

Staci Shultz
English 356
T & Th 1:30-2:45 (Tate 214)
Office Hours: T & Th 10:00-12:00 (Tate 215)
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Advanced Essay Writing: Arguments in Contemporary Communities

He who **establishes his argument** by noise and command shows that his reason is weak. -Michel de Montaigne

Course Overview

The word “argument” in our culture often brings to mind notions of confrontation and heated debate between two parties. But classical thinkers, writing over two thousand years ago, had a much more robust understanding of argument: for them, arguments were means of inquiry, ways of exploring and testing out ideas and interrogating one’s own beliefs.

Thinkers like Aristotle and Cicero recognized that individuals needed tools to craft logical and compelling arguments, so they taught their students rhetoric—the practice of discovering the appropriate argument for any situation. “Rhetoric,” as contemporary rhetoricians Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee have noted, “helped people to choose the best course of action when they disagreed about important political, religious, or social issues.”

In this course, we will study the theories that ancient and contemporary rhetoricians have developed in an attempt to learn how to craft effective and powerful arguments of our own, not simply as a means of confronting opponents but also as a means of inquiry—a means of discovering and building knowledge about ourselves, the local communities in which we participate, and the world at large. We will begin by studying the ancient theory of rhetoric in order to build the scaffolding for the ideas we’ll discuss and the writing we’ll do in this course. From there, we will move on to contemporary arguments, considering how these ancient theories of rhetoric apply to our world today. After careful consideration, you will choose a topic relevant to you and a community in which you participate and work with that topic for the entire semester so that by the end of our time together you will have developed several arguments grounded in this topic and will have positioned yourself as an expert.

Course Goals

In English 356, you will have the opportunity to do the following:

- 1) Write 20-30 pages of revised, polished argumentative prose;
- 2) Reflect on your own processes of reading, writing, and thinking;
- 3) Implement classical tools of argumentation, including the rhetorical triangle, methods of appeal, and types of claims;
- 4) Listen to others’ ideas as a method for understanding the complexities of audience;
- 5) Apply argument as a reading strategy;
- 6) Give and receive constructive critique of writing-in-process;
- 7) Recognize the power that resides in language

Assignments and Grade Breakdown:

Assignment	Description	Guidelines	% of Final Grade
Argument 1	Exigence Argument	2 pages	—
Argument 2	Narrative Argument	4 pages	5%
Argument 3	Causal Argument	7 pages	15%
Argument 4	Proposal Argument	12 pages	20%
Argument 5	Visual/Oral Argument	15 minutes	15%
Final Exam	Job Application Materials	TBA	5%
Reflections		See below	15%
Peer Letters		See below	10%
Participation		See below	15%

Five Arguments on a Sustained Investigation of a Topic:

Instead of writing several brief, surface-level arguments on many different topics, I am asking you to write about one topic for the entire term. Your ultimate task will be to develop a full, complex “story” about a current issue and offer a concrete proposal for action. You will write at least two drafts for each assignment; as you progress through the semester, your essays will be a combination of new content and content that you have written for previous assignments that you continue to “re-purpose” to meet evolving criteria. (Your drafts should look substantially different from week to week because you have considered audience response as well as your own revision ideas. Your final grade for each Argument will reflect the strength of each draft as well as your revision efforts.) The Exigence, Narrative, and Causal Arguments will require that you approach your topic from different perspectives, with the goal of building toward a fully researched and supported, not to mention cohesive, Proposal Argument that you will present as a written paper as well as a oral/visual presentation.

Reflections: In addition to the major essays, you will submit typed single-spaced responses (not to exceed one page) to nearly all of the readings we do in class. There are a total of 8 Reflections, and of those you should do 6 over the course of the semester. Reflections will be submitted at the start of each class and should be a response to that day’s reading(s). I will look for your responses to be concise and also intellectually rigorous and engaging—and certainly not something written at the last minute. Please point to specific passages in the text to demonstrate close reading. These Reflections give you the opportunity to respond to content as well as form. They will also serve as jumping off points for our discussions in class.

