An Introduction to Persuasion and Argument

Moving people to a belief, position, or course of action

Adapted from Mike McGuire’s and Debbie Dean’s presentations
Part I: Identifying Argument and Persuasion

How effective is this argument?

HELP ME THINK OF AN ISSUE TO DEBATE FOR THIS DUMB PAPER.
WELL, WHAT ISSUES DO YOU CARE ABOUT?

I DON'T CARE ABOUT ISSUES! I'VE GOT BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN ARGUE WITH EVERY WRONG-HEADED CRACKPOT WITH AN IGNORANT OPINION! I'M A BUSY MAN!

I SAY, EITHER AGREE WITH ME OR TAKE A HIKE! I'M RIGHT, PERIOD! END OF DISCUSSION!

UM.... RIGHT. THERE, SEE? EVERYBODY'S HAPPY.
Audience and Speaker

• There’s more to rhetoric, or effective communication, than just the speaker and what he or she wants to say.

• Rhetoric works best when you have all of the three components of the rhetorical triangle working together: ethos (authority), pathos (an emotional connection with the audience), and logos (an argument with credibility).
The Rhetorical Triangle

Message
- information, argument
- reasons, evidence, data, structure

Rhetorical Triangle

Audience
- beliefs, values
- knowledge, experience

Communicator
- ethos (credibility), authority
- correctness, appearance, eloquence
Persuasion vs. Argument

• Persuasion and argument are often used interchangeably

• Persuasion is a broad term, which includes many tactics designed to move people to a position, a belief, or a course of action

• Argument is a specific kind of persuasion based on the principles of logic and reasoning
Persuasion vs. Argument

Persuasion
- Ethos (author credibility)
- Pathos (emotional appeals)

Argument
- Logos (logical appeals)
- Reason
Persuasion vs. Argument

"With its roots in orality, rhetoric has a bias for viewing audiences as particular. Aristotle said, ‘The persuasive is persuasive to someone.’ In contrast to rhetoric, writing has a bias for an abstract audience or generalized conception of audience. . . . For this reason, a particular audience can be persuaded, whereas the universal audience must be convinced; particular audiences can be approached by way of values, whereas the universal audience (which transcends partisan values) must be approached with facts, truths, and presumptions.”

~Miller & Charney
Is it argument or persuasion?

Problems

Like a polar bear adrift on a shrinking ice floe in the Arctic Ocean, many of us have held on to the dwindling hope that global warming is a vague concern for the future. As extreme weather patterns disrupt lives everywhere, it is clear that climate change is an immediate threat to our planet that must be addressed now.
Is it argument or persuasion?
The Importance of Argument and Persuasion

- **In everyday life…**
  Appealing a grade, asking for a raise, applying for a job, negotiating the price of a new car, arguing in traffic court

- **In academic life…**
  Defending your ideas, engaging intellectual debate

- **On the job…**
  Getting people to listen to your ideas, winning buy-in, getting your boss to notice, getting cooperation, moving people to action

- **In writing…**
  Irrefutably making your point, writing to be read

- **In reading and listening…**
  Critically evaluating other’s arguments, protecting yourself from unethical persuasive tactics, recognizing faulty reasoning when you see it.
An argument involves the process of establishing a claim and then proving it with the use of logical reasoning, examples, and research.
6 Reasons Why Zombies Would Make Cool Parents

1. Less pointless dinner conversation.

2. Relaxed curfews.

3. Less emphasis on personal appearance.
Elements of Argument

• Claim
• Evidence: relevant and verifiable
• Warrant: explanation of how the evidence supports the claim; often common sense rules, laws, scientific principles or research, and well-considered definitions.
• Backing: support for the warrant (often extended definitions)
• Qualifications and Counter-arguments: acknowledgement of differing claims
The Role of Your Audience

• Understanding your audience is key to effective writing of all kinds, especially persuasive writing.

• An argument is an implicit dialogue or exchange with your audience, so in writing arguments, assume there is a reader that will not agree with you.

• Audience awareness is absolutely essential to successful persuasion and argument; therefore…

• Know your audience
  – What is their position on the issue?
  – How strongly do they feel about it?
  – Are they open-minded enough to consider other views?
  – What will their objections be to your argument?
Audience

How do writers’ assumptions about audience affect production of a text?

1. How much to elaborate based on what they anticipate readers know
2. How much to tailor the development of claims
3. How much to care, since writers’ concerns are bigger when audience matters
4. How to accommodate audiences if writers don't identify with them

“Considering the audience, therefore, is not simply a matter of selecting the information that readers need to understand the argument. Instead, writers must anticipate objections and questions and develop persuasive appeals, including building on common ground, refuting opposing claims, offering an acceptable reader-writer relationship, and presuming upon appropriate beliefs and values."

