## Reflection on Argument Paper Sequence Development

Elizabeth Barnett

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I have developed this Argument Paper sequence here for English 120, but I will be adapting it for 112 by adding in-class time to the readings. This sequence is a little heavy on readings at the beginning, but I feel that is necessary to lay the groundwork for the writing assignments of this sequence. Unlike students in English 110, students in 120 will be looking to sources outside of themselves to craft their writing, and I think that necessitates a fair amount of backgrounding readings. I also think that the contrast between the work they did in 110 in the personally expressive genres of Discourse Community Profiles and Memoirs provides a strong contrast to academic genres of 120. This helps first-year composition students better grasp the Student Learning Outcome A, understanding “genre” and writing across the different kinds. What I hope to highlight as we enter the work of 120 or 112 is that each genre first-year composition students have worked in has distinct features that differentiate it but that all our writing instances, in whatever genre, have a common set of rhetorical elements (topic, audience, purpose, angle, and context) that can be manipulated by authors and analyzed and understood by readers. Another goal I have with this sequence is to provide first-year composition students with a new set of lenses through which to view the world in which they must choose one side or another.

I look forward to teaching Argument Papers/Position Papers again because in my first round in the fall of 2016 I enjoyed incorporating some of the concepts I learned in my English 542 class, Introduction to Rhetorical Traditions. I was surprised last year when I asked that so few of my students had had any form of Speech/Debate classes or lessons about academic argument in any prior English class. Just as ancient orators employed what we might today call “drama,” or pathos, in their arguments to persuade their audiences by any means necessary, I hope to encourage students to bring forth all the ethos, logos, and pathos they can muster in their own persuasive writing. But educated people are also expected to “take the high road” in writing about the opposing viewpoint to their own chosen arguments, and I hope to give students practice at the tradition of Counter Argument, or Dissoi Logos, in this sequence. I may also adapt this sequence for Stretch 112 in taking more time and having my students present their arguments on the “bema,” as ancient orators did. The bema (pronounced bee-ma) was the speaker's physical platform in the assembly in ancient Athens. The term is used today in Judaism to refer to the platform from which services are conducted in the synagogue.

In all, I think the sequence emphasizes the Student Learning Outcome B, that all writing is always a highly social act in presenting a well-crafted argument designed to persuade fellow students, colleagues, bosses, and target market audiences.

My thought at first in developing this sequence was that I would have all students write their MWA argument on the death penalty, but Stevenson brings up several other issues in *Just Mercy* that I think now I will allow my students to choose from for the MWA. So, along with the use of the death penalty itself, students may choose to argue mandatory minimum sentencing, for-profit prison systems, trying and incarcerating people under 18 as adults, and the “war” on drugs. I plan to brainstorm additional MWA topics in class with my students.

