draws people together and enhances familial quality time. In that sense, this general commodity acts almost like a magical elixir, and its very presence at the table both unites the family and validates their shared experience. These are powerful ideologies, of course, and 7-Up is attempting to cast itself in a very specific light with the hopes that consumers will equate the product with the qualities and characteristics of "family." [1]

Types of Visual Arguments

If we reflect on the lessons of the first learning module, we can see that the various rhetorical appeals to logic (logos), pathos (emotion), and ethos (credibility) that Aristotle identified also figure prominently in multimodal arguments. While some messages do encapsulate all three components of Aristotle's model, the vast majority of advertisements attempt to provoke an emotional response. When assessing visual rhetoric, one should consider a couple of important questions:

- What is this piece trying to accomplish? What, ultimately, is it trying to get me to do?
- Is this piece appealing to my heart, or to my head?

The answer to the first question is usually fairly simple—most ads are, of course, attempting to convince you to hand over your cash or your credit card. Some messages, however, have altruistic motives and are attempting to raise awareness or create positive change. Consider this well-known piece, which is part of what is considered one of the most successful and longest running public service campaigns in American history. [1]

"Only You" By Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Association of State Foresters and the Advertising Council, Public Domain, from [Source Link].

The United States Forest Service has operated a public-awareness campaign featuring Smokey Bear since 1944. According to the Forest

Service's Web site, "the Smokey Bear Wildfire Prevention campaign is the longest-running public service advertising campaign in U.S. history" ("About the Campaign"). The advertisements have featured prominently on radio, television, and in print, with a run of popular television spots airing as recently as 2014 (you can view these on YouTube). The campaign has provided generations of Americans with important lessons on preventing wildfires—a critically important responsibility in protecting public lands.

These messages seem to resonate for a variety of reasons. The United States Forest Service observed that Disney's 1942 film *Bambi* proved popular with audiences, and the film's harrowing forest fire seemed particularly prevalent in the public consciousness. Seeking to capitalize on the film's success, the Forest Service created the origin story for a bear cub named Smokey. They were looking for a symbol that was "majestic, powerful (but also cute)" ("About the Campaign"). By settling on a symbol that was easily relatable to children, the Forest Service understood they could establish their messages of conservation, care, and prevention with children at an early age. In the decades since the start of the campaign, the Smokey Bear mascot has made hundreds of visits to American schools to reinforce these messages. The campaign's current slogan, which reads "Only You Can Prevent Wildfires," also operates rhetorically to place the onus for conservation and preservation squarely on the audience—instilling a healthy measure of responsible participation on the audience. [1]

Advertisements as Cultural Touchstones

Many print advertisements advance multiple appeals. If we apply the Toulmin schema to these messages, we invariably find claims of fact, claims of value, and claims of policy in their messages. While some visual appeals rely primarily on statistics and figures (claims of fact) and others rely on comparisons (claims of value), all advertisements function as claims of policy. In other words, they are attempting to get you to do something—to act on a rhetorical message. These appeals ask us to purchase items, to change our behaviors, to become aware of important social issues, and to choose certain products over their competitors.

Because they are reactive to market conditions, advertisements typically reflect short-term concerns. Because they rarely consider what life may resemble many years in the future, they can also operate as important historical indicators of culture and society. Here is an example of an advertisement that reflects some of the overtly misogynistic views that were more prevalent in the middle of the last century. (1)

Kenwood Chef advertisement [Source Link] is made available by Graham Richardson and is available under a CC BY 2.0 license.

9. Visual Arguments

Features of Visual Arguments

Many advertisements use what some rhetoricians might call "scare tactics" to create a persuasive argument. Some might call these "faulty emotional appeals," which would be an example of a logical fallacy, which we will study more closely in a subsequent learning module. However, context is important in assessing these appeals and many could be considered ethical in the sense that they are raising awareness on important public health issues. Here is an example from the Truth campaign, which attempts to create awareness on the dangers of smoking. (1)

Smoking Kills is by Stellapark 025 [Source Link] and is available under a CC By-SA 4.0 license.

Assessing Visual Arguments

Whatever their purpose, assessing and responding to multimodal arguments is an important critical practice in a culture that is simply saturated with such messages. Many of these rhetorical negotiations take place on an intuitive level. We understand, for instance, that just because musician Lil Wayne pours champagne on his Samsung Galaxy S7 phone in a popular television advertisement, we shouldn't necessarily follow suit (although, as if we needed further clarification, Samsung includes the phrase "do not attempt" in the fine print at the bottom of the commercial). But the fact remains that speeches, public-service announcements, press addresses, print advertisements, podcasts, and television news stories dominate our informational environment. Making sense of how these messages operate rhetorically is important for us as consumers, citizens, and cultural participants, and that process begins with a clearer understanding of how various media and different genres logically organize and present information. (1)

Analyzing Visual Rhetoric

An important element of understanding visual rhetoric, which most commonly takes the form of advertisements, is understanding context. Context refers to the informational landscape in which the communication act takes place, and this includes a variety of elements:

- **Historic and social context** —when was the piece created, and what were the important cultural and social events and movements of that era?
- **Genre** —does this piece fall into a particular genre (i.e. the celebrity appeal, the layperson appeal, the appeal to fear, or the familial appeal)?

- **Media** —where was the piece first disseminated? Did it appear in magazines, newspapers, or online? Is the piece intended for broad audiences or smaller, more esoteric groups?
- **Origin** —who designed the piece? Which company sponsored its creation and dissemination?
- **Purpose** —what is the piece trying to do? Is it asking an audience to purchase something, or to choose a particular brand over a competitor? Is it trying to raise awareness or educate an audience?
- **Timing and targeting** —is the piece seasonal? Is it specific only to a given field or profession?
- **Warrants** —what are the underlying assumptions that the producers of the piece share with the audience?
- **Branding** —does the producer of the piece attempt to associate the message with a particular symbol? Ralph Lauren (polo player), Nike (the swoosh), and Lacoste (an alligator) are among the pioneers of building a powerful connection between audiences and symbols.
- **Audience** —which audience is the piece targeting? How do all of the elements listed here come together to illustrate this, and is the particular document effective in connecting with its audience?

Taken together, developing a stronger understanding of how these elements create meaning in visual rhetoric can help consumers of information make informed decisions about which products they purchase, which causes they support, and how they live their lives. (1)

10. Goals of Advertisers

Common Goals of Advertisers

In *The Structure of Argument* , rhetoricians Annette T. Rottenberg and Donna Haisty Winchell list the five common goals of the advertiser. According to one industry analyst, a successful ad should do the following:

- attract attention
- arouse interest
- stimulate desire
- create conviction
- get action (70)

Commercial rhetoric attempts to compel audiences through these five activities in a variety of ways, with the celebrity appeal being one of the most common visual genres.

As an example, consider a popular recent advertisement for the Lincoln MKC sports utility vehicle. In this much-discussed commercial, acclaimed actor Matthew McConaughey tools down the road in a stylish vehicle, discussing his appreciation for the product:

> I've been driving a Lincoln since long before anybody paid me to drive one.
> I didn't do it to be cool.
> I didn't do it to make a statement.
> I just liked it.

It was the first piece of visual rhetoric in what has been a critically successful series of appeals by Lincoln. As Barbara Herman notes in her article "Why Matthew McConaughey's Lincoln Car Ad Is A Big

Deal, Signals a Cultural Shift In Ideas About Celebrity, TV's Status, And Commercialism," the ad is significant:

> For years, A-list Hollywood treated TV commercials with extreme caution. While many felt free to shill products abroad—a phenomenon illustrated by Bill Murray's character in the 2003 [film] "Lost In Translation"—TV ads were thought to be beneath serious movie stars. But McConaughey's presence is the most brazen indication that there's not much of a taboo left, signaling a change in the notion of celebrity and the growing cachet of TV. What's more, "selling out" means little to many young people who've grown up with the idea of the celebrity endorsement and the understanding of celebrities as brands.
>
> There just isn't a stigma to doing TV, or commercials on TV, anymore. Today the public understands celebrities as brands, and an appearance in a commercial is just another way of extending it.

As Herman notes, the piece aims to capitalize on a contextual shift in how contemporary audiences view celebrity, television as a credible medium, and commercialism. The advertisement attempts to humanize a Hollywood actor; in its attempt to accomplish this, the appeal assumes that we, too, would appreciate the "no-nonsense" approach to driving a Lincoln that McConaughey has adopted—never mind the associated price tag of purchasing such a vehicle. (1)

Analyzing the Speech Act

Verbal appeals are also common throughout our daily lives. Classroom lectures, workplace addresses, religious sermons, and commercial dialogues are just a few of the common speech acts that attempt to influence human behavior.

I have a vivid recollection of listening to a Presidential debate between Governor Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama on the radio while driving from Orlando to Jacksonville back in the fall of 2012. It was a memorable experience because I could rely only on my auditory senses to judge the candidates' responses to the questions. Without the ability to see hand gestures, facial expressions, and other forms of body language, I had to focus on the tone and tenor of the responses. The organization of the sentences, the vocabulary choices, and the rhetorical styles of the speech acts themselves moved to the forefront of the communication act, and listening to the candidates speak provided me with a really unique experience in what has become a largely visual culture.

Of course, we encounter the speech act in a variety of contexts, and the most frequent modality is the audiovisual appeal. As Rottenberg and Winchell note, audiovisual "rhetoric includes all that the human voice adds, from a regional dialect to a tine of nervousness; television includes all that the visual dimension adds, from body language to hair style. And, of course, in television commercials we see most of the features of print ads with the addition of sound and motion" (79).

When preparing to critique a verbal appeal, consider the following practices:

- **Prereading** —where possible, make an effort to research the affiliation of the speaker(s) and attempt to get a feel for any potential biases that may surface in the course of the appeal. Sponsorship is also important. Which company or organization is supporting the speech act? Is the message tied to commerce? Politics? Is the communication act unrehearsed or spontaneous, or is it highly moderated? What are the goals of the speaker (to educate, persuade, sell, inform, or connect)?
- **Critiquing for Content** —which messages stand at the core of the speaker's message? If at all possible, take notes and record the major subdivisions discussed in the verbal appeal. Is the speaker using emotional appeals or facts, figures, and statistics

to advance his or her view? Is the support sufficient to establish a successful argument?

- **Critiquing Rhetorical Content** —how does the speaker establish a rapport with the audience? Are there any “starring sentences” or speech hallmarks that the speaker refers to throughout the verbal appeal? How does the speaker move from the opening of the appeal through the conclusion?
- **Conclusion** —the most important evaluation here is whether the speech act was successful. Did it accomplish its goals? Is the audience sufficiently moved to act on the appeals being advanced, whether they be commercial, social, cultural, or political?

Many prominent public figures have speech signatures that help distinguish them as speakers. Consider some of the speeches given by American Presidents over the last half-century and you can locate many starring sentences and historically relevant catchphrases. An important goal in the process of becoming a monitoring citizen is developing the critical skill of being able to differentiate between style and substance. Rhetoric informs both style and substance, of course, and one must be careful to be able to appreciate the elegance of an argument while also critiquing its substantive, actionable qualities. Conversely, some rhetorically simplistic speeches communicate significant messages, and shouldn’t be dismissed for their minimalism. [(1)]

11. Module 2 Assessments

Discussion: Navigating Genres

Instructions:

For our first class-wide discussion, please read the essay, Navigating Genres by Kerry Dirk and post your responses to the discussion prompt before the deadline listed in the course calendar.

In a fully developed short essay (minimum of eight paragraphs in length), please answer all of the questions below and post your essay to the discussion forum. Your work should include an introduction, a body of supporting evidence, and a conclusion.

Remember that you are having a conversation with your peers in this particular genre of writing, so adopt an appropriate tone and vocabulary for an audience of contemporary college students. Please take time to edit your work for punctuation, usage, and clarity prior to submission. Don't forget to comment on the works of two peers in order to earn full credit for these discussions. [(1)] [(17)]

Questions for Analysis:

1) What is Dirk saying about the nature of rhetorical genres? Cite the essay specifically in formulating your answer.

2) Which genres do you follow most closely? Using at least two different genres, cite some specific examples from these genres and comment on their rhetorical features. What are the hallmarks of these communication types?

3) What, in your view, are the important components of the

advertising genre? What about the contemporary speech or verbal address?

Where applicable, feel free to use hyperlinks to connect your essay to a resource or two in support of your answers. [(1)]

PART IV

MODULE 3: UNDERSTANDING LOGIC AND REASONING

12. Introduction

Module Three: Understanding Logic and Reasoning

Module Introduction

The sole and ultimate end of logic is the eviction of truth…

~ George Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*

In the first module, we learned more about critical reading and some of the more prominent formal approaches to rhetorical studies. The second module outlined some strategies for critical viewing, critical listening, and assessing multimodal arguments. This important third module offers instruction on basic forms of logic, logical fallacies, and strategies for responding to arguments.

As Campbell notes above, logic is concerned with the systematic pursuit of argumentative validity. The study of logic (as with many subjects in the field of rhetoric) dates back to Aristotle's influential theories on the art of persuasion. As Annette T. Rottenberg and Donna Haisty Winchell note in The S*tructure of A*r*gument* , there are many ways in which we attempt to discover the various "truths" of our daily lived experience, including "observing the world, selecting impressions, making inferences, [and] generalizing. In this process, Aristotle identified two forms of reasoning: induction and deduction. Both forms, he realized, are subject to error" (296). These errors can result from drawing conclusions based on a pool of observations that is either too small or which lacks sufficient representation of the issues in question. A successful argument often rests on the balance of reputable data, so it is critical for those that are advancing claims to locate a body of credible information to suit their communication activity.

How much support is sufficient to create a successful argument? That is often dictated by the context of the communication act. *The Florida Times-Union* , the daily paper serving the metropolitan area of Jacksonville, Florida, for instance, asks that writers sending letters to the editor keep their pieces to around seventy-five words. With such a small canvas, a skillful letter might only include an example or two in support of the larger argument. In many collegiate writing courses, instructors will often determine a minimum number of resources for a given assignment. Take some time to study the guidelines of the assignment before you begin researching your subjects. If any of these instructions is unclear to you, don't hesitate to communicate with your instructors to ensure that you are providing them with the essay they want to read. This review will also help you determine what a useful pool of supporting data might look like, and it will initiate the process of creating a plan on where to find your resources and how to organize them. [(1)]

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Distinguish between inductive and deductive reasoning.
- Describe the features of basic logic.
- Identify and explain common logical fallacies. [(1)]

Readings

- Online Learning Unit

13. Logic

Basic Logic

Inductive Reasoning

With inductive reasoning, our aim is to arrive at conclusions about our subject based on the observations of specific supporting instances. These conclusions are often based on generalizations concerning a set of data.