~Miller & Charney
Structure of a Classical Argument

- Introduction
- Thesis Statement
- Background Information
- Reasons and Evidence
- The Opposing View and the Refutation
- Conclusions
Part II:

Crafting Arguments and Persuasion Compositions
Choosing an arguable issue

• Arguments need . . .
  – An issue
  – An arguer
  – An audience
  – Common ground
  – A forum
  – Audience outcomes

  – Arguments fail with . . .
    • No disagreement or reason to argue
    • Risky or trivial issues
    • Difficulty establishing common ground
    • Standoffs or fights that result in negative outcomes
The Thesis Statement

...is the most important sentence in your paper

...is an assertion

...answers the question: “What am I trying to prove?”

...brings focus to the entire essay

...lets the reader know the main idea of the paper

...is not a factual statement or an announcement of purpose, but a claim that has to be proven throughout the paper.
Example:
Which thesis statement is best?

• Parents, often too busy to watch television shows with their families, can monitor their children’s viewing habits with the aid of the V-chip.

• To help parents monitor their children’s viewing habits, the V-chip should be a required feature for television sets sold in the U.S.

• This paper will describe a V-chip and examine the uses of the V-chip in American-made television sets.
A Miner would be a good mascot selection for our school.

Mascots should be strong or tough and represent the area. They should be something people would be proud to be.

Our area has mining as one of its primary industries, so the choice would represent our area. In addition, miners need to be tough because they do strenuous work—and dangerous work. They work hard to fill a need for people everywhere. That’s something to be proud of.
V-chart as pre-write

ARGUMENTS
Generates additional revenue
Some people don't have time to search
Time so valuable are willing to pay double ($150/year)
But you don't want faculty to be late to class, hurts dozens of students.

QUESTION
Should the university lease personal parking spaces?

COUNTERARGUMENTS
Leaves fewer spots for others
Many spots unoccupied half the time
Poorer people unable to pay as much, even if time is valuable
Like students, average pay $10,000 vs. faculty, $30,000 to $70,000

INTEGRATE
Which side is stronger and why?
Is there a compromise or creative solution?

Final Conclusion
Rationale
The arguments for are stronger, because if a faculty member is late to class, it wastes the learning time for dozens of students, whereas if a student is late, only he/she is usually affected.
It is true however, that leased spots are often unoccupied (when the center is not in school). As a compromise or solution, spots should be leased for only part of the day (morning, afternoon, or evening).

NOTES:
(1) Reasons and evidence that support other claims are indented.
(2) Arguments that counter other arguments are marked by **REMARK**.

Figure 2. Completed argumentation vee diagram on the question, "Should the university lease personal parking spaces to faculty and students?"
Using a Reasonable Tone

• Shows you are fair-minded and therefore adds to your credibility

• When you acknowledge the opposition with balanced language, it shows that your respect the opposing views

• No matter how passionate you are about the issue, don’t resort to careless, harsh words; this would show more about you than the issue
Offering a Counterargument

• Addressing the opposition demonstrates your credibility as a writer

• It shows that you have researched multiple sides of the argument and have come to an informed decision

• Remember, keep a balanced tone when attempting to debunk the opposition
Counter-arguing Effectively

• Conceding to some of your opposition’s concerns can demonstrate respect for their opinions

• Remain tactful yet firm
  – using rude or deprecating language can cause your audience to reject your position without carefully considering your claims
Four Corners Activity:

• The Supreme Court was right this week to reverse the ban on the sale of violent video games to children.

• Choose one: Strongly Agree? Agree? Disagree? Strongly Disagree? Write for 3 minutes on your opinion.

• Go to corner of room matching your response. In your groups, you have several minutes to create an argument: claim, convincing evidence (yes, you can combine from your individual writing), and explanation to present a two-minute argument to the rest of the groups.
Annotating: Logos, Voice, and Word Choice

• You will be reading this piece as one of the following people:
  – Teenager
  – Parent
  – Police Officer
  – Insurance Executive

• Underline information that is important, surprising, puzzling or thought-provoking. For each time you underline information, jot a sentence or two about why you chose that bit to underline. The goal is to explain your role’s thoughts, opinions or questions.

• Were you convinced by the argument you read? Why or why not? Please comment on the logic of the appeal, the voice, and the word choice used.
Building Support for an Assertion: Using others’ ideas appropriately

• **Quoting**: using the exact words of another. Words must be placed in quotation marks and the author cited.

• **Summarizing**: putting the ideas of another in your own words and condensing them. Author must be identified.

• **Paraphrasing**: putting someone else’s ideas in your words but keeping approximately the same length as the original. Paraphrase must be original in both structure and wording, and accurate in representing author’s intent. It can **not** just be switching out synonyms in the original sentence. Author must be identified.
Quoting

• Why use quotations?
  – when the speaker’s name and reputation add credibility
  – when the phrasing of the quotation is interesting or revealing and cannot be stated another way as effectively

• How effective are these examples?
  – Many students “improve their reading ability” by looking at a text closely and by giving their first reactions to it (Burke 46).
  – Mem Fox contests, “worksheets are the dead-end streets of literacy: there’s a non-message on each line, going nowhere, for no reason” (69).