## Schedule for Argument Sequence, Jan. 15-Feb. 16

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| *Date* | *In-class topic* | *Reading Due* | *Assignment Due* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| M  1/15 | No Class - Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday |  |  |
| W  1/17 | Overview of Sequence 3: Arguments, SWAs and MWA  Genre Analysis: Argument  **SLO A Rhetorical Situation & Genre, analyze and compose in various genres** | *Writing Today*, Chapter 11, “Arguments” | REVEL Quiz on Chapter 11  Close reading/ discussion of Student Argument, “Death Penalty…” in  Chpt. 11 |
| F  1/19 | Debatable Topics: This or That or Just This?  Brainstorming MWA topics from *Just Mercy:*  Death Penalty  Mandatory Sentencing  Under 18: Adult or Child?  For-Profit Prisons  War on Drugs  Others?  **SLO F Reflection, reflect on your rhetorical choices as a writer in choosing your topic carefully**  **SLO C Writing As A Process, using multiple approaches for planning, researching, prewriting, and composing** | *Writing Today*, Chapter 22, “Using Argumentative Strategies” | REVEL Quiz on Chapter 22  In class: This or That Activity, City or Country Living? |
| M  1/22 | Introduce SWA 1: The Annotated Bibliography  **SLO C Writing As A Process, Using multiple approaches for planning, researching, prewriting, and composing**  **SLO D Grammar, improve grammar and fluency conforming to specific styles** |  | In class: Close Reading of Annotated Bibliography sample, pp. 296-297, in *Writing Today*  Discuss selected sample bibliography entries in Chapter 27, “Using MLA Style,” in *Writing Today* |
| W  1/24 | Meet at Zimmerman Library, 2nd Floor, for Researching talk/tour  **SLO C Writing As A Process,** **Using multiple approaches for planning, researching, prewriting, and composing** |  | In class: Finding sources for your argument  *Opposing Viewpoints in Context* and *CQ Researcher* websites |
| F  1/26 | Analyzing Arguments Part 1,  Recognizing Logical Fallacies | Revisit Figure 22.8, “Common Logical Fallacies” | Weird Arguments Activity |
| M  1/29 | Analyzing Arguments Part 2, Logos, Ethos, or Pathos?  **SLO A Rhetorical Situation and Genre, analyze and compose appropriate to rhetorical situation** | Chapter 10, “Mitigation” in *Just Mercy* | SWA 1 due at 9 a.m.  Discussion Question: Should mental illness “mitigate” punishment?  In class: Class reading of “Mitigation” to find what kinds of argument Stevenson makes |
| W  1/31 | Introduce SWA 2, The Counter Argument/Dissoi Logos  **SLO A Rhetorical Situation & Genre, analyze and compose in various genres** | Chapter 11, “I’ll Fly Away,” in *Just Mercy* | Discussion Question: Did Walter deserve more than just walking away free? Compensation?  Free write in your Code of Ethics: is there a difference between what’s right and what’s fair? |
| F  2/2 | Analyzing Arguments Part 3, Analyzing on Your Own | Chapter 14, “Cruel and Unusual,” in *Just Mercy* | Discussion Question: Look for arguments of Logos, Ethos, or Pathos as you read Chpt. 14  In class: What are your results? |
| M  2/5 | Peer Review of SWA 2  **SLO B**  **Writing As A Social Act,**  **SLO C Writing As A Process, editing and revising** |  | Bring a draft of your SWA 2 |
| W  2/7 | Introduce MWA, Formal Argument  A Student’s Argument: Bryce Palmer’s Student Argument & Ann. Bib. in *Altitudes*  **SLO A Rhetorical Situation and Genre, analyze and compose appropriate to rhetorical situation** |  | SWA 2 The Counter Argument due, 9 a.m.  In class: Close reading, discussion on Palmer’s student Argument example |
| F  2/9 | Justice Vs. Mercy | Chapter 15, “Broken,” in *Just Mercy* | Discussion Question:  Why or why not mercy? Are people more than the worst thing they’ve ever done?  Free write in your Code of Ethics: does mercy have a cost? |
| M  2/12 | Peer Review of MWA |  | Bring draft of MWA |
| W  2/14 | Valentine’s Day! |  | “Other Love” Letter Writing Activity |
| F  2/16 | Stevenson on TED: We Need to Talk About An Injustice (23:41 min)  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2tOp7OxyQ8>  What’s Next: Talking About History (5:47 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCdh2yHmVwQ> |  | MWA Formal Argument due by 9 a.m.  In class: Viewing Tasks  Video 1: What do you think he means by “the power of identity”? Who/what shapes it?  Video 2: How else do we/can we change narratives?  Free write in your Code of Ethics: what narrative do you want to change? |

**Daily Activities**

1/17 Overview of SWAs and MWA for the sequence and how each small writing assignment will roll into the MWA. Close reading of Chapter 11, Arguments. Structure of arguments: summaries or point-by-point, finding out what others believe. We will read the student example in the chapter, which, conveniently, is about the Death Penalty.

1/19 Close reading of Chapter 22, Argumentative Strategies. What is arguable? Some things aren’t arguable. Discuss the spectrum of personal judgments to inarguable fact. Logos, ethos, pathos. Taking the high road with opposing views in SWA 2. Class debate on city vs. country living. Why is it debatable? Because both sides have good points? Activity plan is included following the SWAs and MWA prompts. Discuss possible MWA topics to get students thinking about choices.