As an example, consider the inductive reasoning approach one might take in recognizing which of the three local television weather forecasters was most accurate in predicting the daily high temperatures. If you studied their forecasts every day for two weeks and then compared their predictions with the official high temperatures reported by the local weather service, you could begin to arrive at a conclusion on which forecaster was the most accurate. This is inductive reasoning in a nutshell, as the observer moves from specific observationsâ€"the comparison of the daily predictions with the actual daily temperaturesâ€"to generalizations. In this case, the final conclusion might be that one of the three forecasters was better at predicting the daily high temperature. Simple, right?

This example, however, brings other questions into the discussion.

- Is two weeks of data enough to form a valid conclusion?
- Were the forecasters predicting the weather for similar geographic areas?
- Did the news agencies provide each of the forecasters with sufficiently sensitive equipment?

The reliability of an arguerâ€™s conclusion depends on the quality and quantity of the observations, and those factors are what sometimes makes some inductive leaps logically faulty. If the sample size is too small, for instance, an arguer could be guilty of committing the common logical fallacy of "hasty generalization," or drawing a conclusion from an incomplete or inadequate body of data.

It is important to note that induction is a reasoning process, and not necessarily a strategy for developing an essay. It is used to arrive at generalizations that suggest probabilitiesâ€"not certainties. If, for instance, I go hunting for a new house in a planned subdivision here in Florida and I observe that most of the homes follow one of three basic floorplans, then it stands to reason that I will *probably* live in a home that follows one of those plans should I choose to buy there. That doesnâ€™t mean, however, that there might not also be some homes which were built independently and which follow a different floorplan. Logic merely suggests that I would find myself in one of the more common models. (13)

To avoid making hasty generalizations, writers should be thorough in their research and careful in their organization and their positioning of supporting materials.

The two most common forms of basic logic that we apply in our daily lives and our written arguments are induction and deduction. Of these two forms of reasoning, we far more frequently use induction in supporting our views.(1)

Directions: Select each header to reveal information on each topic.

Deductive Reasoning

Deductive arguments seek a greater degree of certainty than their inductive counterparts. They often begin with a general statement that can be applied to a number of specific situations. Typically, deductive arguments take the form of the simple syllogism, which looks like this:

> **Major Premise:** Truth about a large group.
> **Minor Premise:** Truth about a specific member of that group.
> **Conclusion:** Considered valid if the connections and conditions between the major and minor premises are true.

Here is an example of the simple syllogism:

> **Major Premise:** Students scoring above a 3.0 GPA in their English classes at FSCJ need not take the CLAST exam to enter one of Floridaâ€™s public universities.
> **Minor Premise:** Derek has a 3.5 GPA in his English classes at FSCJ.
> **Conclusion:** Derek need not take the CLAST exam to enter a Florida public university.

Deductive arguments are only as strong as their premises, however, and while an argument may be logical, it can also be faulty. For instance, if the premises listed above are not true (Derek might have a 2.8 GPA, for instance), then the argument lacks validity. Or, perhaps Floridaâ€™s newest public university, Florida Polytechnic, has decided to independently create higher admissions standards than its state-wide counterparts. Once again, we can see that the quality of the observations is critical in determining the validity of the deductive argument.

Creating logical, reasonable arguments is often predicated on finding a sufficient body of specific, credible, and relevant supporting materials upon which to base your views. In the next pages of this learning module, we can further explore the components of basic logic and identify the many types of logical fallacies that we encounter on a daily basis. [13]

The Principles of Logic

So what are these principles of reasoning that are part of logic? There are many such principles, but the main (not the only) thing that we study in logic are *principles governing the validity of arguments* â€”whether certain conclusions follow from some given assumptions.

For example, consider the following three arguments:

> If Tom is a philosopher, then Tom is poor. Tom is a philosopher. Therefore, Tom is poor.
>
> If K>10, then K>2.
> K>10.
> Therefore, K>2.
>
> If Tarragona is in Europe, then Tarragona is not in China. Tarragona is in Europe. Therefore, Tarragona is not in China.

These three arguments here are obviously good arguments in the sense that their conclusions follow from the assumptions. If the assumptions of the argument are true, then the conclusion of the argument must also be true. A logician will tell us that they are all cases of a particular form of argument known as "*modus ponens*" :

> If P, then Q.
> P.
> Therefore, Q.

We shall discuss validity again later on. It should be pointed out that logic is not just concerned with the validity of arguments. Logic also studies consistency, and logical truths, and properties of logical systems such as completeness and soundness. But we shall see that these other concepts are also very much related to the concept of validity. (13)

Formal and Informal Logic

Sometimes a distinction is made between *informal logic* and *formal logic* . The term “informal logic” is often used to mean the same thing as critical thinking. Sometimes it is used to refer to the study of reasoning and fallacies in the context of everyday life. “Formal logic” is mainly concerned with formal systems of logic. These are specially constructed systems for carrying out proofs, where the languages and rules of reasoning are precisely and carefully defined. Sentential logic (also known as “Propositional logic”) and *Predicate Logic* are both examples of formal systems of logic.

There are many reasons for studying formal logic. One is that formal logic helps us identify patterns of good reasoning and patterns of bad reasoning, so we know which to follow and which to avoid. This is why studying basic formal logic can help improve critical thinking. Formal systems of logic are also used by linguists to study natural languages. Computer scientists also employ formal systems of logic in research relating to artificial intelligence. Finally, many philosophers also like to use formal logic when dealing with complicated philosophical problems, in order to make their reasoning more explicit and precise. [13]

14. Fallacies

What is a Fallacy?

Fallacies are mistakes of reasoning, as opposed to making mistakes that are of a factual nature. If I counted twenty people in the room when there were in fact twenty-one, then I made a factual mistake. On the other hand, if I believe that there are round squares, I am believing something that is inconsistent. This is a mistake of reasoning, and a fallacy, since I should not have believed something inconsistent if my reasoning is sound.

In some discussions, a fallacy is taken to be an undesirable kind of argument or inference. For example, a certain textbook explains "fallacy" as "an unreliable inference." In our view, this definition of fallacy is rather narrow, since we might want to count certain mistakes of reasoning as fallacious even though they are not presented as arguments. For example, making a contradictory claim seems to be a case of fallacy, but a single claim is not an argument. Similarly, putting forward a question with an inappropriate presupposition might also be regarded as a fallacy, but a question is also not an argument. In both of these situations, though, the person is making a mistake of reasoning since he is doing something that goes against one or more principles of correct reasoning. This is why we would like to define fallacies more broadly as violations of the principles of critical thinking, whether or not the mistakes take the form of an argument.

The study of fallacies is an application of the principles of critical thinking. Being familiar with typical fallacies can help us avoid them. We would also be in a position to explain other people's mistakes. There are different ways of classifying fallacies. Broadly speaking, we might divide fallacies into four kinds.

- **Fallacies of inconsistency:** cases where something inconsistent or self-defeating has been proposed or accepted.
- **Fallacies of inappropriate presumption:** cases where we have an assumption or a question presupposing something that is not reasonable to accept in the conversational context.
- **Fallacies of relevance:** cases where irrelevant reasons are being invoked or relevant reasons are being ignored.
- **Fallacies of insufficiency:** cases where the evidence supporting a conclusion is insufficient or weak. [(14)]

Types of Fallacies: Fallacies of Insufficiency

Limited Sampling

- Momofuku Ando, the inventor of instant noodles, died at the age of 96. He said he ate instant noodles every day. So instant noodles cannot be bad for your health.
- A black cat crossed my path this morning, and I got into a traffic accident this afternoon. Black cats are really unlucky.

In both cases, the observations are relevant to the conclusion, but a lot more data is needed to support the conclusion. These are hasty generalizations, based on small sample sizes of data.

Appeal to Ignorance

- We have no evidence showing that he is innocent. So he must be guilty.

If someone is guilty, it would indeed be hard to find evidence showing that he is innocent. But perhaps there is no evidence to point definitively in either direction, so the lack of evidence is not enough to prove guilt.

Naturalistic Fallacy

- Many children enjoy playing video games, so we should not stop them from playing.

Many naturalistic fallacies are examples of fallacy of insufficiency. Empirical facts by themselves are not sufficient for normative conclusions, even if they are relevant. (15)

Other Common Types of Fallacies

ad hominem

(Latin phrase for “against the man”)

A theory is discarded not because of any evidence against it or lack of evidence for it, but because of the person who argues for it.

This often takes the form of attacks against someoneâ€™s physical appearance.

Example:

> A: The Government should enact minimum-wage legislation so that workers are not exploited. B: Nonsense. You say that only because you cannot find a good job.

ad ignorantiam

(appeal to ignorance)

The truth of a claim is established only on the basis of lack of evidence against it. A simple obvious example of such fallacy is to argue that unicorns exist because there is no evidence against such a claim.

At first sight, it seems that many theories that we describe as scientific involve such a fallacy. For instance, the first law of thermodynamics holds because so far there has not been any negative instance that would serve as evidence against it. But notice, as in cases like this, there is evidence for the law in the form of many positive instances, which therefore prove its existence.

ad populum

(appeal to popularity)

The truth of a claim is established only on the basis of its popularity and familiarity. This is the fallacy committed by many commercials. Surely you have heard of commercials implying that we should buy a certain product because it has made to the top of a sales rank, or because the brand is the city's "favorite." In the middle of the twentieth century, tobacco manufacturers featured ads touting the number of doctors that approved of their cigarettes.

These appeals can be viewed as bandwagon appeals (everybody is doing it). Sometimes, they take the form of patriotic slogans (*Leviâ€™sâ€”Americaâ€™s jeans*).

Begging the question

question (petito principii)

In arguing for a claim, the claim itself is already assumed in the premise. Example: “God exists because this is what the Bible says, and the Bible is reliable because it is the word of God.”

Complex question or loaded question

A question can be fallacious if it is posed in such a way that a person, no matter what answer he or she gives, will inevitably commit him/herself to some other claim, which should not be presupposed in the context in question.

A common tactic is to ask a yes-no question that tricks people into agreeing to something they never intended to say. For example, if you are asked “Are you still as self-centered as you used to be?” then no matter whether you answer “yes” or “no,” you are bound to admit that you were self-centered in the past. Of course, the same question would not count as a fallacy if the presupposition of the question is indeed accepted in the conversational context.

False dilemma

Presenting a limited set of alternatives when there are others that are worth considering in the context. Example: “Every person is either my enemy or my friend. If he/she is my enemy, I should hate him/her. If he/she is my friend, I should love him/her. So I should either love him/her or hate him/her.” Obviously, the conclusion is too extreme because most people are neither your enemy nor your friend.

Non sequitur

A conclusion is drawn which does not follow from the premise. This is not a specific fallacy but a very general term for a poor or incomplete argument. Many of the examples in this section illustrate qualities of the non sequitur. The term roughly translates to “it does not follow,” and it can be considered a fallacy of irrelevancy if not fully defended with reasonable premises.

> Example: John has a safer car than mine because it cost $10,000 more when he bought it.

Post hoc, ergo propter hoc

(literally, “after this, therefore because of this”)

Inferring that X must be the cause of Y just because X is followed by Y.

For example, having visited a graveyard, I fell ill and infer that graveyards are spooky places that cause illnesses. Of course, this inference is not warranted since this might just be a coincidence. However, a lot of superstitious beliefs commit this fallacy. Just because two events happen close to each other in terms of their timing, that doesnâ€™t necessarily prove any causal relationship.

Red herring

Within an argument, some irrelevant issue is raised which diverts attention from the main subject. The function of the red herring is sometimes to help express a strong, biased opinion. The red herring (the irrelevant issue) serves to increase the force of the argument in a very misleading manner.

For example, in a debate as to whether God exists, someone might argue that believing in God gives peace and meaning to many people's lives. This would be an example of a red herring since whether religions can have a positive effect on people is irrelevant to the question of the existence of God. The good psychological effect of a belief is not a reason for thinking that the belief is true.

Slippery slope

Arguing that if an opponent were to accept some claim C_1, then he or she has to accept some other closely related claim C_2, which in turn commits the opponent to a still further claim C_3, eventually leading to the conclusion that the opponent is committed to something absurd or obviously unacceptable.

This style of argumentation constitutes a fallacy only when it is inappropriate to think if one were to accept the initial claim, one must accept all the other claims.

An example: "The government should not prohibit drugs. Otherwise the government should also ban alcohol or cigarettes. And then fatty food and junk food would have to be regulated too. The next thing you know, the government would force us to brush our teeth and do exercises every day."

Straw man

Attacking an opponent by attributing to him/her an implausible position that is easily defeated when this is not actually the opponent's position. This often takes the form of a fallacy of diversion, as a speaker might abandon his or her central argument and develop a secondary argument that might seem more "winnable." For instance, a parent might ask his or her daughter to mow the lawn. That child might argue that she has already cleaned her room, so she should be exempt from taking care of the lawn work. The point of contention in this example is the lawn work, so the other finished chores are immaterial to the argument at hand.

Example: When many people argue for more democracy in Hong Kong, a typical reply is to say that this is not warranted because it is wrong to think that democracy is the solution to all of Hong Kong's problems, or to say that one should not blindly accept democracy. But those who support democracy never suggest that democracy can solve *all* problems (e.g. pollution), and they might also agree that *blindly* accepting something is rarely correct, whether it is democracy or not. Those criticisms attack implausible "strawman" positions and do not address the real arguments for democracy. (15)

Conclusion

We are all guilty of brushing off these fallacies from time to time in our own discussions and arguments. In most cases, they are harmless tools in working through minor disagreements. Developing a stronger understanding of inductive and deductive reasoning and a clearer grasp of the logical fallacies will assist you in navigating these discussions and creating stronger, more convincing arguments of your own. It will also assist you with writing, researching, and developing stronger arguments in your college coursework and professional life. For more information on identifying, avoiding, and refuting flawed logic, please read the next section of this learning module, which features an essay by Dr. Rebecca Jones on various strategies for responding to arguments. (1)

15. Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic? by Rebecca Jones

Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic? by Rebecca Jones

Download and read *Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?* [16] by Rebecca Jones.

16. Module 3 Assessments

Module Discussion: Understanding Logic and Recognizing Common Fallacies

Instructions:

In a fully developed short essay (minimum of eight paragraphs in length), please answer all of the questions below and post your essay to the discussion forum. Your work should include an introduction, a body of supporting evidence, and a conclusion.

Remember that you are having a conversation with your peers in this particular genre of writing, so adopt an appropriate tone and vocabulary for an audience of contemporary college students. Please take some time to edit your work for punctuation, usage, and clarity prior to submission, and don't forget to comment on the works of two peers in order to earn full credit for these discussions. [1]

Questions for Analysis:

1) What role should logic play in modern argument? Which approach to reasoning do you think will be most useful for you in the research argument that you are developing in this course?