• Hints: cut quotes to the core and use them like spice, sparingly
Summarizing

- **Summaries**
  - Should be shorter than original text
  - Should include the main ideas of the original
  - Should reflect the structure of the original text somewhat
  - Should include important details

Is this an effective summary of Source B?
At the moment of harvest, food begins to lose vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals important for fighting disease and maintaining health. Because the decrease is negligible, however, even if food is days or weeks from harvest, it’s still possible to derive nutrition from it and be healthy by making smart food choices.
Paraphrasing

- **Source**: “People of African descent in the Diaspora do not speak languages of Africa as their mother tongue.”

- **Inappropriate Paraphrase**: “People of African descent no longer speak the languages of Africa as their first language.”

- **Appropriate Paraphrase**: “Painter contends that cultural factors like language and religion divide African Americans from their ancestors. Black Americans speak a wide variety of languages, but usually these are not African.”
Introducing others’ ideas

- Put source names either before the idea [Painter insists that the hula hoop can help fight diabetes] or after the idea in parentheses [Others find the idea ridiculous (Smith, Wilson)].

- Use vivid and precise verb signals more than “says” or “believes” to show how an author feels or how an idea might relate to other ideas: agrees, recommends, insists, explains

- Make sure the idea adds to the point you are making. Dropping in unrelated quotes or names diminishes your credibility. SHOW how the idea contributes to YOUR argument.
The Qualities of a Solid Argument

• Clear assertion
• Incorporating others’ words or ideas
• Analyzing and explaining data/sources adequately
• Recognizing the difference between reasons and evidence
• Evaluating quality of evidence/research
• Subordinating opposing views
• Organizing for greatest effect
• Showing connectivity of ideas
• Maintaining an academic tone
Connecting ideas effectively

• Why? To establish clear relations between ideas

“The best compositions establish a sense of momentum and direction by making explicit connections among their different parts, so that what is said in one sentence (or paragraph) not only sets up what is to come but is clearly informed by what has already been said. When you write a sentence, you create an expectation in the reader’s mind that the next sentence will in some way echo and be an extension of the first, even if—especially if—the second one takes your argument in a new direction.”

~Graff & Birkenstein
Ways to make connections

• Transitions
• Pointing words
• Repetition of key words and phrases
• Synonyms
• Idea hooks
Example

“The only thing more dangerous than being on the back of a racehorse was being thrown from one. Some jockeys took two hundred or more falls in their careers. Some were shot into the air when horses would ‘prop,’ or plant their front hooves and slow abruptly. Others went down when their mounts would bolt, crashing into the rails or even the grandstand. A common accident was ‘clipping heels,’ in which trailing horses tripped over leading horses’ hind hooves, usually sending the trailing horse and rider into a somersault. Finally, horses could break down, racing’s euphemism for incurring leg injuries.” Seabiscuit, Hillenbrand
Transitions & Connectivity

EXAMPLES: Also, besides, furthermore, in addition, similarly, in other words, for example, for instance, although, but, despite the fact that, however, as a result, since, so, therefore, admittedly, as a result, consequently, yet

Spot is a good dog. He has fleas.
Spot is a good dog, even though he has fleas.

Courage is resistance to fear.
Courage is mastery of fear.
Courage is not absence of fear.
Repetition of key words or phrases

• “She sighed as she realized she was tired. Not tired from work but tired of putting white people first. Tired of stepping off sidewalks to let white people pass, tired of eating at separate lunch counters and learning at separate schools. She was tired of ‘Colored’ entrances, ‘Colored drinking fountains, and ‘Colored taxis. She was tired of getting somewhere first and being waited on last. Tired of ‘separate,’ and definitely tired of ‘not equal.’” ~ Rosa, Giovanni
Idea hooks

• “Mark Twain is established in the minds of most Americans as a kindly humorist, a gentle and delightful ‘funny man.’ No doubt his photographs have helped promote this image. Everybody is familiar with the Twain face. He looks like every child’s ideal grandfather, a dear old white-thatched gentleman who embodies the very spirit of loving-kindness. Such a view of Twain would probably have been a source of high amusement to the author himself.”

~ Lively Art of Writing, Payne
We surf the Internet.
We swim in magazines.

The Internet is exhilarating. Magazines are enveloping. The Internet grabs you. Magazines embrace you. The Internet is fleeting. Magazines are immersive. And both media are growing.

Barely noticed amidst the thunderous Internet clamor is the simple fact that magazine readership has risen over the past five years. Even in the age of the Internet, even among the groups one would assume are most singularly hooked on digital media, the appeal of magazines is growing.

Think of it this way: during the 12-year life of Google, magazine readership actually increased 11 percent.

What it proves, once again, is that a new medium doesn’t necessarily displace an existing one. Just as movies didn’t kill radio. Just as TV didn’t kill movies. An established medium can continue to flourish so long as it continues to offer a unique experience. And, as reader loyalty and growth demonstrate, magazines do.

Which is why people aren’t giving up swimming, just because they also enjoy surfing.
Practice (Short)

• Write a paragraph expressing your opinion about the ___________ movement using a quote, paraphrase, and summary statement from one of the sources.

• Be prepared to explain why you crafted your writing the way you did.