1/22 Students will need to narrow down their topics quickly in this sequence because each SWA will be directly rolled into their final MWAs. They will need to know what to research to begin the SWA 1, Annotated Bibliography. Discuss style.

1/24 Somewhere in 120 and 112 is the required Zimmerman Library visit. This turned out to be a fabulous visit for my classes during their Argument sequence. Our librarian pointed students to two excellent web-based resources to research controversial issues through UNM’s library system: *Opposing Viewpoints in Context* and *CQ Researcher*. I’ve put them into the sequence here in case other instructors’ librarians fail to mention these.

1/26 Analyzing Arguments, Part 1: Weird Arguments and Logical Fallacies. This was an interesting and challenging activity for my students. I focused their efforts just on trying to come up with arguments based on logical fallacies, which sometimes requires a lot of creativity. Even though it was a challenge, it was good exposure in trying to deliberately craft a fallacious argument. Activity plan is included following the SWA and MWA prompts.

1/29 Analyzing Arguments, Part 2: Logos, Ethos, and Pathos. Close reading in class of Chpt. 10, and looking of what kind of arguments Stevenson makes in different sections of story. This chapter focuses on the issue of incarcerating the mentally ill rather than treating them. A possible MWA topic for students.

1/31 Go over prompt and rubric for SWA 2, the Counter Argument. Talk about Chapter 11. This chapter closes the McMillian case and Walter is freed. His life, his marriage, and his business has been destroyed and the state basically gives him his wallet back. A possible MWA topic about victim compensation for the wrongly accused.

2/2 Analyzing Arguments, Part 3. Students should read Chpt. 14 and try to identify the arguments before class, then discuss their findings in class today. This chapter focuses on the issue of trying children as adults and incarcerating them with adult prison populations. Another possible MWA topic for students.

2/5 Peer review of SWA 2. (There is no peer review of SWA 1, The Annotated Bibliography.)

2/7 Revisit how each SWA becomes part of the MWA for this sequence. Close reading of the student example argument in the custom department e-book Altitudes. Even though Palmer’s argument is about the one-child policy in China, it contains all the elements of a well-done argument. Revisit those elements in class.

2/9 “Broken” is such a powerful chapter, if I have to end the sequence before the end of the book, this is the chapter to end on. Students can discuss Stevenson’s admonishment that “each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done.” Literature graduate students could even bring in reference to *The Scarlett Letter* by Hawthorne. Students can talk about how they’d feel if they, like Hester Prynne and Stevenson’s clients, were condemned to the label of their worst deed for the rest of their lives. I also think every person can relate to reaching a point at which all seems hopeless and we want to give up. I think this chapter can generate a lot of discussion about the role of mercy in our justice system, hope against all odds, and finding strength in failures. Does mercy cost us anything as individuals, as a society? What about the lack of it? What does that cost us?

2/12 Peer review of MWA.

2/14 Revisiting genre analysis with Valentine’s Day letter writing. Activity plan is included following the SWA and MWA prompts.

2/16 Final MWA Formal Argument due. As the end of the sequence and to the start of the President’s Day holiday weekend, I thought it might be interesting for students to hear Stevenson himself talk about his book and his current work/thought/activism.

Student Viewing Tasks

Video 1: We Need to Talk About An Injustice (23:41 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2tOp7OxyQ8>

Here, filmed the year his book came out, Stevenson retells some of the stories in the book. This TED video was probably part of his book tour/promo. But he frames these stories as a discussion of the “power of identity.” As you watch, what do you think he means by “the power of identity”? Think back on your work on your Discourse Community website and how your community has influenced your own identity. Who and what institutions shape an individual’s identity? Let’s make a list and revisit how.

Video 2: Talking About History Honestly (5:47 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCdh2yHmVwQ>

Here, filmed in February of 2017, Stevenson gives an update on his work and discusses the critical importance of changing our national narrative to be more honest about slavery and its legacy. He gives a couple of examples, e.g., installing memorials to honor victims of lynching. As you watch, think about how we do/can change the narratives of our lives, individually, as a community, and as a nation. Let’s discuss other ways that we are changing, or can change, the narratives, particularly regarding nondominant social groups.