2) Using at least three of the common fallacies listed in this learning module, explain which errors in logic you see most frequently in your daily experience with the news, politics, and advertising. Please link to a news story, advertisement, or opinion piece in supporting your view (you should have at least three

hyperlinks for this discussion, although you don't need to include a "Works Cited" list as part of your discussion post).

3) In reflecting on Jones's essay, *Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic*, how can we, as participants in American culture, foster a healthier environment for productive debate? Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of finding common ground in these important public discussions? Explain your views on finding common ground in the arguments that we engage with as participants in a complex and diverse culture. [1] [16]

PART V

MODULE 4: WRITING FOR THE RHETORICAL SITUATION—LANGUAGE, ORGANIZATION, AND DEFINITION

17. Introduction

Module Four: Using Language and Definition to Advance an Argument

Module Introduction

> *Language is a process of free creation; its laws and principles are fixed, but the manner in which the principles of generation are used is free and infinitely varied. Even the interpretation and use of words involves a process of free creation.*
>
> ~ Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind*

At this stage in the course, we now have a stronger understanding of some of the formal approaches to argumentation. We have a better grasp of the critical skills necessary to analyze and respond to written, verbal, visual, and multimodal arguments. We can identify the elements of basic logic, and we have a feel for which arguments are flawed through our understanding of the logical fallacies. Another important aspect of developing effective arguments exists in our manipulation of language and definition in shaping the rhetorical qualities of our work.

As influential linguist Chomsky notes in the epigraph above, language represents a bit of a paradox in the sense that it is simultaneously fixed *and* fluid. Language is fixed in the sense that words, through our study of their historical usage, have a definitive meaning within their given languages. But language is also fluid in the sense that we can shape it to instill certain subjects with new or different meanings through artistic comparisons, creative phrasing, and clear applications of definition. While there is a formal structure to many of the systems of rhetoric and logic that we have encountered thus far in this course, our personal approaches to using language and applying the principles of definition can infuse our arguments with a more nuanced, artistic, or memorable quality.

Essentially, the ability to use language imaginatively and effectively is the soul of creative nonfiction. A purely informative paper has some value—particularly if it is well-researched and competently written. But successful writers must also infuse their work with an engaging prose style, clear definitions, and an element of critical commentary. When it comes to composing a research argument, it's not enough to merely present the audience with the history of a subject or a series of interesting facts and figures; writers must take the next step in the writing process into forming conclusions, inferring predictions, and offering alternatives as they work through a research problem. Working through this process is the engine of critical thinking, and it is often deeply influenced by the writer's ability to use language effectively and define the terms of his or her arguments.

The following sections of this module provide insights into some of the strategies that writers utilize to breathe life and personality into their work. They offer theories on the various ways in which definition can be used to shape the direction of our writing, and they provide instruction on how to compose a definition paper. Finally, the module concludes with an opportunity for students to practice these concepts by composing a piece of timed writing on an abstract concept that would benefit from a specific, personal definition. [1]

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Compose an organized, coherent, and personal definition for an abstract concept in a piece of timed writing. [1]

Readings

- Online Learning Unit

18. Manipulation of Language

The Useful Manipulation of Language

Using Picturesque Language

It is often useful for writers to explain a concept through artistic or descriptive prose. This strategy can serve as an icebreaker for a full argument, or it can bring clarity to a simple subdivision of a larger piece. For instance, if a writer wanted to discuss the effects of homelessness on a community or a population of people actually living outdoors, he or she might begin an essay with an extended description of what a homeless camp might resemble. Lizzy Acker, a reporter for Portland's *The Oregonian* newspaper, does just this in her piece "Life on 'Tweaker Island'":

> On a peninsula that juts out into the Columbia Slough sits a homeless camp that underscores the contradictions, challenges and beauty of living outside.
>
> The area, known to some longtime residents as "Tweaker Island," is not an island and doesn't really contain any "tweakers." Instead, it's home to a fluctuating family of roughly 30 men and women, a community built around a core group of older homeless people, many in their 50s, struggling to make it together among the blackberry bushes across the slough from the Portland International Raceway.

Acker's story then uses both photography and written text to illustrate the juxtaposition between a harsh standard of living and the natural beauty of one of Portland's many urban parks.

Another useful way of employing picturesque language is to literally manipulate an audience into visualizing a concept being explored in the text. In her award-winning article "The Really Big One," Kathryn Schulz does an admirable job of coaxing her audience into understanding how the movement of tectonic plates might ultimately spell disaster for the people of the Pacific Northwest:

> Tectonic plates are those slabs of mantle and crust that, in their epochs-long drift, rearrange the earth's continents and oceans. Most of the time, their movement is slow, harmless, and all but undetectable. Occasionally, at the borders where they meet, it is not.
>
> Take your hands and hold them palms down, middle fingertips touching. Your right hand represents the North American tectonic plate, which bears on its back, among other things, our entire continent, from One World Trade Center to the Space Needle, in Seattle. Your left hand represents an oceanic plate called Juan de Fuca, ninety thousand square miles in size. The place where they meet is the Cascadia subduction zone. Now slide your left hand under your right one. That is what the Juan de Fuca plate is doing: slipping steadily beneath North America. When you try it, your right hand will slide up your left arm, as if you were pushing up your sleeve. That is what North America is not doing. It is stuck, wedged tight against the surface of the other plate.
>
> Without moving your hands, curl your right knuckles up, so that they point toward the ceiling. Under pressure from Juan de Fuca, the stuck edge of North America is bulging upward and compressing eastward, at the rate of, respectively, three to four millimetres and thirty to forty millimetres a year. It can do so for quite some time, because, as continent stuff goes, it is young, made of rock that is still relatively elastic. (Rocks, like us, get stiffer as they age.) But it cannot do so indefinitely. There is a backstop—the craton, that ancient unbudgeable mass at the center of the

> continent—and, sooner or later, North America will rebound like a spring. If, on that occasion, only the southern part of the Cascadia subduction zone gives way—your first two fingers, say—the magnitude of the resulting quake will be somewhere between 8.0 and 8.6. That's the big one. If the entire zone gives way at once, an event that seismologists call a full-margin rupture, the magnitude will be somewhere between 8.7 and 9.2. That's the very big one.
>
> Flick your right fingers outward, forcefully, so that your hand flattens back down again. When the next very big earthquake hits, the northwest edge of the continent, from California to Canada and the continental shelf to the Cascades, will drop by as much as six feet and rebound thirty to a hundred feet to the west—losing, within minutes, all the elevation and compression it has gained over centuries. Some of that shift will take place beneath the ocean, displacing a colossal quantity of seawater. (Watch what your fingertips do when you flatten your hand.) The water will surge upward into a huge hill, then promptly collapse. One side will rush west, toward Japan. The other side will rush east, in a seven-hundred-mile liquid wall that will reach the Northwest coast, on average, fifteen minutes after the earthquake begins. By the time the shaking has ceased and the tsunami has receded, the region will be unrecognizable. Kenneth Murphy, who directs FEMA's Region X, the division responsible for Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska, says, "Our operating assumption is that everything west of Interstate 5 will be toast."

Her harrowing piece won a Pulitzer Prize as a keen example of what the agency called an "elegant scientific narrative." Much of that elegance stems directly from Schulz's use of picturesque language in literally guiding her audience through a potential geological catastrophe.

Skillful writers implement a variety of strategies to establish a connection with their audiences. Some of the strategies that follow work well in creating that connection through artistic phrasing, colorful description, or clear explanations of difficult or abstract concepts. Other strategies (such as some of those found in the "Shortcuts" subdivision) listed in this section should be avoided by the judicious writer. (1)

Directions: Select each topic below to reveal information on each one.

Using Concrete Language

When writers describe the literal, physical dimensions of a subject or concept, they are using concrete language. This compositional style surfaces often in technical writing, where engineers, architects, assessors, or appraisers must carefully record and describe details and dimensions of a building project or a plot of land. Location, size, and topography are often chronicled in a straight-forward passage of concrete description, which should be reported without subjective or personal influences. (1)

Concrete and Abstract Language

Experienced writers develop a knack for using both concrete and abstract language in advancing their arguments. Concrete language describes actual objects, circumstances, and events, and these passages are typically laden with adjectives. In *The Structure of Argument* , Annette T. Rottenberg and Donna Haisty Winchell note:

> …arguments use abstract terms far more extensively than other kinds of writing. Using abstractions effectively, especially in arguments of value and policy, is important for two reasons:

1. Abstractions represent the qualities, characteristics, and values that the writer is explaining, defending, or attacking.
2. Abstractions enable the writer to make generalizations about his or her data. (282)

Remember that inductive reasoning relies heavily on generalizations about a specific body of supporting materials. Terms like "beauty" or "altruism" are subjective, which can make it difficult to advance a line of reasoning in describing them. A writer might use concrete language (velvety, dark crimson roses), for instance, to describe an abstraction (natural beauty).

While writers should, where appropriate and applicable, incorporate picturesque, concrete, and abstract prose in their writing to inspire reader interest and describe concepts accurately, there are also some strategies they should avoid when it comes to the manipulation of language. Many of these strategies are what we might call argumentative "shortcuts," and they often fall into the categories of logical fallacies due to their brevity or irrelevance.

Some Common Shortcuts

Clichés

Clichés are expressions, phrases, or idioms that have grown stale through overuse. Relying on a cliché as part of the rhetorical process can be viewed as weak or lazy argumentation, simply because many of these statements are too "common" or antiquated. Who in modern life, for instance, actually has to avoid anything "like the plague"? Common clichés include phrases such as "opposites attract," "as old as the hills," and "time heals all wounds." If a writer finds himself or herself resorting to a cliché to drive home a particular point, it might be time to go back to the well. Oh, wait…hold your horses while I revise the conclusion of this segment…

Slogans

Slogans are used to deliver brief, truncated messages. They are designed to become memorable, although they represent underdeveloped and overly simplistic ideas or solutions. Companies often attempt to brand themselves with slogans. Wal-Mart, for instance, implores its potential audience of shoppers to "Live better." The message is concise, optimistic, and instructive (the inverse of the message would be to "Live worse," so the slogan implies that shopping at Wal-Mart is an intelligent choice), although it never delves into the actual experience of visiting a Wal-Mart store. It doesn't address Wal-Mart's business model or trade practices.

Think of slogans as "bumper-sticker" arguments. If an ideology can be summarized on a bumper sticker (and many can, unfortunately), then it probably shouldn't find its way into your collegiate writing.

Euphemisms

Sometimes, a writer can use language to sanitize an unpleasant or unmentionable act or ideology. The most common example we encounter is using the phrase "passing on" in the discussion of death and mortality. Astute job seekers exchange boring, ordinary phrasing in their resumes for more dynamic choices. Oregon, for instance, is one of two states (along with New Jersey) that prohibits self-service at gas stations. In Oregon, the workers that pump gasoline are called "petroleum-transfer technicians."

A recent, high-profile example of the public use of euphemisms occurred in Texas in 2015. The state board of education voted to unilaterally revise their K-12 textbooks to refer to the slave trade as the "Atlantic triangular trade" (Moser).

The use of euphemism can be, depending on the intent of the writer and the context of the rhetorical situation, viewed as a fallacy of diversion. Arguers need to carefully deliberate on how they position certain subjects in their work and which terms they use to advance their arguments. (1)

Conclusion

Each of these tactics is an example of the thoughtful use of language. As always, writers should step back and appraise the communication situation, the size and context of the argument being advanced, and the piece's intended audience before making critical choices on how to incorporate them into an argument.

Another important component of advancing successful arguments is the author's use of definition. Definition is, of course, important for clarifying the grounds of an argument, but it can also be used as an organizational approach to writing about such vague and ambiguous terms as "success," "terrorism," and "abuse." Courses in rhetoric, philosophy, and political science often include definition essays as assignments so that students can practice the activity of applying specific criteria to a vague concept. (1)

19. Definition

Definition and Meaning

The sloppy or misleading use of ordinary language can seriously limit our ability to create and communicate valid reasoning. As philosopher John Locke pointed out three centuries ago, the achievement of human knowledge is often hampered by the use of words without fixed signification. Needless controversy is sometimes produced and perpetuated by an unacknowledged ambiguity in the application of key terms. We can distinguish disputes of three sorts:

- Genuine disputes involve disagreement about whether or not some specific proposition is true. Since the people engaged in a genuine dispute agree on the meaning of the words by means of which they convey their respective positions, each of them can propose and assess logical arguments that might eventually lead to a resolution of their differences.
- Merely verbal disputes, on the other hand, arise entirely from ambiguities in the language used to express the positions of the disputants. A verbal dispute disappears entirely once the people involved arrive at an agreement on the meaning of their terms, since doing so reveals their underlying agreement in belief.
- Verbal—but also fundamentally genuine—disputes can occur as well, of course. In cases of this sort, the resolution of every ambiguity often only reveals an underlying genuine dispute. Once that's been discovered, it can be addressed fruitfully by appropriate methods of reasoning. In the backyard barbecue setting, for instance, sometimes it is important to deconstruct the verbal argument all the way back to its definitive grounds.

Sometimes, this means looking a term up in a dictionary or clarifying the history of a concept or idea.

We can save a lot of time, sharpen our reasoning abilities, and communicate with each other more effectively if we watch for disagreements about the meaning of words and try to resolve them whenever we can. [(1)]

Kinds of Definition

The most common way of preventing or eliminating differences in the use of languages is by agreeing on the definition of our terms. Since these explicit accounts of the meaning of a word or phrase can be offered in distinct contexts and employed in the service of different goals, it's useful to distinguish definitions of several kinds:

- A **lexical definition** simply reports the way in which a term is already used within a language community. The goal here is to inform someone else of the accepted meaning of the term, so the definition is more or less correct depending upon the accuracy with which it captures that usage. In these passages, my definitions of technical terms of logic are lexical because they are intended to inform you about the way in which these terms are actually employed within the discipline of logic.
- At the other extreme, a **stipulative definition** freely assigns meaning to a completely new term, creating a usage that had never previously existed. Since the goal in this case is to propose the adoption of shared use of a novel term, there are no existing standards against which to compare it, and the definition is always correct (though it might fail to win acceptance if it turns out to be inappropriate or useless). If I now decree that we will henceforth refer to Presidential speeches delivered in French as "glorsherfs," for instance, I

have made a (probably pointless) stipulative definition. The idea of "national security" is a concept of stipulation. If a federal agent felt that he needed to commandeer my vehicle, he might do so under an edict of "national security." Whether he took my car to pursue a criminal or he used it to run to the corner store for a sandwich, the wide-reaching qualities of the term allow for a stipulative use of the vehicle.

