MODULE 3: DOWNLOADABLE PACKET

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MODULE 3: TEACHING ESSAY WRITING AND ARGUMENTATION

Module 3: Getting Started

OVERVIEW AND TO-DO LIST

Overview

Let's work on Module 3: Teaching Essay Writing and Argumentation

Objective

This module targets **Course Objective 3: Understand the principles of composing argumentative writing.** By the end of the module, you will be able to accomplish the following **Module Objectives**:

- **3.1.** Learn strategies for helping writers develop topics and content
- **3.2.** Describe the structure and types of argumentative texts
- **3.3.** Apply key concepts to create an argument activity mode

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To-Do List

Below are the tasks you need to complete in Module 3 with the recommended time as a guide. These time guidelines are only approximate; you may find that you spend longer or shorter on some tasks, depending on your experience with and interest in the topic.

Module 3: Getting Started

- Read this Module 3: Overview and To-Do List page (10 minutes)
    - Watch the Module 3: Introduction video (10 minutes)

Module 3: Basics of Essay Writing

- Read the pages following the Module 3: Basics of Essay Writing page
    - Module 3: Purpose and Audience (15 minutes)
    - Module 3: Structure (10 minutes)
    - Module 3: Content (10 minutes)
- Read the Module 3: Writing an Effective University Application Essay page (20 minutes)



"Brown framed eyeglasses on a calendar" by Olya Kobruseva via Pexels is licensed under the Pexels license

Module 3: Argumentative Writing

- Watch the Module 3: What is an Academic Argument? video (20 minutes)
- Read the following Module 3: Types of Arguments pages
    - Module 3: Types of Arguments, Part 1 (10 mins)
    - Module 3: Types of Arguments, Part 2 (10 mins)
- Complete the optional task Module 3: OPTIONAL Discussion: Argumentation in My Classroom (30 minutes)

Review

- Take the assessment on Module 3 Quiz page (30 minutes)
- Respond to the optional task Module 3: OPTIONAL Teaching Journal: Argument Map Model (45 minutes)
- Watch the Module 3: Summary video (10 minutes)

"Module Overview", "Module Objectives", "To Do List", and "Download" by Iowa State University are licensed under CC BY 4.0.

MODULE 3: INTRODUCTION



Video: Module 3 Introduction

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Watch this Module 3 Introduction video that introduces you to the most important aspects of this module.

>>>> Please note that this video is available for online viewing. See the transcript below. <<<<

Transcript: Module 3 Introduction

Welcome to Module 3 Teaching Essay Writing and Argumentation!

In Module 3, we will:

- introduce you to the basics of essay writing;
- describe the characteristics and types of arguments in academic writing;
- give strategies for teaching argumentation.

You will learn from short video lectures and readings about:

- structure of a personal narrative essay;
- context, audience, and purpose;

- content and originality;
- effective college application essay writing;
- features and types of academic arguments;
- approach to analyzing arguments.

To help you better understand how key concepts work in actual teaching, we will demonstrate them in:

- personal narrative essay examples;
- examples of arguments;
- guide and model for argument mapping.

You will also have the opportunity to interact with each other and engage in:

- a discussion about argumentation in your classroom.

To learn 'by doing' and apply your new knowledge, you will continue your teaching journal. Specifically, you will create an argument map model for your AWC Materials Packet.

Your work will be evaluated throughout the module and at the end of the module with help of:

- Module 3 Quiz.

Let's begin working on Module 3!

Module 3: Basics of Essay Writing

Let's begin learning about essay writing!

In this part of Module 3, you will learn from short readings about some important aspects of essay writing:

1. Purpose and Audience
2. Structure and Content.

Then, we will direct your attention to one particular type of essay - the Application Essay.



"Person wearing black coat" by Van Tay Media via Unsplash is licensed under the Unsplash license

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Optional: Additional engagement

Write down your ideas about the following questions:

- What makes for a successful personal essay?
- What aspects of essay writing may be the most difficult for students?

Keep your notes to compare with those presented in the content pages.

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MODULE 3: PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

Please note: **Words in bold** can be found in the Course Glossary.