Peer Letters: Every few weeks we will devote class time to peer conferencing. I ask you to take these conferences seriously: Carefully read one another’s arguments and, in your letters to the writers, offer productive and critical feedback. (We are not here to slam one another, nor are we here to offer hollow praise.) Whether you are the reader or the writer, you should come to conference days with questions, concerns, and revision ideas. You should produce typed single-spaced letters that are at least $\frac{1}{2}$ pages long, and I ask that you push yourself to move beyond commenting on “local” issues like grammar and style to focus primarily on “global” issues like pathos, logos, ethos, organization, fallacies, and the strength of claims. We will discuss grammar and style throughout the semester since having a stylistically coherent and grammatically sound argument is important to your overall ethos. However, students sometimes focus on grammar and style because it feels easier than addressing more pressing concerns. I want you to learn to address both local and global, but the latter should be your primary concern.

Participation: Participation comes in various forms, and below I've listed three important ways I expect you to participate:

1. Class Discussions: This class involves primarily discussions and workshops, which means that I will expect you to come to class ready to contribute your ideas and actively participate in the day's activities. Some of you are shy, and you might find contributing to class discussions difficult. Please talk to me early on in the semester if this is the case so we can find ways to ensure that your voice is being heard.

2. Brief Rhetorical Analysis: My goal is to create an open door between the classroom and the world beyond. One way we can do that is to bring into the classroom the texts we come across in our everyday lives and to evaluate them according to the rhetorical skills we're developing. Each student will bring in a text and lead us in a conversational rhetorical analysis of the text—for instance, asking us think about audience, purpose, and writer as well as ethos, pathos, and logos. These analyses should be approximately ten minutes, and should be on a text you can discuss thoroughly in the time allotted. Arguments are everywhere, including websites, editorials, advertisements, videos, television shows, and so forth; be creative in your selection.

3. Discussion Leaders: Nearly every day we meet, one or two students will lead the class in a discussion of the readings. Don't panic: As a Discussion Leader, you won't have to do much to prepare; just make sure you have done the readings (obviously) and that you come with some questions for us to consider. These questions should address the content as well as the form—that is, you should be sure to ask us to address the strategies the author employs and whether or not we find them compelling. You're welcome to ask us to do some cross-comparison between other essays we've read or lead us in a writing activity.

Grading Scale

I will use the following grading scale when evaluating your work:

A	93-100%	C	73-77%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	88-89%	D+	68-70%
B	83-87%	D	63-67%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	77-79%	E	0-59%

The following scale reflects my assessment policy:

A: An 'A' is reserved for exceptional work. This means that you not only fulfilled the basic requirements of the course, but also consistently pushed yourself and your writing in new, creative and dynamic ways. An A signifies that there is clear evidence of hard work, extensive revision, and a consistent willingness to try new ideas in writing. Additionally, you: were a stellar participant in classroom discussions and workshops; handed in your work on time and completed all assignments; demonstrated a strong engagement with and commitment to your essays, Reflections, and other work.

B: A 'B' is reserved for good, solid work. You fulfilled the basic requirements and your work shows evidence of increased effort over the semester. You tried some new things with your writing, worked on revisions, and were an important member of classroom discussions and group workshops. Your Reflections showed regular and significant connections to your essay writing.

C: A 'C' is reserved for average work—and also work that is expected. You fulfilled the basic requirements of the course, but did not push yourself beyond them. A 'C' might also indicate excessive lateness/absences, missed assignments, inattention to the presentation and quality of your work, or a lack of participation in discussions and group work.

D: A 'D' is reserved for below average work. You failed to turn in many of the assignments, missed multiple classes, and put in a minimal effort to both your writing and classroom presence.

F: An 'F' is reserved for students who have either plagiarized or failed to comprehend the subject matter. You didn't turn in or finish assignments, missed too many classes, and weren't a productive presence in the classroom.