- Combining these two techniques is often an effective way to reduce the vagueness of a word or phrase. These rhetorical definitions begin with the lexical definition of a term but then propose to sharpen it by stipulating more narrow limits on its use. Here, the lexical part must be correct and the stipulative portion should appropriately reduce the troublesome vagueness. If the United States Postal Service announces that "proper notification of a change of address" means that an official form containing the relevant information must be received by the local post office no later than four days prior to the effective date of the change, it has offered a (possibly useful) valid definition.
- **Theoretical definitions** are special cases of stipulative or rhetorical definition, distinguished by their attempt to establish the use of this term within the context of a broader intellectual framework. Since the adoption of any theoretical definition commits us to the acceptance of the theory of which it is an integral part, we are rightly cautious in agreeing to it. Newton's definition of the terms "mass" and "inertia" carried with them a commitment to (at least part of) his theories about the conditions in which physical objects move.
- Finally, what some logicians call a **persuasive definition** is an attempt to attach emotive meaning to the use of a term. Since this can only serve to confuse the literal meaning of the term, persuasive definitions have no legitimate use. [(1)]

Extension and Intension

A rather large and especially useful portion of our active vocabularies is taken up by general terms, words, or phrases that stand for whole groups of individual things sharing a common attribute. But there are two distinct ways of thinking about the meaning of any such term.

The **extension** of a general term is just the collection of individual things to which it is correctly applied. Thus, the extension of the word “chair” includes every chair that is (or ever has been or ever will be) in the world. The**intension** of a general term, on the other hand, is the set of features which are shared by everything to which it applies. Thus, the intension of the word “chair” is (something like) “a piece of furniture designed to be sat upon by one person at a time.”

Clearly, these two kinds of meaning are closely connected. We usually suppose that the **intension** of a concept or term determines its extension—that we decide whether or not each newly-encountered piece of furniture belongs among the chairs by seeing whether or not it has the relevant features, for instance. Thus, as the intension of a general term increases, by specifying with greater detail those features that a thing must have in order for it to apply, the term’s extension tends to decrease, since fewer items now qualify for its application. (1)

Denotative and Connotative Definitions

With the distinction between extension and intension in mind, it is possible to approach the definition of a general term (concerning any of the types of previously discussed definitions) in either of two ways:

A **denotative definition** tries to identify the extension of the term in question. Thus, we could provide a denotative definition of the phrase "this rhetoric class" simply by listing all of our names. Since a complete enumeration of the things to which a general term applies would be cumbersome or inconvenient in many cases, though, we commonly pursue the same goal by listing smaller groups of individuals or by offering a few examples instead. In fact, some philosophers have held that the most primitive denotative definitions in any language involve no more than pointing at a single example to which the term properly applies.

But there seem to be some important terms for which denotative definition is entirely impossible. The phrase "my grandchildren" makes perfect sense, for example, but since it presently has no extension, there is no way to indicate its membership by enumeration or example. In order to define terms of this sort at all, and in order to more conveniently define general terms of every variety, we naturally rely upon the second mode of definition.

A **connotative definition** expresses the contemporary attitudes that adhere to a term through long usage. Language is fixed, so a term like "gay" has a continuous meaning that expresses such ideas as "happily exuberant" or "brilliant in color" (from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary), but it also has come to describe aspects of the homosexual community in the last half-century. Terms like "intimate" and "familiar" have remarkably similar denotative definitions, but the word "intimacy" carries connotations with it that society often equates with sex or romance. In many instances, arguments hinge on both the denotative (literal) definitions of terms as well as their connotative (social) definitions, and this can become a tricky point of contention for establishing the grounds of a debate. It is important for a speaker or writer to clearly define how they view a particular term, and this should happen fairly early in the argument that is being advanced. [1]

Definition by *Genus* and *Differentia*

Classical logicians developed an especially effective method of constructing connotative definitions for general terms, by stating their *genus* and *differentia* . The basic notion is simple: we begin by identifying a familiar, broad category or kind (the *genus*) to which everything our term signifies (along with things of other sorts) belongs; then we specify the distinctive features (the *differentiae*) that set them apart from all the other things of this kind. My definition of the word "chair" earlier in this learning module, for example, identifies "piece of furniture" as the *genus* to which all chairs belong and then specifies "designed to be sat upon by one person at a time" as the *differentia*that distinguishes them from couches, desks, etc.

Logicians Irving M. Copi and Carl Cohen list five rules by means of which to evaluate the success of connotative definitions by *genus* and *differentia* . A successful definition should:

1. **Focus on essential features.** Although the things to which a term applies may share many distinctive properties, not all of them equally indicate its true nature. Thus, for example, a definition of "human beings" as "featherless bipeds" isn't very illuminating, even if does pick out the right individuals. A good definition tries to point out the features that are essential to the designation of things as members of the relevant group.
2. **Avoid circularity.** Since a circular definition uses the term being defined as part of its own definition, it can't provide any useful information; either the audience already understands the meaning of the term, or it cannot understand the explanation that includes that term. Thus, for example, there isn't much point in defining a "cordless 'phone" as "a telephone that has no cord."
3. **Capture the correct extension.** A good definition will apply to exactly the same things as the term being defined, no more

and no less. There are several ways to go wrong. Consider alternative definitions of “bird”:

- “warm-blooded animal” is too broad, since that would include horses, dogs, and aardvarks along with birds.
- “feathered, egg-laying animal” is too narrow, since it excludes those birds who happen to be male.
- “small flying animal” is both too broad and too narrow, since it includes bats (which aren’t birds) and excludes ostriches (which are).

Successful intentional definitions must be satisfied by all and only those things that are included in the extension of the term they define.

4. **Avoid figurative or obscure language.** Since the point of a definition is to explain the meaning of a term to someone who is unfamiliar with its proper application, the use of language that doesn’t help such a person learn how to apply the term is pointless. Thus, “happiness is a warm puppy” may be a lovely thought, but it is a lousy definition.This doesn’t refute the value of figurative language in the argumentative process, as outlined earlier in the module. Figurative (picturesque and abstract) language is still important for clarifying concepts, reporting and describing features, and creating reader interest. It only means that most successful definitions, in and of themselves, take the form of direct and straightforward explanations.
5. **Be affirmative rather than negative.** It is always possible in principle to explain the application of a term by identifying literally everything to which it does not apply. In a few instances, this may be the only way to go: a proper definition of the mathematical term “infinite” might well be negative, for example. But in ordinary circumstances, a good definition uses positive designations whenever it is possible to do so. Defining an “honest person” as “someone who rarely lies” is a poor

definition. Instead, an "honest person" might be "someone who does the just and truthful thing whenever possible" is more convincing.In the interests of advancing a personal (subjective) definition for a concept, however, negation can also be a useful tool in explaining an ideology or the boundaries of a standpoint. Negation is the act of defining something by illustrating what it is not. In a political debate on expanding social programs, for instance, a candidate might enumerate those areas in which expansion might be appropriate while also indicating which programs should either be untouched or reduced. He or she might make a statement as follows: "While I agree that our current budget is inadequate in funding programs to reduce homelessness, I am not advocating that we expand our spending on blight reduction or transportation." Sometimes, explicitly stating any aspects of a subject that are being excluded during a contentious debate can be a positive move toward Rogerian compromise. [(18)]

20. Module 4 Assessments

Writing the Definition Essay

Definition essays attempt to bring a measure of clarity to difficult or abstract concepts. The online writing lab at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, describes the purpose of the genre as follows:

> In assigning definition essays, we hope that you will sharpen certain skills. First and foremost, we hope that you will practice supporting assertions with textual evidence (quotes and detailed examples). Second, we want you to develop your organizational skills. Definitions are a good place to do this since they provide a model of synthesis. Rather than starting with details (the roots, branches, leaves) and asking you to imagine a whole (the tree), we ask you to examine a whole with respect to its parts. In this sense, the definition essay prepares you to do a close reading of a passage, since it shows how details can come together to create a larger image.

- A useful strategy to begin a definition essay might be to open your work with a broad, general definition of a concept that is directly related to your subject. Consider a hypothetical example, for instance, in which you are learning about Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs in a course on human growth and development. Perhaps your instructor asks you to write a definition essay outlining your personal concept of self-actualization. Maslow has a particularly nebulous definition of self-actualization's features, noting that it generally describes the fulfillment of the highest human needs—such as one's personal potential. For each of us, potential is a subjective term. Identifying and defining what

"potential" is as a general concept would then create grounds for a writer to begin identifying the various categories of potential to be discussed in the body of the essay.
- Identify a debatable thesis. Because we often disagree on the connotative features of certain terms, it is important for the writer to establish his or her main ideas on a subject early in the process. "Heroism" can take any number of forms, of course, and a writer might very well equate the daily sacrifices of a single parent with the traditional definition of a person that acts decisively in a dangerous environment.
- Cast a wide net in distinguishing your definition from any alternative views on your subject. There are any number of different types of "love," for instance, so your definition of the term might very well benefit from the process of isolating it and contrasting it with those alternatives.
- Carefully consider your argumentative approach:
  - You can use induction to chronicle a series of specific, relevant examples.
  - You can compare and contrast a series of terms or concepts.
  - You can reason by use of analogy, designing a suitable comparison that illustrates your view on the component parts of a whole (writing an essay is like building a house, and the introduction is like the foundation of the…).
- Take some time to isolate the various parts that comprise your definition, and arrange your supporting details accordingly.

Definition essays are often personally illuminating works because they both illustrate a process of synthesis (the logical tying together of examples and materials) and represent a definitive statement of a writer's opinion or philosophy at a given point in time. While knowledge and human growth are evolutionary processes and it is natural for our beliefs to change as we accumulate life experiences, writing a philosophical essay in your first year of college on the nature of kindness, for instance, can illustrate precisely how you felt about a given subject during that time in your life. (1)

Quiz 2: Defining the "Good Life"

The activity in this module is to practice writing your own definition essay in the form of a timed examination.

Instructions:

In a fully developed essay (minimum of ten paragraphs in length), please answer the questions below. You work should include an introduction, a body of supporting evidence, and a conclusion. Please take some time to edit your work for punctuation, usage, and clarity prior to submission.

You have three hours in which to complete this assignment. Once you have opened the exam, you cannot save your work and return to it at a later date. It is recommended that you compose your work in a word processor and save a copy to your local computer in the event that you experience technical difficulties with your Internet connection or Blackboard.

You can use personal examples in support of your definition, but you are also encouraged to locate and incorporate supporting materials from the Internet or other resources in formulating your response. If you use specific resources in your paper, please cite them parenthetically in the body of the essay and include a bibliography at the conclusion of your piece. (1)

Questions for Analysis:

1) How do you define the "good life"?

2) Which lifestyle categories and specific examples comprise your definition? (1)

PART VI

MODULE 5: DEVELOPING A RESEARCH PLAN

21. Introduction

Module Five: Developing a Research Plan

Module Introduction

What we find changes who we become.

~ Peter Morville, *Ambient Findability*

Research composition is the product of merging original critical thinking with timely, credible information. We conduct research almost every day—from looking up show times for movies to comparing restaurants on Yelp. Far less frequently, however, do we dip into a large (and often scattered) body of information to support an argument. Now that we have a stronger understanding of some of the important features of rhetorical theory, it is time to apply that knowledge to the composition of an argument on a topic of your choice. This learning module is designed to help you begin the process of planning and researching your term paper for this course.

Students might be surprised at how often they have to formulate arguments in their work beyond the college classroom. Attorneys in all fields must frequently draft complex arguments based on facts, expert testimony, and historical precedent. Politicians need to establish the historical and argumentative grounds for potential changes in laws and regulations, and business professionals are often called upon to defend their decisions in writing. Whenever issues of policy or protocol arise in the workplace, individuals and organizations are called upon to mediate arguments.

As we noted in the first learning module, digital technologies provide contemporary writers with access to a wealth of information, and yet the activities of locating and incorporating credible supporting materials in a research paper can still be challenging. Developing a plan and thinking carefully about which resources you might use can save a writer time in the drafting process and help contribute to a focused, clear piece of persuasive writing. (1)

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Plan the stages of a research topic.
- Identify a topic for exploration.
- Identify a series of guiding research questions
- Establish a thesis statement.
- Identify the subdivisions of an argument.
- Locate and assess research materials.
- Create an outline for planning an argument.
- Draft a topic proposal for an argument.
- Create an annotated list of resources (Works Cited).
- Apply the elements of a Works Cited entry under the guidelines of the eighth edition of the Modern Language Association (MLA). (1)

Readings

- Online Learning Unit
- Introduction to Primary Research: Observations, Surveys, and Interviews by Dana Lynn Driscoll (Supplemental Reading)
- ENC1102 Research Proposal (attached with assignment)
- ENC1102 Final Research Argument (attached with assignment)

22. Research Process

Research Process Overview

Writing a research paper is often the most complex writing task you'll engage in during your college experience. The process of locating sources, note-taking, drafting, and editing offers you the opportunity to delve into a specific question on a topic. The result can be deeply rewarding; when you finish a well-researched and well-crafted paper, you'll feel as though you truly own your material and your assessment of the topic as an expert.

In some classes, your professor will assign a topic. In other classes, you may be asked to choose among selected topics. And, sometimes, your professor may leave the topic entirely up to you.

Whichever strategy your professor uses, you'll need to know how to get started and how to ultimately create a polished piece of writing. For your paper to be successful, you need to think through the steps of the research process and make sure that you give yourself enough time for all the stages of research and writing that will be explained in detail in the pages that follow.

It's important to remember that a good research and writing process is recursive. This means the steps are not always linear. For example, when you revise, you may realize you need to go back a few steps and add more research to your paper. Or, perhaps, as you edit, you realize you need to go back to the beginning, to the analysis stage, and reconsider your audience, as you think about the language choices you make. These steps are signs of a thoughtful research process.

Writing a research paper is not exceedingly difficult if one remains considerate of the process, plans carefully, and stays on task.

In the planning stages of the research process, you will want to complete the following steps:

- identify and narrow your topic to suit the size of your writing assignment
- identify research questions
- establish a working thesis statement
- identify the subdivisions of your paper
- locate and evaluate materials
- create an outline
- draft a topic proposal
- create an annotated list of works cited [(19)]

Narrowing Your Topic/Asking the Right Questions

It may seem easy to choose a topic for a research paper, but it can actually be difficult sometimes. In fact, determining a good, solid research question can be one of the hardest parts of writing a strong research paper.

Here are some guidelines to help you:

If you are able to choose your topic, find a subject that interests you. If your topic is assigned, try thinking about an aspect of that topic you find most interesting. You'll be spending a great deal of time working on this paper. Make sure that it's about something that you really are interested in learning to understand very well.

Keep in mind that your final topic and research question(s) won't simply come to you by thinking about it. You need to get out there and start digging—through books, through encyclopedias, and through Internet sites. Pick a general topic that attracts you, and then roll up your sleeves and start reading. The narrowed topic and research question will only come to you as you wrestle with the material related to that topic.