Skillful writers can successfully communicate with their audience. Their texts are more powerful because they address the expectations, values, and background knowledge of their readers. To help students learn how to write powerful texts, it is important to make them think about the Rhetorical Situation when they begin to draft their text after the Inventing stage. You learned about the **Rhetorical Situation** in Module 1: What Is Academic Writing?, so you know that many factors shape writing. The most central factors include who the writer is, who the target audience is, and what/when/why is being communicated. Thinking about purpose and audience will help students better plan to write and produce more effective writing.



"Two women using laptops" by Emma Dau via Unsplash is licensed under the Unsplash license

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Purpose

The purpose is a writer's reason for writing. People write for a variety of purposes, including the following:

- to **express** creative expression;
- to **tell** a story;
- to **describe** something;
- to **explain** a process;
- to **convince** someone to think or do something;
- to **track** learning.

The same topic could lead to different texts depending on the purpose. In the table below, you can see three different statements from texts about vegetarian diets. Note how the statements use language appropriate for the purpose. The descriptive statement uses *includes plant-based foods*. The process statement contains *When you order vegetarian food*. And the text to convince includes the modal verb *should*.

You can try a similar exercise with your students: ask them to choose a topic and draft a statement based on a different purpose. Or, you can ask them to identify the purpose of several texts written on the same topic but in different genres. Determining the purpose before writing will help your students choose appropriate language and content for their texts.

Writing Purposes

Purpose	Statement
To describe	A vegetarian diet includes plant-based foods. Vegetarians do not eat meat.
To explain a process	When you order vegetarian food at a restaurant, you will ask your server which dishes do not contain meat products.
To convince	People should eat less meat for their health and to benefit the environment.

Audience

Students often think of the teacher as the audience for their writing. The teacher is the person who evaluates their work, after all! Yet, it is necessary to challenge students to write to an audience beyond the classroom. This can help them better understand how to adapt their content and language choices to match the rhetorical situation. This is a skill that will benefit students as they write in any course or other contexts in the future.



"Person writing audience" by Melanie Deziel via Unsplash is licensed under the Unsplash license

Here are some questions suggested by Babin et al. (2017) to help them think about their audience:

1. What do I know about my audience? This can be personal demographics (e.g., age, sex, education level), interests, beliefs, or other concerns.
2. What is my audience likely to know about my topic? What might they not know about my topic?
3. Is my audience someone who has an interest in my topic? Does my audience already have an opinion?
4. What may affect the way my audience feels about my topic? What details or examples may be interesting to my audience?

The answers to these questions should inform all aspects of content development. Depending on the background knowledge of the audience, students may include more or less information. Students' personal characteristics may influence the type of language, grammar, and supporting information they choose.

Optional: Additional engagement

As you think about how to help your students attend to their audience and purpose, consider the following questions:

- What audiences will your students be writing for in class and beyond?
- How can writing change depending on the context?

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Reference:

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Babin, M., Burnell, C., Pesznecker, S., Rosevear, N., & Wood, J. (2017). *The word on college reading and writing.* Open Oregon Educational Resources. https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/wrd

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Additional Resources:

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- Writing for the Reader: A Problem-Solution Approach: This article provides examples of activities that build knowledge of rhetorical context and audience.
- From Idea to Essay: Effective Strategies for Teaching Academic Writing: This webinar gives example activities for thinking about context.

MODULE 3: STRUCTURE

Please note: **Words in bold** can be found in the Course Glossary.

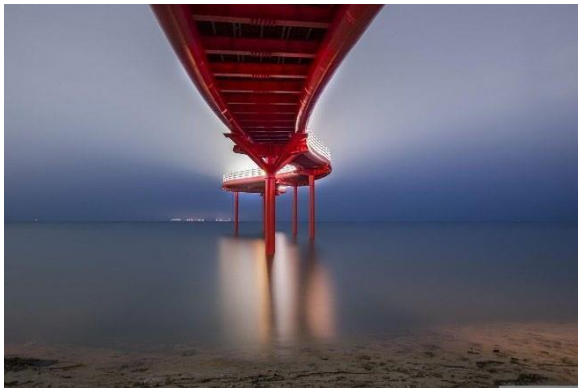
Developing structure

Many academic writing courses start with a **personal narrative essay**. A narrative essay is a narration or story from the writer's own experience and background knowledge. This type of essay makes a good introduction to the writing course because it asks the students to tell something from their own lives.