**Small Writing Assignment 1: Annotated Bibliography**

**Due:** Monday, Jan. 29, at 9 a.m. (No peer review)

**Description:** Using 12 point, Times Roman font, create an annotated bibliography, using MLA (Modern Language Association) style, of the sources you plan to use for your formal argument. Annotated means that for each of your sources, you will write a 100- to 150-word summary and evaluation of the source’s information. For reference, we will look at the “Annotated Bibliography: The Fog of Revolution” example given in *Writing Today*, pp. 296-297, and follow that format. This example is a critical annotated bibliography in that it summarizes information in the source but also includes a brief “assessment” of the source as it relates to your own argument position.

You must find and cite AT LEAST six sources. You may use more than six. Your bibliography must have the following:

* One source must be an article published within the last three years in a popular magazine or newspaper, such as *TIME, Newsweek, The New York Times, The Atlantic,* etc.;
* One source must be a book excerpt or academic journal article;
* One source must come from a governmental or nonprofit agency, such as a study or data compiled by the Center for Disease Control or a university or another not-for-profit type of organization.

Other than those three types of sources, you may seek out other credible sources for experts’ opinions, facts, and data on the internet or Ebrary or elsewhere. You may also conduct an interview with a credible expert in the field.

**Rhetorical Situation and Purpose:** The MWA for this sequence is a fully developed argument that focuses on a topic worthy of debate, drawn from the issues presented thus far in our reading of *Just Mercy*, and persuasively presents to your fellow students the reasons why they should adopt your side. This SWA will become part of that MWA, so the sources you find and cite here will help to promote your ethos (credibility, authority) and contribute to others’ decision to adopt your way of thinking on your chosen MWA topic.

**Genre:** Bibliography

**Rubric:** I will determine your grade using this rubric. 50 points possible.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Features** | **Points** |
| Author has at least six credible sources, including the required three, and provided the reader with adequate summary notes on each. | 40 |
| Author has formatted the bibliography’s entries following MLA style. | 10 |

**Short Writing Assignment 2: The Counter Argument (Antilogos or Dissoi Logos)**

**Peer Review:** Monday, Feb. 5

**Due:** Wednesday, Feb. 7, at 9 a.m.

**Description:** Write a two-page, about 500-word, essay explaining the major points for the opposing side of your chosen topic.

**Rhetorical Situation & Purpose:** Your goal is to take the high road, explaining your imaginary opponent’s point of view from as fair and objective a stance as you can. You should be able to describe and explain at least three to four of the ***best*** counter points to your own view. Your audience for this SWA is your friends in class. Think of your friends as new to the debate, never having heard either side, and you must fairly explain the strongest points of the side you do not embrace, convincing them that this is what you believe.

**Genre:** Argument or Position Paper

Think about how much time and effort Stevenson went to in each case in *Just Mercy* to fully understand the shortcomings of previous legal proceedings so that he and his staff could effectively counter previous judgments. This skill in researching, understanding, presenting, and defending against counter moves and arguments is crucial not only in sports and law, but business, certainly politics, and sometimes even education and medicine.

**Rubric:** I will determine your grade using this rubric. 100 points possible.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Features** | **Points** |
| Content: Author has identified and explained at least three to four of the opposing side’s best points and strongest arguments. | 50 |
| Organization: Author has organized the points from strongest to weakest and included transitional sentences to help the reader follow the author’s path. | 50 |
| Extra Credit Mechanics: Paper is free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors that would hurt the author’s ethos with readers. | 5 |

**Major Writing Assignment: The Formal Argument Paper**

**Peer Review:** Monday, Feb. 12

**Due:** Friday, Feb. 16, at 9 a.m.

**Length:** double spaced, 12-point Times Roman font. The main text of your argument should be about 4 pages or about 1,000 words, not counting the Annotated Bibliography, which should be included at the end.

**Rhetorical Situation & Purpose**: Your goal in this paper is to persuade your fellow English 110 students to agree with your position on your topic. As we’ve discussed in class, the ancient Greeks and Romans believed that learning to speak persuasively in front of an audience was the centerpiece of a quality education. One major school of orators, the Sophists, believed that there were always two sides to every argument, and they trained themselves to be able to persuasively argue any side. You should fairly present the opposing side’s points and refute them all using sound arguments based on logos, ethos, and pathos.