Now, here's one of the keys to doing a research paper for a college course. Don't try to write the history of everything about your topic. Instead, find one small intriguing aspect of your topic and focus on that. A good research paper is not a big, general history or overview of everything that covers a great deal of information in a very superficial manner. It's narrowed and focused and goes deep into a limited area of a topic.

For instance, a student would have a difficult time writing an insightful essay about the various ways that digital technologies have changed human communication in an essay that is capped in length at ten pages. That is a huge topic, of course, and it really can't be explored in any meaningful fashion in such a short essay.

However, that same student might be able to craft a decent research argument on a component of that topic by focusing on one smaller, specific area of study—say, composing a paper on the ways that text messaging has changed the dynamics of interpersonal communication. (20)

Identifying Research Questions

Research is a process of uncovering information to learn something new. As Peter Morville, a leading consultant on information architecture and the World Wide Web, notes in the epigraph in the introduction to this learning module, the things that we learn shape both our personalities and our identities.

Early in your research process, you will want to explore your narrowed topic from the perspective of a series of questions. In the example from the previous section on how text messaging is altering interpersonal communication, the following questions might be appropriate:

- When did text messaging first surface as a widespread mode of communication?
- Where did text messaging first become popular?
- Why is text messaging such a popular form of staying in touch?
- How does text messaging influence other forms of human interaction?
- What are the long-term consequences for a culture that is shifting away from spoken conversation and toward text messaging as a dominant communication style?

These questions correspond with the types of inquiries that journalists make in their investigations of important news stories. As you begin the process of evaluating resources on your selected topic, keep your own research questions in mind and take notes as you read to help you refine the scope and direction of your essay.

It is important to note that the questions above relate only to how aspects of text messaging are changing interpersonal communication. They do not address (nor should they) another common controversy surrounding text messaging, which is the practice of texting and driving. These are two separate (though equally worthy) topics, but they are unrelated for the purposes of this particular example. Always make sure that your research questions are sufficiently focused to suit the needs of your narrowed topic!

As a writer begins to read and assess the materials in a particular subject area, these research questions often produce closely related inquiries that require elaboration in the paper. The questions above are what some researchers might refer to as "trailhead questions," as they provide a writer access to the forest of information; those paths of inquiry, however, often branch off into new and interesting areas in the course of a research project.

Consider, for instance, the question listed above: *How does text* *messaging influence other forms of human interaction?* As students begin to read widely on the subject, they may encounter resources illustrating a variety of the common life experiences that are being changed by text messaging—including the celebration of birthdays. A series of related questions may arise:

- Is receiving a text message on a birthday the same as getting a card in the mail or taking a personal telephone call?
- How do automated text messages (often sent by companies or institutions) change the sincerity or authenticity of sending and receiving a birthday message?

These questions, which diverge just slightly from the trailhead, often yield some of the most insightful, specific subdivisions for a persuasive research paper. The questions above, for instance, would open up rhetorical avenues for the philosophical discussion of sincerity and authenticity in contemporary culture. [(1)]

23. Thesis Statement

Establishing the Thesis Statement

Thesis or Focus

Once you have a specific, narrow topic, you'll want to be sure you bring that specific topic into your essay effectively and maintain focus on that specific topic. It can be easy to wander off topic in a long research paper, but a good research paper always has a strong focus. Information that does not directly relate to supporting your point or maintaining your focus shouldn't be included in your research essay.

Some research assignments will require a specifically stated thesis statement, while other projects will simply require that you maintain a strong focus, without requiring a specific thesis. [(21)]

Drafting a Debatable Thesis

A thesis statement expresses the central arguments and establishes the focus of a piece of writing. Here is a simple formula for the thesis statement:

Narrowed Topic + Main Ideas = Thesis Statement

An effective thesis statement for a research argument should be debatable. Because humans communicate in a variety of ways, the following thesis statement on text messaging fits the criteria for a debatable thesis:

Although text messaging can often be a convenient mode of *communication, overreliance on the practice can lead to insincerity, confusion, and a lack of depth in human communication.*

This is certainly an open topic for debate, as many people born in the last two decades view text messaging as the preferred method for staying in touch with friends and family. But the practice is not without controversy. M.I.T. communications theorist Sherry Turkle has interviewed many young people who admit to avoiding important face-to-face conversations because of their discomfort with spontaneous conversation. (1)

Stating Your Thesis

Most traditional research essays will require some kind of explicitly stated thesis. This means you should state your thesis clearly and directly for your readers. A thesis is a statement of purpose, one to two sentences long, about your research, that is often presented at the beginning of your essay to prepare your audience for the content of your whole research paper. Your thesis is often presented at the end of your introductory paragraph or paragraphs.

Your thesis statement should state your topic and, in a persuasive research essay, state your assertion about that topic. You should avoid simply "announcing" your thesis and should work to make it engaging. A good thesis will answer the "so what?" question your audience might have about your research paper. A good thesis statement will tell your readers what your research paper will be about and, specifically, why it is important.

You should avoid thesis statements that simply announce your purpose. For example, in a research paper on health care reform, you should avoid a thesis statement like this:

In this essay, I will write about health care in the United States.

Instead, a good thesis statement on health care reform in the United States would be more specific and make a point that will help establish a clear purpose and focus for your essay. It might look something like this:

Although health care reform is a controversial topic in the United States, the need for strong reform is important, as too many Americans are living without access to health care.

Of course, not all research papers are persuasive. Some research papers can also be analytical. In developing a thesis for an analytical essay, you won't make an argument, but you'll still want to provide a specific statement about the purpose of your essay. A good analytical thesis statement might look something like this:

Analysis of high school dropout rates reveals that an emphasis on standardized testing plays a role in higher dropout rates among American high school boys, resulting in what some educational researchers call "the boy crisis."[22]

Implying Your Thesis

Not all research papers will require an explicitly stated thesis. Some research papers in some fields will simply require a strong focus. You can maintain a strong focus in your essay without an explicitly stated thesis by thinking about an implied thesis for your research paper. With an implied thesis, your point is never stated directly, but your paper does have a clear focus or point. Even if you're not stating your thesis directly, you should keep your implied thesis in mind as you write. All papers require a specific focus, and a good research paper will maintain that focus throughout. [23]

Identifying the Subdivisions of Your Essay

The body of your essay should feature the bulk of your research and support your thesis statement. Complex subjects often have numerous components that require discussion. Consider our sample thesis statement from the previous section:

Although text messaging can often be a convenient mode of communication, overreliance on the practice can lead to insincerity, confusion, and a lack of depth in human communication.

A research essay on this topic might logically explore these subdivisions in the order they are listed in the thesis statement. The essay would likely have an introduction that is a page or two in length, and then each of the three subdivisions would also stretch to a few pages.

The first subdivision on the lack of sincerity in some text messages might explore the subject from the perspective of texting to commemorate celebrations (graduations, anniversaries, and birthdays, for instance) and important life events, texting as a means of ending romantic relationships, and the nature of how we use punctuation in text messages. In fact, according to a recent study that was reported on NPR's *All Things Considered* , researchers "at Binghamton University have found that ending your text with a period—full stop—may make you seem more insincere" ("You Should…"). These are the kinds of research findings that would support your viewpoint that text messaging is probably not the best option for communicating in some important situations.

Your next two subdivisions would cover the ways in which text messaging can lead to confusion in the communication act (typos, autocorrected terminology, and lack of emotional nuance), and also the lack of depth or complexity (language erosion) that often accompanies the practice.

It may be useful to think of each subdivision as a smaller essay that is subsumed within your larger argument. These subdivisions support your thesis by using examples, opinions, and theories, and you can connect them with transitional sentences or you can use headings to organize your essay. [1]

24. Evaluating Materials

Locating and Evaluating Materials

Research Strategies

As you search for sources on your topic, it's important to make a plan for that research process. You should develop a research strategy that fits within your assignment expectations and considers your source requirements. Your research strategy should be based on the research requirements your professor provides. Some formal research essays should include peer reviewed journal articles only; however, there are some research papers that may allow you to use a wider variety of sources, including sources from the World Wide Web. (24)

Database Searching

Databases can help you to identify and secure information across a range of subjects. Such information might include a chapter in a book, an article in a journal, a report, or a government document. Databases are a researcher's best friend, but it can take a little time to get used to searching for sources in your library's databases. Be prepared to spend some time getting comfortable with the databases you're working in, and be prepared to ask questions of your professor and librarians if you feel stuck.

Becoming adept at searching online databases will give you the confidence and skills you need to gather the best sources for your project.

Your online college library can help you learn how to select search terms and understand which database would be the most appropriate for your project. College libraries will require login information from students in order to access database resources.

The Florida State College at Jacksonville Library is accessible online. Some of the stronger resources for information on matters of American public controversy include *The CQ Researcher* and *Issues and Controversies* . To find these resources, click on "Databases by Subject" at the top of the screen and navigate to the "News and Current Events" field. You will find these resources among many that might be suitable for furnishing materials for your essay. (25)

Internet Searching

Web research can be an important part of your research process. However, be careful that you use only the highest quality sources that are returned on your general web search. Your paper is only as good as the sources you use within it, so if you use sources which are not written by experts in their field, you may be including misinformed or incorrect information in your paper.

As a general rule, one site to avoid is Wikipedia, which is not considered a quality source for academic writing. While this site is fine for looking up information in a casual way and gaining a better understanding of a subject, it is not recommended for academic writing since information can sometimes be incorrect since the content is user-generated, rather than peer-reviewed and written by experts; peer-reviewed resources and works written by experts can be found in academic journals, news articles, magazines, or published books. Wikipedia is also considered more of a "general knowledge" source, and academic writing favors sources with more specific information.

Still, when you are researching on the web, search engines are effective tools for locating web pages relevant to your research, and they can save you time and frustration. However, for searches to yield the best results, you need a strategy and some basic knowledge of how search engines work. Without a clear search strategy, using a search engine is like wandering aimlessly in a field of corn looking for the perfect ear.

Locating useful resources for academic writing on the Internet can sometimes become a frustrating task due to the amount of commercial content and misleading or erroneous material available on the World Wide Web. Students should consider the following strategies when using search engines on the Internet:

- Many popular search engines such as Yahoo rank their results based on commercial interests. Therefore, some of the most applicable materials, such as those hosted on the Web sites of colleges and universities, are frequently located well beyond the first page of results. Take some time to explore your findings beyond the top two or three listed in any given search.
- Consider using dedicated research sites such as iSEEK Education, Refseek, and Google Scholar to begin your research queries. Many of these services effectively filter the commercial content from the results, saving you time and aggravation.
- Google filters its search findings based on relevance instead of commercial influence. The number of links and the amount of user engagement with a site figure heavily in how Google ranks individual Web sites. If you are going to use a general search engine, Google will likely yield more useful results for you than many of the search engines that tie search results to commercial interests. (26)

Evaluating Sources

As you gather sources for your research, you'll need to know how to assess the validity and reliability of the materials you find.

Keep in mind that the sources you find have all been put out there by groups, organizations, corporations, or individuals who have some motivation for getting this information to you. To be a good researcher, you need to learn how to assess the materials you find and determine their reliability—before deciding if you want to use them and, if so, how you want to use them.

Whether you are examining material in books, journals, magazines, newspapers, or websites, you want to consider several issues before deciding if and how to use the material you have found.

- Suitability
- Authorship and Authority
- Documentation
- Timeliness [27]

Source Suitability

Does the source fit your needs and purpose?

Before you start amassing large amounts of research materials, think about the types of materials you will need to meet the specific requirements of your project.

Overview Materials

Encyclopedias, general interest magazines (*Time* , *Newsweek* online), or online general news sites (CNN, MSNBC) are good places to begin your research to get an overview of your topic and the big questions associated with your particular project. But once you get to the paper itself, you may not want to use these for your main sources.

Focused Lay Materials

For a college-level research paper, you need to look for books, journal articles, and websites that are put out by organizations that do in-depth work for the general public on issues related to your topic. For example, an article on the melting of the polar icecaps in Time magazine offers you an overview of the issue. But such articles are generally written by non-scientists for a non-scientific audience that wants a general—not an in-depth—understanding of the issue. Although you'll want to start with overview materials to give yourself the broad-stroke understanding of your topic, you'll soon need to move to journals and websites in the field. For example, instead of looking at online stories on the icecaps from CNN, you should look at the materials at the website for the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) or reports found at the website for the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC). You also should look at some of the recent reports on the polar icecaps in *Scientific American* or *The Ecologist* .

Specialists' Materials

If you already have a strong background in your topic area, you could venture into specialists' books, journals, and websites. For example, only someone with a strong background in the field would be able to read and understand the papers published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* or the *Journal* *of the Atmospheric Sciences* . Sources such as these are suitable for more advanced research paper assignments in upper-level courses, but you may encounter source requirements like these in freshman writing courses. [28]

Authorship and Authority

As you begin to compile your research materials, remain vigilant about the background of the authors you are using. You will want to use credible, authoritative resources. Look for affiliations to universities or colleges, professional credentials, and associations with reputable agencies.

Some useful articles will not include an author. These are considered to be written by a "corporate" author, which means that they represent the thoughts or viewpoints of an organization. Use your best judgment on whether to use these resources in your research essay. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Mayo Clinic, for instance, both have many articles of this sort on their sites.

In terms of the parenthetical citation, you would just cite the title of the article instead of the author's name. If it is a particularly long title, just use the first two words and an ellipsis to cite the resource. For instance, the CDC page "Common Public Health Issues" would be truncated to the following citation ("Common Public…") in the body of an essay.

Alphabetize any articles written by a corporate author as you will your other resources in your final list of Works Cited. [1]

Evaluating Sources: Documentation

Where does the book, article, or website get its information?

Look for a bibliography and/or footnotes. In a piece of writing that is making a case using data, historical or scientific references, or appeals to outside sources of any kind, those sources should be thoroughly documented. The writer should give you enough information to go and find those sources yourself and double-check that the materials are used accurately and fairly by the author.

Popular news magazines, such as *Time* or *Newsweek* online, will generally not have formal bibliographies or footnotes with their articles. The writers of these articles will usually identify their sources within their texts, referring to studies, officials, or other texts. These types of articles, though not considered academic, may be acceptable for some undergraduate college-level research papers. Check with your instructor to make sure that these types of materials are allowed as sources in your paper.

Examine the sources used by the author. Is the author depending heavily on just one or two sources for his or her entire argument? That's a red flag for you. Is the author relying heavily on anonymous sources? There's another red flag. Are the sources outdated? Another red flag.

If references to outside materials are missing or scant, you should treat this piece of writing with skepticism. Consider finding an alternative source with better documentation. [29]

Timely Sources

Is the material up-to-date?

The best research draws on the most current work in the field. That said, depending on the discipline, some work has a longer shelf life than others. For example, important articles in literature, art, and music often tend to be considered current for years, or even decades, after publication. Articles in the physical sciences, however, are usually considered outdated within a year or two (or even sooner) after publication.