Whatever the purpose, a narrative essay follows a predictable organizational pattern: **Introduction**, **Body**, and **Conclusion**. Each of these parts of an essay structure has its own characteristics.

Introduction

The first paragraph starts with a **hook**, or an interesting opening statement to get the audience's attention. The hook can be a vivid description, surprising scene, or question for the reader. The opening paragraph should also give relevant background information, or the context of the story. This can include the setting, main characters, and timing. The opening paragraph ends with a **thesis** statement, or main idea that the writer will develop throughout the story. The thesis statement can relate to the significance of the story. Or, it can set up a question in the reader's mind, which the writer answers by the end of the paper.



"Bridge" by 춘성 강 via Pixabay licensed under Pixabay License

Body

The body of the essay contains several paragraphs. Each body paragraph focuses on a specific idea that relates to the thesis statement. The first sentence of each paragraph expresses the main idea of the paragraph, which is why it is called the **topic sentence**. The idea in a topic sentence should be developed with the appropriate information, or **evidence** supporting the idea. Evidence can include personal experiences, observations, facts, examples, data, and quotes from credible sources.

A good rule for developing body paragraphs is "Show, don't tell!" The mark of a good story is that it paints a picture in the reader's mind through description and reflection. Consider this example of telling: "*She was so angry."* It can be more powerful to express the feeling of anger like this: *"She stomped out of the room and slammed the door behind her."*

Each body paragraph should connect to the paragraphs before and after it. Together, all the body paragraphs create a path from the Introduction to the Conclusion. For this path to be clear for the audience, the writer needs to use **transitions**, or words that create a bridge from one idea to the next. Transitions are especially useful at the start of a new paragraph to show a change in topic focus, time, or event. For example, the transition comes at the beginning of this sentence: *"After our conversation, I thought long and hard about where I would go Saturday night."* At the same time, transitions are necessary inside the paragraphs, too.

Conclusion

The Conclusion should remind readers of the thesis, not necessarily by repeating it word for word. If the thesis posed a question, then the conclusion may give a precise answer. What should the reader learn from the narration? Why is it an important and memorable story? Ideally, this impression is created with the reader throughout the essay. The Conclusion is an opportunity to highlight this significance. Keep in mind that the Conclusion should not be a simple summary of the main points. Also, it should not bring in new information; rather, it should create a feeling of completeness. It may, however, state that the topic presented in the essay is important in other contexts.

See a number of examples for different thesis statements, transitions, and conclusion strategies in the Structure of a Personal Narrative Essay Examples Handout. Please refer to the Structure of a Personal Narrative Essay Examples Handout.

Additional Resources:
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Strategies for essay writing: This copyrighted resource from the Harvard College Writing Center provides practical information about developing the components of an essay.

- Thesis
- Topics sentences
- Conclusion

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From Idea to Essay: Effective Strategies for Teaching Academic Writing - This "American English" webinar covers many of the topics from this reading in-depth.

MODULE 3: CONTENT

Please note: **Words in bold** can be found in the Course Glossary.

Developing content
Think of content development as how we choose to express and support our main ideas. When we develop a main idea, we add specific ideas, examples, and details about the story we want to tell (Reid & Kowalski, 2021, para. 1). Reid and Kowalski (2021) recommend a number of ways in which writers can provide specific details to develop their ideas on a topic:

1. **Amplification** - used to clarify, elaborate, or explain a topic sentence;
2. **Appeal to emotions** - used to produce emotions in the reader;
3. **Cite authority** - used to quote or use information from a respected source;
4. **Cite common assumptions** - used to cite information that people may know;
5. **Definition** - used to specify the meaning of some term or concept;
6. **Qualification** - used to limit the number of interpretations that readers may have;
7. **Analogy** - used to make claims based on similarity to another claim;
8. **Analysis** - used to present data that a respected source has collected;
9. **Association** - used to state that a respected source uses or follows a claim.