Conferences: In addition to introductory individual conferences at the beginning of the semester, I will cancel class twice during the semester to meet with you individually for twenty minutes to discuss your most current draft. Conferences are opportunities for us to discuss our ideas about the assignments you're working on at that moment and for you to talk with me about both specific and general concerns or questions you might have. As these meetings replace class time, they are not optional.

Office Hours: I encourage you to attend my office hours. Be sure to make arrangements with me if you have a time conflict during my office hours; I'm happy to accommodate as much as I can.

Communication: I prefer to correspond with you via email rather than phone. If you do not receive a response from me within 24 hours, please send me another email—a lengthy delay in response usually means I did not receive your message. *Please check your email on a daily basis.*

***A note about email etiquette:** In every email correspondence with an instructor, please include the following: 1. a subject line that is informative ("Question about Essay 1"); 2. a salutation ("Dear Professor Shultz"); 3. a message that is well written and polite; 4. a closing remark ("Thank for your time"); and 5. a signature (i.e. your name).

Reading Drafts: Throughout the semester, I will read your writing at various stages. Your peers will read your second drafts. While I encourage you to meet with me outside of class about your work, I ask you not to give me entire drafts to read. We will work more efficiently if you approach me during office hours and via email with questions regarding specific aspects of your draft.

Attendance: You are expected to attend class, period. Participation and attendance are factored into your final grade. You are allowed **THREE** absences without penalty. (Note: Missing a conference is equivalent to missing a class.) For every absence thereafter your final grade will be reduced by two percentage points. Excessive tardiness—more than five minutes and on more than two occasions—will lower your grade as well. Out of respect to this classroom community, please arrive, on time, ready to participate.

A Note from the College on Classroom Conduct: In this classroom, we will treat each other with respect, faculty and students alike. Personal conversations, rude behavior, walking in and out of the classroom during class, use of cell phones, sleeping, eating, working on other classes' assignments, and other disruptive behaviors interfere with other students' rights and with the instructor's ability to teach. Therefore, anyone exhibiting unacceptable behaviors during the class will be asked to leave and will be counted absent for that class period. Failure to cooperate with this process will result in disciplinary action that may include withdrawal from the class or dismissal from the college.

Saving Your Work: It's a good idea to designate a binder to store your work for this class—the drafts I hand back, handouts, syllabus, etc. Save all of your work and email every draft to yourself so that you always have back-up copies. You will need to turn in *all drafts* plus your peers' letters each time you submit a final draft of an argument, so be sure not to lose anything.

Late Work: I will grant you one extension, but no extensions are allowed on peer conferencing days. Bring whatever you have in whatever form it's in. Beyond this one extension, all late work will result in a 5-point deduction on the final grade for the assignment.

Cell Phones and Pagers and iPods, Oh my...

Please remember that it is common courtesy to silence (and ignore) electronic devices as soon as you walk into any classroom. While I am an enthusiastic advocate for advances in technology, I do not want them disrupting the short time we spend together.

Plagiarism: I cannot emphasize this enough: Do **NOT** plagiarize. As evolving rhetoricians and citizens of the academic community, it is your duty to remain ethical. All work you do for this class must be your own original work (not your roommate's) and written specifically for *this* class. (Yes, it's possible to plagiarize yourself! If you submit work already completed for one course as original work for another course, you are violating university policy. This means no "recycled" essays.) When you use outside sources (books, articles, Internet sources, interviews, etc.) you must correctly document them. We will discuss citations in class; meanwhile, don't hesitate to ask me if you have questions along the way.

Whenever you're in doubt, cite—even if it's not correctly formatted.

And let me offer this advice: Don't let yourself get into a bind. Start your assignments early so you can allow time for writer's block, crashing computers, weeping roommates, unexpected travel delays, temperamental printers, unreliable Internet service, and other such catastrophes that might lead to desperate measures. Please note that **evidence of plagiarism will result in an automatic failing grade for the course.**

Writing Center: Run by trained upper-level Wesleyan students, the Writing Center is a free resource that can help you with every step of your writing process. Drop in to work on brainstorming, organization, final drafts and citation questions. (However, please do not treat the Writing Center as a drive-by proofreading service.) Be sure your tutor completes a Writing Center Tutorial Form and hand it in with your paper for grading consideration. The Center's hours are **Sunday-Thursday, 3-5 & 7-9**. You can schedule a 30-minute appointment or drop in.