In choosing your materials, you need to think about the argument you're making and the field (discipline) within which you're making it.

For example, if you're arguing that climate change is indeed anthropogenic (human-caused), do you want to use articles published more than four or five years ago? No. Because the science has evolved very rapidly on that question, you need to depend most heavily on research published within the last year or two.

However, suppose you're arguing that blues music evolved from the field songs of American slaves. In this case, you should not only look at recent writing on the topic (within the last five years), but also look at historical assessments of the relationship between blues and slavery from previous decades.

Timeliness and Websites

Scrutinize websites, in particular, for dates of posting or for the last time the site was updated. Some sites have been left up for months or years without the site's owner returning to update or monitor the site. If sites appear to have no regular oversight, you should look for alternative materials for your paper. [30]

25. Outlining

Creating an Outline

A strong outline is like a road map for your research paper. Outlining can help you maintain a clear focus in your research essay because an outline helps you see your whole paper in a condensed form, which can help you create a good plan for how you'll organize your research and develop your ideas.

Just as there are different types of essays, there are different outline structures appropriate to different fields and different types of essay assignments. You'll want to consult with your instructor about any specific organizational requirements, but the following pages will provide you with some basic examples of outline structures for research papers in several different fields. (31)

Outlining: Traditional

In many of your courses, you'll be asked to write a traditional, thesis-based research essay. In this structure, you provide a thesis, usually at the end of your introduction, body paragraphs that support your thesis with research, and a conclusion to emphasize the key points of your research paper. You'll likely encounter this type of assignment in classes in the humanities, but you may also be asked to write a traditional research paper in business classes and some introductory courses in the sciences and social sciences.

In the accompanying sample, you'll see a basic structure that can be modified to fit the length of your assignment. It's important to note, in shorter research essays, each point of your outline might correspond to a single paragraph, but in longer research papers, you might develop each supporting point over several paragraphs.

Traditional Outline Sample

1. Introduction
    1. background, context for topic
    2. background, context for topic
    3. background, context for topic
2. Subdivision 1
    1. supporting detail
        1. example 1
        2. example 2
    2. supporting detail
        1. example 1
        2. example 2
    3. supporting detail
        1. example 1
        2. example 2
3. Subdivision 3
4. Subdivision 4
5. Subdivision 5
    1. review central ideas presented in body and make connection to thesis
    2. transition to closing thoughts
    3. closing thoughts [32]

Drafting a Topic Proposal

After you have selected a topic, narrowed it down sufficiently to suit the needs of your writing assignment, located and evaluated some resources, and organized your ideas into an outline, it is useful to formalize your plan by writing a topic proposal. Many courses in higher education (and particularly those courses you may encounter in your final year of studies) require that students compose a topic proposal.

Writing a proposal accomplishes a few goals: it gets you oriented to the writing process and helps you develop a stronger sense of your audience, purpose, and focus in your work.

For this course, the topic proposal for your research argument should address the following areas:

- Summary
- Purpose
- Audience
- Opening Statement, Thesis, or Hypothesis
- Method, Materials, and Data
- Expected Ourcomes

The summary is just that—a brief synopsis of the subject and the subdivisions you hope to explore in your research argument.

The purpose section should detail the goals of the paper. Research arguments serve to educate, persuade, inform, create awareness, and analyze—among other common goals. In this section, you will want to discuss the objectives of your work.

In your discussion of audience, you'll want to consider your piece's suitability beyond the instructor that is reading it. What does a general audience already understand about your topic? Are there any vocabulary terms that you'll need to clarify for a general audience? What are the demographics of the target audience you are writing to if you were to publish this piece in a journal or magazine? Is your audience assumed to be hostile, neutral, or captive on your subject?

You will want to take some time developing a potential thesis statement. What is your narrowed topic + your main ideas? Which subdivisions will you explore in your work?

In the section on method, materials, and data, you might discuss whether you are using induction or deduction as a guiding approach to argumentation. Do you plan to conduct personal interviews or distribute a survey? Which specific sources will you be using? It is not enough to state that you are using Internet articles in this section. You are encouraged, however, to list any specific article titles and/or authors that you will be using to support your research argument in this section of your topic proposal. [(1)]

26. Works Cited

Creating an Annotated List of Works Cited

A **bibliography** is an alphabetized list of sources showing the author, date, and publication information for each source.

An **annotation** is like a note; it's a brief paragraph that explains what the writer learned from the source.

Annotated bibliographies combine bibliographies and brief notes about the sources.

Writers often create annotated bibliographies as a part of a research project, as a means of recording their thoughts and deciding which sources to actually use to support the purpose of their research. Some writers include annotated bibliographies at the end of a research paper as a way of offering their insights about the source's usability to their readers.

Instructors in college often assign annotated bibliographies as a means of helping students think through their source's quality and appropriateness to their research question or topic.

Although it may take a while to complete the annotated bibliography, the annotations themselves are relatively brief.

Annotations may include three things:

1. A brief summary of the information in that source.

2. A brief evaluation of the quality of the source's information.
3. A brief evaluation of how the source might be useful for the purpose of the research. [33]

MLA 8th Edition Citation Styles

The research argument that you are writing for this course should follow the citation method that is outlined in the eighth edition of the Modern Language Association (MLA) Handbook. You should be familiar with MLA formatting and documentation principles from your studies in English Composition I, but here is a quick tutorial on the changes in the eighth edition of the handbook and some sample citations that you will follow in composing the Works Cited page for your research argument.

In order to accommodate the rapidly expanding number of digital sources and formats, MLA 8th edition has moved away from citation formats for specific source types (e.g., a book, a magazine article, a web page, etc.).

Instead, MLA 8 requires writers to identify sources based on nine key properties, or *Core Elements*. The idea is that these nine features are common across different platforms and can be combined to identify any source type that you might run across.

The writer's job is to identify these elements and use them to create citations. This new approach requires students to recognize what these elements look like in different contexts. The nine elements are numbered below in order to facilitate the process of identifying the elements across platforms and source types (DVDs, books, web pages, articles, videos, etc.). [34]

Nine Core Elements

1.	Author.	
2.	Title of source.	
3.	Title of container,	
4.	Other contributors,	
5.	Version,	
6.	Number,	
7.	Publisher,	
8.	Publication date,	
9.	Location.	

MLA 8th Edition Citation

Note that many sources do **not** have all of the nine core elements while many online resources, such as articles found in collegiate databases and television programs and documentaries watched on digital platforms like Hulu, YouTube, and Netflix, will use **more** than one instance of certain elements.

Here is how the following web page article: "Introducing Your New Cat to Other Pets" can be broken down into its core elements:

Example Breakdown

Note: If there is no named author, start your citation with the source title.

1.	Author.	
2.	Title of source.	"Introducing Your New Cat to Other Pets."
3.	Title of container,	*Humane Society of the United States*
4.	Other contributors,	
5.	Version,	
6.	Number,	
7.	Publisher,	
8.	Publication date,	2016,
9.	Location.	www.humanesociety.org/animals/cats/tips/introducing_new_cat.html

"Introducing Your New Cat to Other Pets." Humane Society of the United States, 2016, www.humanesociety.org/animals/cats/tips/introducing_new_cat.html [34]

MLA 8th Edition Citation

Here's how to break down the Core Elements of the following article, "Burr Conspiracy," from the *Encyclopedia of the New American Nation* in the Gale Virtual Reference Library.

Note that the encyclopedia is a container, which is housed inside a larger container, the Gale Virtual Reference Library.

1.	Author.	Lewis, James E., Jr.
2.	Title of source.	"Burr Conspiracy."
3.	Title of container,	*Encyclopedia of the New American Nation*
4.	Other contributors,	edited by Paul Finkelman,
5.	Version,	
6.	Number,	vol. 1,
7.	Publisher,	Charles Scribner's Sons,
8.	Publication date,	2006,
9.	Location.	pp. 232-233.

The *Gale Virtual Reference Library* contains the *Encyclopedia of the New American Nation* and is the larger container.

1.	Author.	*Gale Virtual Reference Library,*
2.	Title of source.	
3.	Title of container,	
4.	Other contributors,	
5.	Version,	
6.	Number,	
7.	Publisher,	
8.	Publication date,	
9.	Location.	sproxy.glenbrook225.org:2110/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX34467001168&v=2.1&u=gotitans&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w&asid=80c2a0d3643d71ea6d1f266d21612300.

Lewis, James E., Jr. "Burr Conspiracy." *Encyclopedia of the New American Nation* , edited by Paul Finkelman, vol. 1, Charles Scribner's Sons, 2006, pp. 232-233. *Gale Virtual Reference Library* , Direct Link.

Keep track of the core elements of your research materials, as you will need to create an alphabetized Works Cited list that directly follows the body of your research argument. For the assignment in this learning module, you will need to create an annotated Works

Cited page for at least three of the sources that you have already identified in the planning stages of your writing process. [34]

27. Module 5 Assessments

Course Assignment: Research Proposal

Download File

There are three parts to the research proposal that you are going to submit here in Blackboard: a topic proposal (two pages in length), a traditional outline of your topic (one page), and an annotated list of three potential resources (one page) that you might use in your larger research argument.

Please upload a single, four-page document here in Blackboard before the submission deadline noted in the course calendar.

You should upload your work in either a Microsoft Word file (.DOCX) or PDF file for evaluation.

Format Requirements:

- Use Times New Roman, 12-pt font for all of your work
- Use double spacing for the topic proposal and the annotated citations and single spacing for the outline.
- Include a running header (right justified) on each page with your last name and the page number.
- The document should include the following information in the upper left corner of the first page of the document:

Student Name

Professor Name

Course Number

Assignment due date

Topic Proposal

The first two pages of this document should include your research proposal. Your work should address each of the following six areas listed below, and you need to include a word count inside a parenthesis at the conclusion of each section. Please follow the word-count guidelines listed for each section as follows:

- Summary (100-150 words)
- Purpose (50-100 words)
- Audience (50-100 words)
- Opening Statement, Thesis, or Hypothesis (50-100 words)
- Method, Materials, and Data (50-100 words)
- Expected Outcomes (50-100 words)

Outline

The third page of your proposal should include a traditional outline (Roman numerals, capital letters, numbers, and lower-case letters) that plots the course for your research paper. It is okay if this plan changes in the course of your writing process, but for now you are just illustrating forethought in planning your work.

Annotated Citations

The fourth and final pages of your proposal should include the alphabetized citations for ***three*** resources that you might use to support your research argument. Each citation should include as much publication information from the core elements of the MLA documentation style as you can identify as well as a written annotation of 2-3 sentences outlining the features of this particular resource.

Please note that annotations ***are not*** required in the final draft of your research paper, which has a requirement of ten resources. This exercise is meant only to orient you to a common research practice that you are likely to encounter in future college classes. You can remove the annotations and paste the citations into your "Works Cited" page when you have finished the final draft or your research argument.

Here is a sample for what your final page should resemble:

Annotated List of Works Cited

Adams, Sarah. "Writing the College Term Paper." *College Language Association Journal* , vol. 1, Southern University, spring 2016.

This article by Sarah Adams outlines the steps necessary to compose a persuasive college term paper. The piece includes sections on composing the introduction, finding and evaluating resources, and compiling a list of citations. I plan to use her advice on developing an interesting hook, where she notes that "clear college writing should capture the reader's attention from the first page." (1)

Final Research Argument | Introduction

[Download File]

Overview:

The Final Research Argument assignment is introduced here, but it is not due until Module Eight. This assignment is worth up to 250 points of your final course grade.

An important goal of ENC 1102 is to equip you with the writing and research skills to compose a clear, coherent, and engaging research argument. A traditional approach to writing a longer essay includes a process of:

- Generating a topic and identifying a clear, defendable thesis.
- Accumulating and evaluating solid academic and popular (news) resources.
- Organizing a coherent argument (often from an outline) with an introduction, body of supporting evidence, and a conclusion.
- Working through a recursive drafting process that includes a rough draft, a preliminary draft, and a final draft.

Topics:

The subject matter and argumentative direction of your research argument are open to your choice. You must, however, research and write about a matter of contemporary American public controversy. In recent classes, students have written about gun control, immigration policy, educational access, environmental concerns, and stem-cell research—just to name a few potential topics. Due to the complexity of many of these areas of controversy, you'll want to identify a subject that you are passionate about early in the course and begin accumulating resources and refining your views. I recommend that you develop a series of research questions that will help you to clarify your position and organize your writing.

Composition Guidelines:

- Your research argument should be ten pages in length. Because you will also include a "Works Cited" page at the conclusion of your work, the final document that you submit for a grade will stretch to eleven total pages in length.

- You need to incorporate a minimum of at least ten resources in supporting your work. I recommend a mixture of academic resources (journal articles, reference texts, or chapters from academic books) and popular resources (newspaper and magazine articles, TED Talks, or podcasts) for your essay.
- Your essay must be formatted to meet MLA standards. Please review Module Five for information on citing resources with MLA documentation principles.
- Please use either the Times New Roman or the Courier New font for your work. Depending on the length of your essay, you can use 10, 10.5, 11, 11.5, or (preferably) 12-pt font size. Your work should be double spaced. Please do not include an extra space between paragraphs.
- Do *not* include a cover page for this assignment (some instructors may ask for one in other classes).
- Up to three reasonably sized images (charts, graphs, and photographs) are acceptable. Please re-size them so that the images are not pixelated, and center them in your document with text above and below. Label them Figure 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3 (for images) or Table 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3 (for charts and graphs). You can use both images and charts, of course, but just make sure that you label them accordingly.

Assignment Deadline:

- Consult the calendar in the course syllabus for the appropriate assignment deadline and submission method. [1]

PART VII

MODULE 6: INCORPORATING MATERIALS AND DRAFTING THE ESSAY

28. Introduction

Module Six: Drafting the Research Essay

Module Introduction

> *We've talked so much about the reader, but you can't forget that the opening line is important to the writer, too. To the person who's actually boots-on-the-ground. Because it's not just the reader's way in, it's the writer's way in also, and you've got to find a doorway that fits us both.*
>
> ~ Stephen King

Novelist Stephen King's sentiment above rings true for all writers—including students composing research arguments. Effective persuasive writing, after all, engages with the audience from the opening passages. Writers should attempt to blend creativity with credible content and a logical approach in order to craft a solid term paper, and much of that important work takes place from the outset, when the author establishes a bond with his or her audience and outlines the parameters of the project. This module is designed to help you begin the drafting process on your research argument by presenting advice on organizing the different parts of your essay and effectively incorporating the resources you will use to support your main points.

To summarize our work thus far in the course, we have explored various formal approaches to creating persuasive rhetorical arguments. We have studied and practiced critical reading and response skills in the investigation of articles and speeches. We have examined the components of basic logic and investigated a variety of approaches to using definition and creative phrasing to develop complex, persuasive arguments. And we now have a research plan and a collection of resources that we will incorporate in our term paper.