Originality
It is important for personal narratives to be original and to keep the readers interested. One way to do this is by creating a **dominant feeling**, or a clear feeling that writers want their readers to have about the person, place, or event they are describing. Writers create a dominant feeling to make sure they express their main point of view clearly – both in their thesis and throughout the essay. To do that effectively, they carefully choose their words, especially when providing specific details.

For example, look at the excerpts from an essay about a business student taking a summer to help her grandfather on the farm. The dominant feeling is that this experience at the farm helped her decide to become a veterinarian. Her choices of language show how she felt at the time. When saying *without*

hesitation, for instance, she showed her excitement to help her grandfather. Also, expressions like *I swear I caught a sparkle appearing in his eye* make the dominant feeling more lively and memorable.

Example: Dominant feeling excerpt

Examples from Excerpts Showing Dominant Feeling

Dominant feeling	Example excerpts
Though I didn't know it at the time, that summer would pull me away from my business studies and kickstart my path toward becoming a veterinarian.	*My grandfather gave me a slow look. Though his face was unchanged, I swear I caught a sparkle appearing in his eye.* *"Are you sure you want to come along? Birthing calves is a messy business, and we could be out all night."* *"I'll grab my coat," I replied without hesitation.*

Optional: Additional engagement

We have highlighted the importance of carefully structuring and developing the content of a personal narrative essay. Think a bit further and consider the following questions:

- What makes for a well-told story?
- How should students add support to their paragraphs?
- What can students do to engage their readers?

Reference:

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Reid, S., & Kowalski, D. (2021). *Developing your ideas*. The WAC Clearinghouse. Colorado State University. https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/writing/guides/ideas

Additional Resources:
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Strategies for essay writing: This copyrighted resource from the Harvard College Writing Center provides practical information about developing the components of an essay.

- Thesis
- Topics sentences
- Conclusion

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From Idea to Essay: Effective Strategies for Teaching Academic Writing - This "American English" webinar covers many of the topics from this reading in-depth.

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MODULE 3: WRITING AN EFFECTIVE UNIVERSITY APPLICATION ESSAY

Let's learn about teaching university application essay writing!

Personal essays are often used in other contexts. One such context is writing an application essay to apply to an American university or college. Professor Elena Cotos conducted a webinar titled "Writing an Effective University Application Essay" for the Online Professional English Network Program of the U.S. Department of State. Let's learn from her!



"Person walking on concrete road" by Victoria Heath via Unsplash is licensed under the Unsplash license

The application essay makes an applicant stand out from others
Most colleges and universities require applicants to submit different documents such as school grades, test scores, letters of recommendation, and an essay about why the applicant wants to study at a certain institution. This Application Essay is where they can tell something unique about themselves, something that people who make admissions decisions cannot know from other application documents.

Topics for the application essay can vary
Usually, applicants can choose the topic of their Application Essay. However, more than 700 institutions in the United States require essays in response to the Common Application essay prompts (you can see example prompts for 2021-2022 here). In many cases, applicants are asked to respond to specific writing questions that are based on the institution's culture and values. For example, Brown University asks how the applicant will contribute to this university's community.

The application essay is a genre of academic writing

The Application Essay is a *genre*, a specific type of text written in a specific style. The style is defined by its overall purpose and the expectations of the audience. As any genre, the Application Essay has component parts. Each part has *communicative goals* – that is, what the writer wants to do with each part of their text. The communicative goals are achieved by *writing strategies*, which help the writer accomplish specific communicative goals. The following communicative goals and writing strategies can help compose a successful Application Essay:

Types of Communicative Goals and Writing Strategies

Communicative goals	Writing Strategies
A. Captivate the readers (admissions officers)	○ Catch attention ○ Highlight academic motivation
B. Communicate a unique, impressive image of yourself	○ Describe identity, personality, character ○ Specify interests, passions, values ○ Share life experiences, influences, or achievements ○ Recognize challenges and lessons learned
C. Demonstrate fit with the college/university	○ Explain why you chose this college/university ○ Explain why you are a good match for this college/university
D. Leave a lasting, positive impression	○ Restate that you are one of the most promising applicants and why you this college/university might want to choose you

Like any essay, the Application Essay should have an Introduction, Body, and Conclusion. The Introduction should have a strong opening and a clear thesis, so that the admissions officers want to continue reading the essay. Goal A is characteristic of the Introduction. The body of the essay should have a personal narrative, which should expand on the thesis with specific ideas and supporting examples. Goals B and C are characteristic of the Body paragraphs. The Conclusion should sound very promising. In other words, it should emphasize why the applicant is one of the best and unique applicants, so Goal D is for the Conclusion.