Statement on Disabilities: Wesleyan College is committed to equal education and participation for all students. Any student who requires reasonable academic accommodations or the use of auxiliary aids in class must first identify herself to the Director of Student Disability Services in the Academic Center. Documentation is required (which will be evaluated) and appropriate accommodations will be recommended. The student will then be expected to collaborate with each of her professors. Please see me during the first two weeks of class if you have any questions regarding this policy or its related procedures.

Required Text

Good Reasons With Contemporary Arguments, 4th ed., Lester Faigley & Jack Selzer, eds.

Schedule

****Syllabus Subject to Change****

*****Please Bring Your Text to Class Every Day*****

Thursday, Jan. 13: Welcome to English 356!

In class:

- Attendance
- Discuss: Syllabus (assignments, books, policies)
- Defining terms: Argument, Rhetoric, Composition
- Letter to Prof. Shultz: Why are you taking 356? What are your goals for this course? What questions do you have about the syllabus or the course?

Tuesday, Jan. 18: Defining Terms and Introducing Argument #1: The Exigence Argument

Reading Due:

- Syllabus
- Chapters 1, 2 & 3
- “Counselors Walk a Fine Line Weighing the Rights of Student and College,” p. 491
- “The End of Youthful Indiscretions: Internet Makes Them Permanent Blots,” p. 492

Writing Due:

- Typed answers to questions on p. 35-36. For each category, add **two** of your own questions.

Thursday, Jan. 20: The Exigence Argument

Reading Due:

- “Speech at the Democratic National Convention...” p. 464
- “Ron Reagan Wrong on Stem Cells,” p. 466

Writing Due:

- Exigence Prewriting Assignment
- Practice Reflection (Required): In your responses to these arguments, remember to consider the rhetorical situation of each argument and practice using the rhetorical appeals we’ve been discussing: logos, pathos, and ethos.

Tuesday, Jan. 25: Exigence Argument cont.

Reading Due:

- Chapters 16, 17 & 18

Writing Due:

- Draft of Exigence Argument

In Class:

- Partner Conferences
- Brief Rhetorical Analysis I

Thursday, Jan. 27: Defining Your Terms

Reading Due:

- “Setting the Record Straight,” p. 121
- “Can Anyone Be a Designer?” p. 592

Writing Due:

- Exigence Argument
- Reflection I

In Class:

→ Discussion Leaders

Friday, Jan. 21: Instructor Conferences

Tuesday, Feb. 1: Narrative Argument

Reading Due:

→ Chapter 11

→ "The Border Patrol State," p. 182

→ "Facebook's 'Privacy Trainwreck': Exposure, Invasion, and Social Convergence," p. 595

Writing Due:

→ Reflection 2

In Class:

→ Brief Rhetorical Analyses 2 & 3

→ Discussion Leaders

Thursday, Feb. 3: Narrative Argument cont.

Reading Due:

→ Chapter 20 **OR** 21

→ "Struggling Alone," p. 365

→ "Citizenship and Disability," p. 540

Writing Due:

→ Reflection 3

In Class:

→ Brief Rhetorical Analysis 4

→ Discussion Leaders

Monday, Feb. 7: First Group to Post Draft of Narrative Argument by Noon

Tuesday, Feb. 8: Peer Conferencing, Day 1

Reading Due:

→ First Group's Drafts

Writing Due:

→ Peer Letters

Wednesday, Feb. 9: Second Group to Post Draft of Narrative Argument by Noon

Thursday, Feb. 10: Peer Conferencing, Day 2

Reading Due:

→ Second Group's Drafts

Writing Due:

→ Peer Letters

Tuesday, Feb. 15: The Causal Argument

Reading Due:

→ Chapter 9

→ Chapter 19

→ "Kate Winslet, Please Save Us!" p. 548

→ “Secret Society of the Starving,” p. 556

Writing Due:

→ Final Draft of Narrative Argument

→ Reflection 4

In Class:

→ Brief Rhetorical Analysis 5

→ Discussion Leader

Thursday, Feb. 17: Causal Argument cont.