The primary assignment for this learning module is the submission of a three-page "pilot paper," which should include the following elements:

- The first three pages of your research argument, which should include your introduction, your thesis, and at least the early passages of your essay's first subdivision.
- At least two resources should be incorporated in accordance with MLA formatting principles.

This module will offer advice on capturing a reader's attention from the outset of a piece of writing, using sources effectively in college writing, and creating powerful conclusions that leave readers with a clear understanding of the components of your argument. [(1)]

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Produce the introductory passages of a ten-page argumentative research essay, including the introduction, the thesis statement, the early passages of the essay's first subdivision, and two resources correctly introduced using Modern Language Association (MLA) in-text documentation principles. [(1)]

Readings

- Online Learning Unit

29. Introductions

Drafting the Research Essay: Introductions

The opening passages of any piece of focused writing serve a variety of critical purposes. They introduce the workâ€™s subject, establish its authorial voice, develop the important points that are up for discussion and, perhaps most importantly, provoke the readerâ€™s interest through the creation of what is commonly called a â€œhook.” On this important subject, King says:

> But there’s one thing I’m sure about. An opening line should invite the reader to begin the story. It should say: Listen. Come in here. You want to know about this.
>
> How can a writer extend an appealing invitation—one that’s difficult, even, to refuse?
>
> We’ve all heard the advice writing teachers give: Open a book in the middle of a dramatic or compelling situation, because right away you engage the reader’s interest. This is what we call a “hook,” and it’s true, to a point. (Fassler)

The same advice holds true for writing engaging research arguments, and perhaps the most compelling way to immerse your audience in the â€œdramatic or compelling” nature of your subject matter is by narrating a case study. If you are writing about the water shortages and drought conditions now plaguing large regions of the American West, for instance, you might begin your essay by describing a scene from one of the water-distribution centers that has been established in such communities as Fresno and Bakersfield. If you are writing about the potentially adverse effects of digital technology on the human attention span, perhaps you describe some of the recent findings by Stanford psychologist

Clifford Nass on how digital multitasking is making us less efficient at learning and storing information.

Whichever subject you choose to write about, the introduction serves an important function in setting up your essay. Here are some additional elements, including examples, that you will want to consider as you begin writing your research argument. (1)

Introductions Purpose

The introduction has work to do, besides grabbing the readerâ€™s attention. Below are some things to consider about the purposes or the tasks for your introduction and some examples of how you might approach those tasks.

Example 1

1) The introduction needs to alert the reader to what the central issue of the paper is.

Few people realize how much the overuse of antibiotics for livestock is responsible for the growth of antimicrobial—resistant bacteria, which are now found in great abundance in our waterways.

Example 2

2) The introduction is where you provide any important background information the reader should have before getting to the thesis.

One hundred years ago there were only 8000 cars in the United States and only 144 miles of paved roads. In 2005, the Department of

Transportation recorded 247,421,120 registered passenger vehicles in the United States, and over 5.7 million miles of paved highway. The automobile has changed our way of life dramatically in the last century.

Example 3

3) The introduction tells why you have written the paper and what the reader should understand about your topic and your perspective.

Although history books have not presented it accurately, in fact, the Underground Railroad was a bi-racial movement whereby black and white abolitionists coordinated secret escape routes for those who were enslaved.

Example 4

4) The introduction tells the reader what to expect and what to look for in your essay.

In 246 BCE, Ctesibius of Alexandria invented a musical instrument that would develop into what we know as the organ. Called a hydraulis, it functioned via wind pressure regulated by means of water pressure. The hydraulis became the instrument played at circuses, banquets, and games throughout Mediterranean countries.

Example 5

5) The thesis statement (often located at the end of the

introduction) should clearly state the claim, question, or point of view the writer is putting forth in the paper.

While IQ tests have been used for decades to measure various aspects of intelligence, these tests are not a predictor for success, as many highly intelligent people have a low emotional intelligence, the important human mental ability to reason about emotions and to use emotions to enhance thought. (35)

Introductions Strategies

Although there is no one â€œright” way to write your introduction, there are some common introductory strategies that work well. The strategies below are ones you should consider, especially when you are feeling stuck and having a hard time getting started.

Consider opening with an anecdote, a pithy quotation, an image, a question, or a startling fact to provoke your readerâ€™s interest. Just make sure that the opening helps put your topic in some useful context for the reader.

Anecdote

One day, while riding in the car, my five-year old son asked me why my name was different from his daddy's. I welcomed the opportunity to explain some of my feminist ideas, especially my strong belief that women did not need to take their husband's name upon marriage. I carefully explained my reasons for keeping my own surname. My son listened intently and was silent for a moment after I finished.

Then he nodded and said, “I think it's good you kept your own name Mom!”

“You do?” I asked, pleased that he understood my reasons.

“Yep, because you don’t look like a Bob.”

Question

The study of anthropology and history reveal that cultures vary in their ideas of moral behavior. Are there any absolutes when it comes to right and wrong?

Overall, your focus in an introduction should be on orienting your reader. Keep in mind journalism’s five Ws: who, what, when, where, why, and add in how. If you answer these questions about your topic in the introduction, then your reader is going to be able to follow along with you.

Of course, these are just some examples of how you might get your introduction started, but there should be more to your introduction. Once you have your readers’ attention, you want to provide context for your topic and begin to transition into your thesis, and don’t forget to include that thesis (usually at or near the end of your introduction). [36]

30. Supporting Your Thesis

Drafting the Body: Supporting Your Thesis

The bulk of your research findings will surface in the body sections of your essay. If you think of a research argument in terms of the outline you completed in the last learning module, most students will typically have three to five sections that directly engage with the subject matter while supporting the author's particular view on the subject.

For example, a research argument advocating for enacting some of the changes needed to address the water shortage in California might include the following subdivisions:

- **Subdivision I:** Outline of the history of the problem in California, including measures taken after prolonged droughts crippled various industries and communities in the 1950s and 1980s.
- **Subdivision II:** Assessment of the current state of affairs, including an explanation of population trends, agricultural needs, and prominent water sources.**Subdivision III:** Discussion of some of the potential approaches to addressing the water shortage, including desalinization of ocean water, changes in infrastructure in the storage and distribution of rainwater, and changes in lifestyle (xeriscaping, at-home conservation, rationing).
- **Subdivision IV:** Discussion of the necessity for raising awareness of the effects of the water shortage on some communities in California and the importance of educating the population about measures that can be taken to ensure the fair use of an important natural resource. (1)

The subdivisions outlined here serve only as an example, but the problem in California is extremely serious. Consider this passage, written by Dr. Kiki Sanford in her article “Which water technology will save California from its long, dry death?”:

> Water is complicated—especially in the West.
>
> For years, willful ignorance has prevailed. Infrastructure projects allowed water to flow in places it would not otherwise be found. Seemingly plentiful supplies allowed agriculture to flourish. California raced to become a top producer of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and wine. Water gushed from the taps, kept cheap by the sheer political willpower invested in sustaining a blissful mirage of water abundance.
>
> Sure, we’ve experienced water hardship in the past. A 1976-77 drought in California popularized a proverb that gets stuck on repeat in my head, like an annoying earworm: “If it’s yellow, let it mellow; if it’s brown, flush it down.”
>
> A drought in the late 1980’s solidified water conservation habits for many in the state.
>
> Over time, though, we forgot these difficulties, because it’s easier to exist in the belief that our water will always be there when we need it. So when history repeated itself, the California of 2014 was surprised to find serious water problem on its hands.
>
> Suddenly, it was gone. Wells went dry. People began stealing water. Extreme drought conditions, dwindling water reserves, and shrinking aquifers all influenced the decision from California’s Governor Brown to further limit water use by everyone. [38]

There is an abundance of persuasive, credible research on this important topic that is readily available, and much of that good data would be featured in the body of a research argument. Changes—some of them uncomfortable—will need to be made in many regions as drought and water shortages continue in the

American West. An essay enumerating what these changes might look like would certainly fit the bill for a solid research argument. [1]

Incorporating Your Research

As we noted earlier in the course, each of your resources must be "positioned" in your work in order to illustrate proper attribution. For this course and the research argument that you are composing, you must identify the author or organization for each of your ten resources the first time you introduce them in your essay. After you have introduced them, you can simply use parenthetical citations in accordance with the Modern Language Association (MLA) style that was discussed in the previous chapter.

To develop a better feel for how resources should be featured in your work, please carefully read Kyle D. Stedman's short essay "Annoying Ways People Use Resources" before beginning your own research argument for this course.

Note:

Select this article, "Annoying Ways People Use Sources" [39] , to download.

31. Conclusions

Conclusions

A satisfying conclusion allows your reader to finish your paper with a clear understanding of the points you made and possibly even a new perspective on the topic.

Any one paper might have a number of conclusions, but as the writer you must consider who the reader is and the conclusion that you want them to reach. For example, is your reader relatively new to your topic? If so, you may want to restate your main points for emphasis as a way of starting the conclusion. (Don't literally use the same sentence(s) as in your introduction, but come up with a comparable way of restating your thesis.) You'll want to smoothly conclude by showing the judgment that you have reached is, in fact, reasonable.

Just restating your thesis isn't enough. Ideally, you have just taken your reader through a strong, clear argument in which you have provided evidence for your perspective. You want to conclude by pointing out the importance or worthiness of your topic and argument. You could describe how the world would be different, or people's lives changed, if they ascribed to your perspective, plan or idea.

You might also point out the limitations of the present understanding of your topic, and suggest or recommend future action, study or research that needs to be done. Finally you can also make some educated guesses on what the future may hold for your subject and those affected by it. [40]

32. Module 6 Assessments

Final Research Argument | Introduction

[Download File]

Overview:

The Final Research Argument assignment is introduced here, but it is not due until Module Eight. This assignment is worth up to 250 points of your final course grade.

An important goal of ENC 1102 is to equip you with the writing and research skills to compose a clear, coherent, and engaging research argument. A traditional approach to writing a longer essay includes a process of:

- Generating a topic and identifying a clear, defendable thesis.
- Accumulating and evaluating solid academic and popular (news) resources.
- Organizing a coherent argument (often from an outline) with an introduction, body of supporting evidence, and a conclusion.
- Working through a recursive drafting process that includes a rough draft, a preliminary draft, and a final draft.

Topics:

The subject matter and argumentative direction of your research argument are open to your choice. You must, however, research and write about a matter of contemporary American public controversy. In recent classes, students have written about gun control, immigration policy, educational access, environmental concerns, and stem-cell research—just to name a few potential topics. Due to the complexity of many of these areas of controversy, you'll want to identify a subject that you are passionate about early in the course and begin accumulating resources and refining your views. I recommend that you develop a series of research questions that will help you to clarify your position and organize your writing.

Composition Guidelines:

- Your research argument should be ten pages in length. Because you will also include a "Works Cited" page at the conclusion of your work, the final document that you submit for a grade will stretch to eleven total pages in length.
- You need to incorporate a minimum of at least ten resources in supporting your work. I recommend a mixture of academic resources (journal articles, reference texts, or chapters from academic books) and popular resources (newspaper and magazine articles, TED Talks, or podcasts) for your essay.
- Your essay must be formatted to meet MLA standards. Please review Module Five for information on citing resources with MLA documentation principles.
- Please use either the Times New Roman or the Courier New font for your work. Depending on the length of your essay, you can use 10, 10.5, 11, 11.5, or (preferably) 12-pt font size. Your work should be double spaced. Please do not include an extra space between paragraphs.
- Do *not* include a cover page for this assignment (some instructors may ask for one in other classes).
- Up to three reasonably sized images (charts, graphs, and

photographs) are acceptable. Please re-size them so that the images are not pixelated, and center them in your document with text above and below. Label them Figure 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3 (for images) or Table 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3 (for charts and graphs). You can use both images and charts, of course, but just make sure that you label them accordingly.

Assignment Deadline:

- Consult the calendar in the course syllabus for the appropriate assignment deadline and submission method. (1)

PART VIII

MODULE 7: THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT RESEARCH AND RHETORIC

33. Introduction

Module Seven: Thinking Critically about Research and Rhetoric

Module Introduction

> *The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.*
> ~ Sydney J. Harris

Research composition, like many other worthwhile learning opportunities, can provide us with valuable glimpses into subjects, people, and ideas that have the power to change our belief systems and, in some cases, alter how we live. Exploring a research topic provides us with new streams of knowledge. It broadens our worldview, sharpens our intellectual capabilities, and helps us grow both personally and intellectually.

The study of rhetoric provides us with a set of useful reasoning skills for making sense of the world, resolving conflicts, and thinking about the nature of our lives and our relationships. Important rhetorical discussions happen all around us at all times, shaping the cultures that we participate in and defining our daily lived experiences. Rhetoric is the persuasive tool with the potential to sway the balance of such important collective subjects as securing fundamental human rights, sustaining environmental stewardship, and cultivating a harmonious world for future generations.

Taken together, research composition and rhetoric offer viable conduits toward addressing this module's epigraph, which is a quote on the meditative nature of education by American journalist

Sydney J. Harris. Harris is saying that education can productively channel us into more reflective modes of thinking as we immerse ourselves in new concepts and theories. Education can compel us to examine ourselves and our communities and think more broadly about our own experiences and what the future may hold.

In this learning module, we are going to explore modern rhetoric from the perspective of its scope and reach in daily life, the importance of context in the communication act, and the ways that it can impact our societies and cultures. We will also take some time to learn more about reflective writing before composing an essay that ties these concepts together.

Before participating in the third class-wide discussion, take your time in applying your critical reading skills to the following essay by rhetorician Laura Bolin Carroll. Developing a clear understanding of the lessons and theories in the subsequent sections of this module will help you thoughtfully respond to the questions in our discussion. [1]

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Discuss the importance of identifying and understanding context in the rhetorical situation.
- Reflect on what was learned in the process of writing their research arguments. [1]

Readings

- Online Learning Unit

34. Reflective Thinking

Understanding Context and Reflecting on Your Research

Reading

Select and read this article, "Backpacks Vs. Briefcases: Steps toward Rhetorical Analysis" by Laura Bolin Carroll. [41]

Reflective Thinking and Writing

Reflective writing is a useful tool for contextualizing and memorializing our learning activities. A variety of educational theories on how we acquire knowledge and make sense of our experiences include reflective composition as an important culminating activity.

Reflective writing is personal, of course, and it should discuss a spectrum of introspective thinking on how a learning opportunity positively impacted you. That spectrum begins with you and your prior knowledge about a given subject, and it then progresses through a series of questions (or stages of thinking). Generally speaking, a piece of reflective writing will address some of the following areas.