Optional: Additional engagement

If you have time, watch the "Writing an effective university application essay" webinar presented by Professor Cotos. Then, consider the following questions:

- How can a student applicant catch the attention of admissions officers?
- What can student applicants say in their essays to describe themselves and make a favorable impression?
- Is it important for student applicants to explain why they chose to apply to a particular college or university?
- What can make an application essay stand out as one of the most impressive?

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Reference:

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Cotos, E. (April 20, 2021). Writing an effective university application essay. EducationUSA and OPEN Program Webinar. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGBm1yn-kKY

Here is an alternative video link for Writing an effective university application essay,

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Additional Resources:

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- First-year essay prompts: See examples of Common Application essay prompts.
- Student solutions center: See examples of writing questions expected to be answered by student applicants within individual colleges/universities in the USA.

Module 3: Argumentative Writing

MODULE 3: WHAT IS AN ACADEMIC ARGUMENT?

Video: What is an Academic Argument?

Watch this lecture introducing the main features and expectations of academic arguments.

>>>> Please note that this video is available for online viewing. See the transcript below. <<<<

Presentation slides: What is an Academic Argument?

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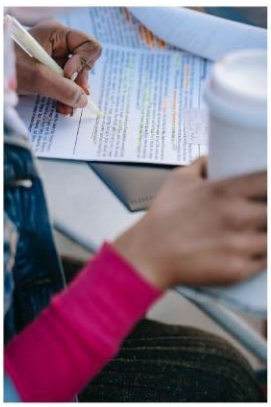
Module 3: Teaching Argumentative Writing

WHAT IS AN ACADEMIC ARGUMENT?

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Preview



ACADEMIC ARGUMENTS

1. Definition
2. Features
3. Audience Expectations

"Student underlining information in text with marker" by Kiera Burton via Unsplash is licensed under the Unsplash license

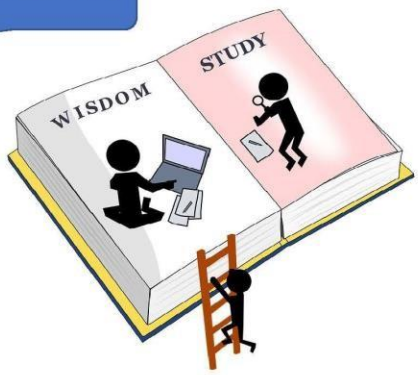
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What is an argument?

A tool that helps us explain what we think and why we think it
(Schick & Schubert, 2017)



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"Learning, reading, growth, literature, book, education" by pinterastudio via Pixabay is licensed under the Pixabay License

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Arguments are everywhere





Basic form of effective communication in everyday life
(Lunsford et al., 2019)