Reading Due:

→ Chapter 12

→ “How Race Affected the Federal Government’s Response to Katrina,” p. 328

→ “Why Should I Be Nice to You? Coffee Shops and the Politics of Good Service,” p. 147

Writing Due:

→ Reflection 5

→ Brief Rhetorical Analysis 6 & 7

→ Discussion Leaders

Tuesday, Feb. 22: Causal Argument cont.

Reading Due:

→ “What Is Global Warming?” p. 335

In Class: *An Inconvenient Truth*

Thursday, Feb. 24: Causal Argument cont.

Reading Due:

→ “Top Ten ‘Global-Warming’ Myths,” p. 339

In Class: *An Inconvenient Truth*

Writing Due:

→ Reflection 6

Monday, Feb. 28: First Group to Post Draft of Causal Argument by Noon

Tuesday, March 1: Peer Conferencing, Day 1

Reading Due:

→ First Group’s Drafts

Writing Due:

→ Peer Letters

Wednesday, March 2: Second Group to Post Draft of Causal Argument by Noon

Thursday, March 3: Peer Conferencing, Day 2

Reading Due:

→ Second Group’s Drafts

Writing Due:

→ Peer Letters

Tuesday, March 8: No Class: “Spring Break”

Thursday, March 10: No Class: "Spring Break"

Tuesday, March 15: Proposal Argument

Reading Due:

- Chapter 13
- "Evan's Two Moms," p. 373
- "Homophobic? Read Your Bible," p. 362
- "Coming Out in the Line of Fire," p. 380

Writing Due:

- Final Draft of Causal Argument
- Discussion Leader

Thursday, March 17: Proposal Argument cont.

Reading Due:

- "Take My Privacy, Please!" p. 484
- "Is Google's Data Grinder Dangerous?" p. 576

Writing Due:

- Reflection 7

In Class:

- Brief Rhetorical Analysis 8
- Discussion Leader

Tuesday, March 22: Introducing Argument #4: Proposal Argument

Reading Due:

- "The Right Drug to Target: Cutting Marijuana Use," p. 518
- "Make Peace with Pot," p. 520

Writing Due:

- Reflection 8
- Brief Rhetorical Analysis 9 & 10
- Discussion Leader

Thursday, March 24: Instructor Conferences

Writing Due:

- Outline of Proposal Argument

Monday, March 28: First Group to Post Draft of Proposal Argument by Noon

Tuesday, March 29: Peer Conferencing, Day 1

Reading Due:

- First Group's Drafts

Writing Due:

- Peer Letters

Wednesday, March 30: Second Group to Post Draft of Proposal Argument by Noon

Thursday, March 31: Peer Conferencing, Day 2

Reading Due:

- Second Group's Drafts

Writing Due:

→ Peer Letters

***Note:** April 1 → Last day to withdraw with a W.Tuesday, April 5: Tuesday, April 12: Visual/Oral Argument**Reading Due:**

→ Chapters 14 & 15

→ Visual arguments on the following pages: 401, 414, 488, 506, 524-525, 547, 565, 570, 583

Writing Due:

→ Final Draft of Proposal Argument

In Class:

→ Discussion Leader

Thursday, April 7: Visual/Oral Argument**In Class:**

→ In-class Workshop

Tuesday, April 19: Visual/Oral Arguments: Day 1Thursday, April 21: Visual/Oral Arguments: Day 2Tuesday, April 26: Visual/Oral Arguments: Day 3Tuesday, May 3: Job Application Materials**Final Exam: Details TBA**