**Genre:** Formal Argument, also known as a Position Paper

**Rubric:** I will determine your grade using this rubric. 150 points possible.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Features | Points |  |  |
| Content | 100 99 98 97 96 95  Author has all the features of a strong argument: a clear thesis statement of position on topic; informative introduction to the topic; either a summary narrative or a point-by-point refutation of the strongest points, with four or more points of debate; well-stated reasons the author’s view is better; and a persuasive conclusion. | 94 93 92 91 90  a clear thesis statement of position on topic; basic introduction, only two or three points fully presented and argued. Basic conclusion. | >90  Lacking clear thesis statement, brief or weak refutation of points or two or less argued points. Too brief wrap-up. |
| Design & Format | 25 24 23  Author has used headings and/or subheadings to organize the points. Bullet points and graphics, such as tables, graphs, or photos, add to the ethos of the author’s argument. | 22 21 20  Subheadings too general and generic. Minimal use of graphic elements to help orient reader. | >20  Little or no use of subheadings, lacking graphic elements, points are hard to follow. |
| Bibliography | 25 24 23  Full bibliography is included at the end of the argument paper. In-paper citations are properly included in MLA format where the author has used quotes, data, or other information from bibliography texts. | 22 21 20  Full bibliography is included. In-text citations may not be correct MLA format or a few instances of needed citations missing. | >20  Forgot to include bibliography or less than the required six sources. No in-text citations. |
| Extra Credit: Mechanics | 5 points  Paper is free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors that would hurt the author’s ethos with readers. |  |  |

**Activity Plan for This and That: Creating Arguments**

By Ruben Rodriquez

From mini-lesson he presented in 530 practicum class. Thanks, Ruben!

The Hope: In this mini-lesson, students will be asked to take a stand (literally) and form arguments for their opinions. By using a physical prompt, the students are more likely to be engaged and forced to participate at some level. This mini-lesson is meant to spur active thought through the forming of arguments while also urging students to look to their community for assistance.

The Plan:

1. Create space in the center of the classroom, something that will allow the students to use as a sort of corridor.
2. Have the students get out from behind their desks and stand in the middle of the space.
3. Present a question with two sides that have valid perspectives. For example,
   1. Is it better to live in the city or the country?
   2. Is a second language requirement appropriate at the university level?
4. Designate each side of classroom to represent each side of argument (students can pick which side to take)
5. Ask for opinions, calling on students who don’t often talk. Allow time for discussion.
6. Once you’ve been through a few questions, send students back to their desks to free write their argument on one of the questions.

Ruben’s Experience: My students actively participated in the exercise. Some questions worked better than others. The city/country one spurred a good conversation. Students tended to highlight the positives of their side of the argument, but when I asked them to go on the attack, they became more creative. This allowed for rebuttals that debunked or solidified previous arguments. In the free writes, students had lots of ammunition and wrote well-thought out responses.

My Experience: I didn’t have enough time in a 50-minute class to do more than one question, so we did the city/country one, and like Ruben’s, my classes really enjoyed the activity. We didn’t get to the free write time, but I will plan better this time to give students time to write in their journals.

**Activity Plan for Weird Arguments**

By Sofya Tarabrina

Adapted from mini-lesson she presented in 530 practicum class. Thanks, Sofya!

This mini-lesson allows students to practice making arguments as an introduction to Chapter 22, “Using Argumentative Strategies,” in *Writing Today*.