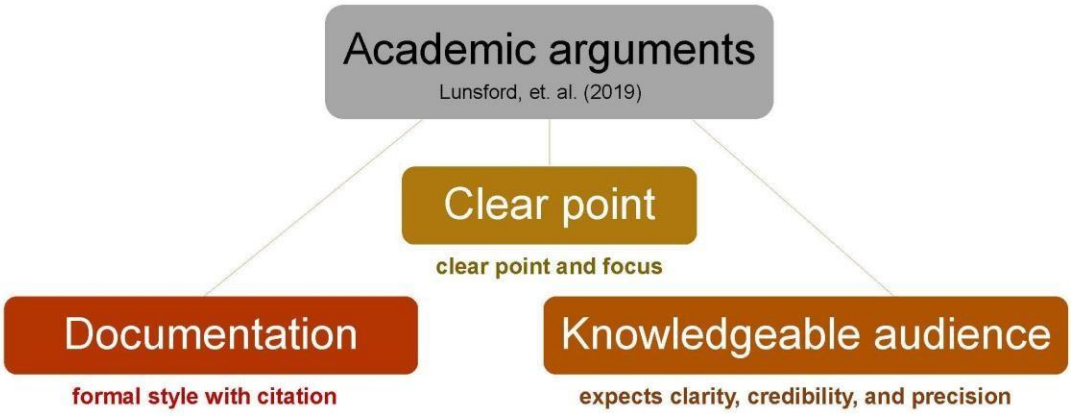


"Man raising brazil flag inside football stadium" by Caio; "Person holding green and brown wooden signage" by Markus Spiske; "Come in we are awesome sign" by Artem Beliaikin via Pexels are licensed under the Pexels license

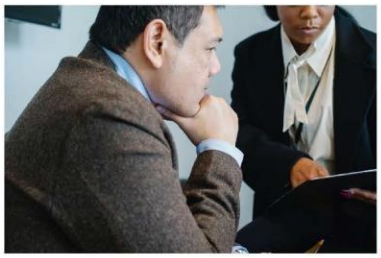
Features of academic arguments

Claim	• the most important feature • the main point
Support	• the believable evidence
Reasoning	• the explanation of the evidence • also known as “rationale”
Background	• the context • the reason why it matters

Defining characteristics of academic arguments



Audience expectations for academic arguments



"Serious diverse coworkers reading contact in office" by Sora Shimazaki via Pexels is licensed under the Pexels license





"Woman student highlighting with text marker in document" by Kiera Burton via Pexels is licensed under the Pexels license

Audience expectations for academic arguments



"Clear light bulb" by Pixabay via Pexels is licensed under the Pexels license



"Pile of covered books" by Pixabay via Pexels is licensed under the Pexels license



Wrap-up





- Arguments are part of everyday life.
- Arguments' purposes and structures vary.
- All arguments must have a claim, evidence, reasoning, and background.
- Expectations of the audience are part of what defines academic arguments



"Assorted billboards" by Marcus Herzberg; "Serious students taking notes at table" by Charlotte May; "Crop person showing smartphone with inscription on screen" by Liza Summer; via Pexels are licensed under the Pexels license

References

References:

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Lunsford, A., Ruszkiewicz, J. J., Walters, K. (2019). *Everything's an argument.* Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Schick, K., & Schubert, L. (2017). *So what? The Writer's Argument.* New York, New York: Oxford University Press.

Transcript: What is an Academic Argument?

SLIDE 1: TITLE
Welcome to Module 3, What Is an Academic Argument?

SLIDE 2: PREVIEW
In this lecture, you will learn about what defines academic arguments, some basic features of academic arguments, and the importance of the expectations that academic audiences have for arguments.

SLIDE 3: WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?
When we hear the word argument, we might think of a conflict between opposing sides, like a disagreement or a fight. But, in fact, arguments are not necessarily negative.

The goal of an argument depends on the purpose of communication. One purpose we may think of is to persuade or convince someone to agree with a personal opinion. Arguments may have many purposes, including to present new ideas, to share current knowledge, or to gain understanding.
Simply defined, an argument is "a tool that helps us explain what we think and why we think it" (Schick & Schubert, 2017, p. 5).

SLIDE 4: ARGUMENTS ARE EVERYWHERE
Andrea Lunsford, an expert of argumentation in academic writing, explains that we should think about argument as a basic form of effective communication in everyday life. From her point of view, arguments are everywhere. Whenever we communicate, we are making claims about something, which means we are arguing for something (Lunsford et al., 2019, p. 5).

For example, if we wear a shirt with the name of our favorite sports team on it, we are arguing that our sports team is worthy of support. The shirt may claim that our team is great, but it may not give a lot of evidence for how or why the team is great. People who see us wearing a shirt like that do not need such evidence. Audiences for academic arguments, on the other hand, have different expectations.

SLIDE 5: FEATURES OF ACADEMIC ARGUMENTS
Good academic arguments can be defined by a number of required features. The most important one is a claim. The claim is the main point of the argument. Then, arguments need support, which is believable evidence that explains how the claim is true. Arguments also need reasoning. This is an explanation of how the evidence proves that the claim is true. It is sometimes called rationale. And another important feature is background, which gives context for the argument and why it matters.