A writer will…

- Review his or her experiences as a learner. Which new or innovative ideas did you encounter? What type of learning experience (hands on or academic) did you participate in? What did you do or make, and how did your experiences create skills or aptitudes that can help you in other areas of your life?
- Consider the assumptions (previously held notions), attitudes, values, and beliefs that he or she brought to this learning experience. Did participating in the class or course of study help you develop any core personal principles? Were there any important changes in your personal belief systems that can be tied directly to your learning activity?
- Speculate on the future. How can you use what you have learned to justify your beliefs and actions? How can you use what you have learned to solve problems for you, your family, or your community? How has what you have learned changed your understanding of a subject or added meaning to your broader worldview?

The value of reflective writing rests in the activity of stepping back and adopting a wider view of yourself and your subjects. By taking some time to tie these concepts together, students can gain a clearer perspective on their core beliefs and attitudes and create depth and complexity in their understanding of important rhetorical subjects. [1]

Reflective Thinking and Writing in Practice

So how do we engage in useful reflection?

University of Portland educator Peter Pappas modified Dr. Benjamin Blooms Taxonomy of Learning to focus on reflection. He writes:

> *Reflection can be a challenging endeavor. It's not something that's fostered in school—where typically someone else tells you how you're doing! Principals (and other instructional leaders) are often so caught up in meeting the demands of the day that they rarely have the luxury to muse on how things went. Self-assessment is clouded by the need to meet competing demands from multiple stakeholders.*

Each level of reflection in the examples to follow is structured to parallel influential theorist Dr. Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy. Dr. Bloom's taxonomy (an orderly classification of categories for a given subject) was first published in 1956, and it has subsequently been revised. (42)

Consider this taxonomy of reflection in light of the tasks that you have accomplished in writing your research argument in this class. These questions will be reflected in the discussion that you will write for this module, and they can help you explore your growth as a scholar and go deeper into your understanding of the subjects that you discussed in your writing. (43)

A Taxonomy of Reflection

Creating: What should I do next? ↑
Evaluating: How well did I do? ↑
Analyzing: Do I see any patterns in what I did? ↑
Applying: Where I could use this again? ↑
Understanding: What was important about it? ↑
Remembering: What did I do? ↑
Model developed by Peter Pappas.

The Reflective Principle

Here are some of the potential reflection questions an educational leader might ask upon the conclusion of a project, in addition to their categorization under Bloom's taxonomy.

Bloom's Remembering: What did I do?

What role did I play in implementing this program? What role did others play? What steps did I take? Is the program now operational and being implemented? Was it completed on time? Are assessment measures in place?

Bloom's Understanding: What was important about what I did? Did I meet my goals?

What are the major components of the program? How do they connect with building / district goals? Is the program in compliance with federal/state/local mandates? Will it satisfy relevant contracts? Is it within budget? Is the program meeting its stated goals?

Bloom's Application: When did I do this before? Where could I use this again?

Did I utilize lessons learned earlier in my career? Did I build on the approaches used in previous initiatives? Will the same organizational framework or plan for implementation meet the needs of another program or project? How could my interaction with one stakeholder group be modified for use with others?

Bloom's Analysis: Do I see any patterns or relationships in what I did?

Were the implementation strategies I used effective for this situation? Do I see any patterns in how I approached the initiative – such as timetable, communications, input from stakeholders? Do I see patterns in my leadership style – for example do I over-promise, stall when I need to make a tough decision? What were the results of the approach I used – was it effective, or could I have eliminated or reorganized steps?

Bloom's Evaluation: How well did I do? What worked? What do I need to improve?

What are we doing and is it important? Does the data show that some aspects of the program are more effective than others? What corrective measures might we take? Were the needs of all stakeholders met? In a larger context, is the organization improving its capacity for improvement? Were some aspects of my leadership approach more effective than others? What have I learned about my strengths and my areas in need of improvement? How am I progressing as a leader?

Bloom's Creation: What should I do next? What's my plan or design?

What did I learn from this initiative and how would I incorporate the best aspects of my experience in the future? What changes would I make to correct areas in need of improvement? Given our experience with this project, how would I address our next challenge? What suggestions do I have for my stakeholders, supervisors or peers to foster greater collaboration? [44]

Final Thoughts on Reflective Thinking

In this hypothetical example, these reflection questions would assist an educational leader in creating a comprehensive view of his or her abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes in implementing a new project.

As the author of a sustained piece of rhetorical research, you must now ask yourself some similar questions about your subject, your curiosity with this area of research, your results as a researcher, and your progress as a college writer. [1]

35. Module 7 Assessments

Module 7 Discussion: Understanding Context and Research Reflection

Instructions:

In a fully developed short essay (minimum of eight paragraphs in length), please answer all of the questions below and post your essay to the discussion forum. Your work should include an introduction, a body of supporting evidence, and a conclusion.

Remember that you are having a conversation with your peers in this particular genre of writing, so adopt an appropriate tone and vocabulary for an audience of contemporary college students. Edit your work for clarity, punctuation, and usage, and don't forget to comment on the works of two peers in order to earn full credit for these discussions. [(1)]

Questions for Analysis:

1) What is Carroll saying about the nature of rhetorical analysis? How do the fundamentals of rhetorical analysis figure into *your* life, both as a student and as a citizen? Describe a pair of specific examples in which these concepts might play (or have played) a role in your participation in those areas.

2) Using at least one citation from Carroll's essay, comment on the role of context in framing contemporary arguments. Is there enough contextual background on news stories, speeches, advertisements, and other areas of rhetoric in today's digital

information culture? How does the *Washington Post's* proposed feature of the "Knowledge Map" (noted in the Shan Wang article) enrich the contemporary news environment?

3) Finally, in the second half of your essay, explain to your classmates the general features of your research argument. Using the taxonomies of reflection in the previous section as a guide, answer the following questions in your final four paragraphs:

A. What did you learn about your topic that you didn't already know or that was surprising to you?

B. What is an area that you would like to improve upon as a writer moving forward, and which aspect of your research argument are you most proud of?

C. Finally, how do you see the subject of your research argument changing over the course of the next ten years? Where will it be in a decade's time?

Where applicable, feel free to use hyperlinks to connect your essay to a resource or two in support of your answers. [(1)]

Final Research Argument | Introduction

Overview:

The Final Research Argument assignment is introduced here, but it is not due until Module Eight. This assignment is worth up to 250 points of your final course grade.

An important goal of ENC 1102 is to equip you with the writing and research skills to compose a clear, coherent, and engaging research argument. A traditional approach to writing a longer essay includes a process of:

- Generating a topic and identifying a clear, defendable thesis.
- Accumulating and evaluating solid academic and popular

(news) resources.

- Organizing a coherent argument (often from an outline) with an introduction, body of supporting evidence, and a conclusion.
- Working through a recursive drafting process that includes a rough draft, a preliminary draft, and a final draft.

Topics:

The subject matter and argumentative direction of your research argument are open to your choice. You must, however, research and write about a matter of contemporary American public controversy. In recent classes, students have written about gun control, immigration policy, educational access, environmental concerns, and stem-cell research—just to name a few potential topics. Due to the complexity of many of these areas of controversy, you'll want to identify a subject that you are passionate about early in the course and begin accumulating resources and refining your views. I recommend that you develop a series of research questions that will help you to clarify your position and organize your writing.

Composition Guidelines:

- Your research argument should be ten pages in length. Because you will also include a "Works Cited" page at the conclusion of your work, the final document that you submit for a grade will stretch to eleven total pages in length.
- You need to incorporate a minimum of at least ten resources in supporting your work. I recommend a mixture of academic resources (journal articles, reference texts, or chapters from academic books) and popular resources (newspaper and

magazine articles, TED Talks, or podcasts) for your essay.
- Your essay must be formatted to meet MLA standards. Please review Module Five for information on citing resources with MLA documentation principles.
- Please use either the Times New Roman or the Courier New font for your work. Depending on the length of your essay, you can use 10, 10.5, 11, 11.5, or (preferably) 12-pt font size. Your work should be double spaced. Please do not include an extra space between paragraphs.
- Do *not* include a cover page for this assignment (some instructors may ask for one in other classes).
- Up to three reasonably sized images (charts, graphs, and photographs) are acceptable. Please re-size them so that the images are not pixelated, and center them in your document with text above and below. Label them Figure 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3 (for images) or Table 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3 (for charts and graphs). You can use both images and charts, of course, but just make sure that you label them accordingly.

Assignment Deadline:

- Consult the calendar in the course syllabus for the appropriate assignment deadline and submission method. (1)

PART IX

MODULE 8: COURSE CAPSTONE AND FINAL WRITTEN EXAMINATION

36. Introduction

Module Eight: Course Capstone and Final Examination

Module Introduction

> *Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making.*
> ~ John Milton, Areopagitica

John Milton's oft-cited sentiment in this module's epigraph speaks to the evolutionary heart of learning, communicating, and acquiring knowledge. The enigmatic Greek philosopher Socrates believed so strongly that "knowledge" was a fluid concept (and therefore inclined to change with time and experience) that he wrote nothing in his journey toward becoming the founding father of philosophical studies.

The notion that important values (both individual and collective), beliefs, attitudes, and concepts require careful scrutiny is the guiding principle of rhetorical studies. A rich abundance of theories on the subjects of establishing sound proof or advancing persuasive arguments abound in this area of study, and this course merely scratches the surface of what is possible through studying modern rhetoric and practicing research composition.

And yet, even in an introductory course such as this one, we have encountered a variety of important concepts, theories, and arguments that will assist you in the remainder of your studies and in your life outside of higher education. A small sampling of our work includes exposure to:

- The rhetorical theories of Stephen Toulmin, Carl Rogers, and Aristotle.
- A number of important concepts and strategies for critical reading and thinking.
- A discussion of the fluid nature of authority in digital news stories.
- A variety of important concepts and strategies for assessing visual arguments, speeches, and written arguments.
- The basics of logic (induction and deduction) and the logical fallacies.
- Some important composition theory on the useful manipulation of language, including approaches to using concrete and abstract writing and the various forms of definition.
- The fundamentals of drafting a comprehensive research plan.
- The basics of the Modern Language Association's (MLA) approach to citing and documenting resources.
- The rhetorical importance of creating engaging introductions and definitive conclusions in research composition.
- The importance of understanding context in the rhetorical situation.
- A series of reflective strategies for evaluating the work you have completed.

In this final module, you must apply your understanding of some of these concepts to a series of questions by writing about a written argument and a speech.

As members of various communities, we are often called upon to consider and act upon important, collectively negotiated issues. These negotiations are happening all around us at all times. Most of these debates—such as those surrounding where to have dinner or how to fairly divide the household chores—have minor consequences. Some of these debates, however, materially influence the critical issues of our time. They impact our treatment of the environment, our understanding of our species, and our approach to moving forward into the future.

Research informs us. It helps us grow intellectually and it gives us a practical foundation for grounding our claims.

Rhetoric shapes us. It shows us how to use communication to create influence and provides us with a mechanism for participating in our culture.

Taken together, these practices are important elements of the bedrock of what it means to be an informed citizen and a thoughtful scholar. (1)

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Analyze the rhetorical features of President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address (January 20, 1961) in a short, timed essay.
- Analyze the rhetorical features of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in a short, timed essay. (1)

Readings & Resources

- **Readings for Final Examination: (Please study before opening the final exam)**
    - Transcript of President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address January 20, 1961 (45)
    - The Declaration of Independence (46)

37. Module 8 Assessments

Final Examination

Examination Overview:

The final examination has two written parts.

The first question asks you to listen to (or read) President John F. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural address and compose a short (minimum of four paragraphs) rhetorical analysis outlining the features of his speech and discussing its content and place in American history.

The second question asks you to read the Declaration of Independence, one of America's founding documents, and compose a fully developed short essay (minimum of eight paragraphs) outlining the piece's features and commenting on its efficacy and place in American history.

Instructions:

Please observe the deadline for this final examination in your course calendar and plan accordingly to give yourself enough time to complete the assessment. Take some time to first critically analyze these source documents here in the learning module before opening up the final examination questions.

You will likely want to spend some time researching the contextual elements surrounding Kennedy's speech and Thomas Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence*. For further information on the Declaration of Independence, you might want to read "The

Declaration of Independence: A History," which can be found on the digital pages of the National Archives.

After you have critically analyzed these documents and you are ready to respond to the examination questions, navigate to the appropriate folder in Blackboard and open the assessment.

As always, your work will be evaluated for clarity, punctuation, grammar, content, and incorporation of the course theories and concepts.

You have three hours in which to answer the questions in the final examination.

You cannot save your work and return to it, so both of your answers must be recorded in one sitting. (1)

Final Research Argument | Submission

Overview:

An important goal of ENC 1102 is to equip you with the writing and research skills to compose a clear, coherent, and engaging research argument. A traditional approach to writing a longer essay includes a process of:

- Generating a topic and identifying a clear, defendable thesis.
- Accumulating and evaluating solid academic and popular (news) resources.
- Organizing a coherent argument (often from an outline) with an introduction, body of supporting evidence, and a conclusion.
- Working through a recursive drafting process that includes a rough draft, a preliminary draft, and a final draft.

Topics:

The subject matter and argumentative direction of your research argument are open to your choice. You must, however, research and write about a matter of contemporary American public controversy. In recent classes, students have written about gun control, immigration policy, educational access, environmental concerns, and stem-cell research—just to name a few potential topics. Due to the complexity of many of these areas of controversy, you'll want to identify a subject that you are passionate about early in the course and begin accumulating resources and refining your views. I recommend that you develop a series of research questions that will help you to clarify your position and organize your writing.

Composition Guidelines:

- Your research argument should be ten pages in length. Because you will also include a "Works Cited" page at the conclusion of your work, the final document that you submit for a grade will stretch to eleven total pages in length.
- You need to incorporate a minimum of at least ten resources in supporting your work. I recommend a mixture of academic resources (journal articles, reference texts, or chapters from academic books) and popular resources (newspaper and magazine articles, TED Talks, or podcasts) for your essay.
- Your essay must be formatted to meet MLA standards. Please review Module Five for information on citing resources with MLA documentation principles.
- Please use either the Times New Roman or the Courier New font for your work. Depending on the length of your essay, you can use 10, 10.5, 11, 11.5, or (preferably) 12-pt font size. Your work should be double spaced. Please do not include an extra

space between paragraphs.

- Do *not* include a cover page for this assignment (some instructors may ask for one in other classes).
- Up to three reasonably sized images (charts, graphs, and photographs) are acceptable. Please re-size them so that the images are not pixelated, and center them in your document with text above and below. Label them Figure 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3 (for images) or Table 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3 (for charts and graphs). You can use both images and charts, of course, but just make sure that you label them accordingly.

Assignment Deadline:

- Consult the calendar in the course syllabus for the appropriate assignment deadline and submission method. [1]

PART X

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