Instructions:

1. Divide the students into groups of four or five.
2. Give them a claim (on board or index cards).
3. Ask them to generate an argument based on each of the following: Reason (Logos), Authority (Ethos), Emotion (Pathos), a Logical Fallacy (from Figure 22.8), and a rebuttal/refutation. Variation: assign each group just one source of argument.
4. After 10 minutes or so, compare arguments.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Claim** | Reason  /Logical | Authority | Emotion | Logical Fallacy | Rebuttal/  Refutation |
| **Ice Cream is a cure for all diseases.** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Global Warming is not man-made.** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Humankind are beavers by nature.** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Everyone should listen to RAP music.** |  |  |  |  |  |

My Experience: For time reasons, I had my student groups focus just on creating arguments choosing one of the Logical Fallacies listed in Figure 22.8 of Chapter 22 in *Writing Today*. Some groups had trouble understanding fallacies, so it generated class discussion. ­­­ On the whole, I think it was a successful activity, in terms of crafting quick argument responses and exposing students to the variety of logical fallacies. I’d love some feedback from other instructors on how to tie this to real-world examples.

**Activity Plan for Valentine’s Day, “Other Love” Letters**

By Elizabeth Barnett

Adapted from a spiritual retreat led by Rev. Patricia Green, and a Letter Writing mini-lesson by Erick Martinez. Thanks, Pat and Erick!

I plan to use this activity during our Argument sequence in which we have already discussed the Greek words Logos, Ethos, and Pathos, and in which Valentine’s Day will fall on a teaching day for me. Most of the time, Valentine’s Day celebrates the idea of Eros, or physical, sexual desire between lovers. But the Greeks had a host of other words to describe different types of love and connection.

Surprisingly, there are students out there who have rarely or never written a formal letter, and some who have rarely or never addressed and snail mailed anything. This activity engages students with SLO A at the level of understanding genre, the genre of letter writing, and SLO B, writing as a social act, in crafting an “other love” letter to someone in their social sphere.

Optional Materials:

1 box standard envelopes

1 wide-mouth mason jar or other lidded container

Colored pencils

Strips of paper with kind action instructions (see below)

The Plan:

1. Show the 3-minute video: Greek Words for Love at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUnnX9GAd_g>

The Video Viewing Task is to acquaint students with some Greek words. As they watch, have them write the words down with a one- or two-word description.

1. Discuss the different meanings of love using Eros, Philia, Ludus, and Agape. You could also include other Greek words like Storge (love for one’s family and children), Pragma (mature, longstanding love), and Philautia (self-love or self-compassion, which the Greeks believed you had to have before you could have any other kind of love. Philautia is the opposite of Narcissism.) Instructors can refer to this link for a good discussion of other words:

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/happiness/the-ancient-greeks-6-words-for-love-and-why-knowing-them-can-change-your-life>

1. Have students think of someone who has been good to them, or done something good for them, outside of a sexual relationship, and craft a letter to that person. I use an example of a letter I wrote one Valentine’s Day to my mother-in-law about my deep love and respect for her in raising such a wonderful man who is my life partner and how much I hope to imitate her in the raising of my son.
2. Remind them of the conventions of the letter writing genre, however informal:
   1. Your address in the upper left-hand corner, single-spaced, then two paragraph spaces
   2. The date, then two paragraph spaces
   3. The salutation, or greeting, as in “Dear …,” then two paragraph spaces
   4. The body of the letter should be single-spaced, one topic per paragraph. Each paragraph should be focused more on the letter recipient than on the letter writer. As in, “You have shown me…,” or “Your generosity and attention…”
   5. A valediction, or closing sentence, and one paragraph space
   6. Your name
3. The letter may be typed or handwritten and should be written with the intention to actually send it, in other words, best handwriting, attention to spelling, etc.
4. Options: Hand out envelopes and have students properly address the envelopes if they know the recipient’s address and properly place the return address. They can also take them home to address or hand-deliver them to their recipients. Instructors could also make colored pencils available for students to include artwork in their letters.
5. At the end of class, I have students draw Valentine’s Day “fortunes” from a jar in which I’ve placed small slips of paper with kind things to do for themselves (Philautia) or others (Agape) over the next few days or week. Here are some examples:

Let someone go in front of you in line.

Set up an altar in your home.

Give someone a compliment.

Take a bubble bath.

Give someone a flower.

Pay for the person behind you at the fast food line or drive-thru.

Draw or paint a picture.

Go for a walk.

Call your mom or someone else close to you and tell them you love them.

Seek the Holy in the ordinary today.

Listen to some inspirational music.

Meditate for 10 minutes.

Give your waitress/waiter a huge tip.