SLIDE 6: DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF ACADEMIC ARGUMENTS
Andrea Lunsford and her co-authors add a few more defining characteristics of academic arguments. Specifically, they state that arguments:

- directly state a clear point and focus on that point;
- use a formal documentation, citation, and writing style; and
- are written for a knowledgeable audience.

Clearly, it is extremely important to think of the audience, who expects clarity, credibility, and precision from a successful academic argument.

SLIDE 7: AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS FOR ACADEMIC ARGUMENTS
As you know from previous modules, academic readers use critical thinking skills to question the accuracy and credibility of what a writer is trying to say. They look for reasons and evidence to be convinced of the writer's argument. They read the text critically, so they may agree or disagree with the writer.

Also, academic readers want to make sure they understand how and why the argument is important. They want to learn from the argument and maybe even do more research on the topic or do their own writing on the topic.

SLIDE 8: AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS FOR ACADEMIC ARGUMENTS
Academic audiences generally expect the main idea of the argument to be an answer to a question or a response to a need for information that is important to others. It could be a solution to a problem or a new perspective on a controversial issue.

An academic argument should always begin with a real need to explain or understand an issue that matters to the audience. And it should clearly tell the readers what the writer wants them to accept and why.

SLIDE 9: WRAP-UP
In conclusion, remember that our everyday life is full of arguments.
Academic arguments can have different purposes and will use different structures depending on the field of study or type of argument being made.

As you continue to learn more about argument writing, keep in mind that all arguments must have a central claim supported by evidence with reasoning for how it is true, and background for why it matters.

Finally, academic arguments can be defined by the expectations of the readers, who are critical thinkers that will question the text. Even if they agree with a claim, they will still want credible and formally cited evidence.

SLIDE 10: REFERENCES
References:
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Lunsford, A., Ruszkiewicz, J. J., Walters, K. (2019). Everything's an argument. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Schick, K., & Schubert, L. (2017). So what? The Writer's Argument. New York, New York: Oxford University Press.

Optional: Additional engagement

We have all had to argue to get someone to agree with us. Maybe we wanted a friend to agree to go with us someplace. Or, we argued with our parents not to worry about how late we wanted to stay out with our friends. Maybe, we saw a poster with a famous pop star saying they are the number 1 artist of the year. What is the difference between these everyday arguments and the kind of argumentative writing we do for an academic audience? As you watch this video and read the following pages of this module, think about what defines an academic argument and how you can identify those defining features.

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Lunsford, A., Ruszkiewicz, J. J., Walters, K. (2019). *Everything's an argument.* Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Schick, K. & Schubert, L. (2017). *So what? The Writer's Argument.* New York, New York: Oxford University Press.

Additional Resource:
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What is an argument? This video from Kahn Academy explains how academic arguments are different from everyday opinions. It also explains how we need to use critical thinking skills to examine other people's arguments and build our own.

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MODULE 3: TYPES OF ARGUMENTS, PART 1

Please note: **Words in bold** can be found in the Course Glossary.

Arguments of Fact
Arguments of fact aim to inform people about something that happened. They explain facts and argue about what facts mean, or how they could be **interpreted**. People can interpret facts in various ways. That's why explaining the way the facts relate to the audience might make people re-think their understanding of the facts.

For example, many people already know that social media usage has increased dramatically over the last decade, so it may seem that there is nothing to argue. However, not everybody may know that excessive social media use can lead to increased feelings of anxiety and depression (Office of the Surgeon General, 2023). This means that changes in social media habits can bring significant changes to mental health. If we cannot agree on what the facts about social media usage mean, it will be difficult to make decisions to address its impact on mental health. That is why an argument can be made for how the facts should be **interpreted**.



"A person sitting at the table" by Mikael Blomkvist via Pexels is licensed under the Pexels license

Example Essay prompt

Discuss the impact of increased social media usage on mental health.

The central claim for an argument of fact could be:

> *"Excessive social media use can lead to increased feelings of anxiety and depression, which negatively impacts individuals' mental health and overall well-being."*

Arguments of Definition

Definition arguments focus on defining exactly what something is. Building a clear, mutual understanding would not be possible without knowing the meaning of certain terms or concepts. Defining the terms helps the audience better understand a problem or controversy and, thus, be more likely to agree with the author's position on the issue.

For example, if the topic is organic food, the word *organic* may mean different things to different people. They may not know about organic farming, or the pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers used in conventional farming (Kwiatkowski & Harasim, 2020). So, to be able to convince the audience, the writer would need to define the concept of *organic*. Giving examples can also help readers understand what it means.

Example Essay prompt

Discuss the importance of growing organic foods.

The central claim for an argument of definition could be:

> *"Organic foods do not use harmful pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers, so they are better for the environment."*

Arguments of Cause and Effect
Cause and effect arguments, also called causal arguments, try to answer how or why something has happened or what effect something has. They provide specific reasons why an action, event, or situation came about. They also show the connection between the reasons and the results. Cause and effect arguments are very common because they help explain the relationship between how things are and how they became that way, or how things can be changed to create different results.

Example Essay prompt

Discuss ways to improve cybersecurity measures.
The central claim for an argument of cause and effect could be:

> *"Cybersecurity cannot be significantly improved until organizations adopt advanced security protocols and regularly train employees on best practices."*

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Office of the Surgeon General. (2025, February). *Social media and youth mental health.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/youth-mental-health/social-media-and-youth-mental-health/index.html

Kwiatkowski, C. A., & Harasim, E. (2020). Chemical properties of soil in four-field crop rotations under organic and conventional farming systems. *Agronomy*, *10*(7), 1045.

Additional Resource:
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Argumentative Purposes - This webpage from The Excelsior College Online Writing Lab (OWL) provides more details and example essays of different types of arguments.

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MODULE 3: TYPES OF ARGUMENTS, PART 2

Please note: **Words in bold** can be found in the Course Glossary.

Arguments of Evaluation
Arguments of evaluation express a judgment or opinion about something - is something good or bad, useful or useless, beneficial or harmful - and so on. Authors provide supporting evidence and reasoning for this type of argument not only to describe the object or topic of evaluation; they also use specific **criteria** to analyze what they are evaluating. The criteria are quality standards that people use to judge things or make decisions.

For example, if the topic is the value of college education, the essay would need to evaluate higher education using appropriate criteria. The criteria may include any of the following: quality of education, expertise of the faculty, resources offered, student academic performance, employment opportunities for graduating students, etc. The central claim would depend on the choice of criteria. The writer would have to argue what makes a high-quality education based on the chosen criteria.



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Example Essay prompt

Discuss the value of college education.
The central claim for an argument of evaluation could be:

> *"A well-rounded college education includes a broad range of courses across many disciplines including the arts, humanities, and sciences."*

Arguments of Proposal
Arguments of proposal argue that an action or change needs to happen. They provide convincing reasons for why it needs to happen. Usually, writers first highlight an existing problem, then propose a solution for it. Lunsford et al. (2019) explain that a basic formula for a proposal argument is:

A (someone) should do **B** (action or solution) because of **C** (reasons or problems)

For example, suppose the topic is the need to protect teenagers from the bad effects of cigarette smoking. Arguing that smoking is bad for human health (an evaluative argument) usually does not result in any change in behavior or policy. However, presenting a plan to prevent young people from starting to smoke is a good proposal argument.

Example Essay prompt

Discuss the problem of teenage cigarette smoking.
The central claim for an argument of proposal could be:

> *"Schools and youth centers should adopt the new Teen Smoking Prevention Program because it can help prevent long-term health and addiction problems."*

Optional: Additional engagement

While all arguments must support a claim with evidence and reasoning, the writer's purpose will determine the type of argument they will build. The concept of a claim is directly connected with a concept you have learned about earlier in the course - the thesis statement. Think of the following questions connecting these to concepts:

- How might a thesis of a narrative essay be different from the thesis of an argumentative essay?
- What would you expect from the thesis of an argumentative essay?

Reference:

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Lunsford, A. A., Ruszkiewicz, J. J., & Walters, K. (2019). *Everything's an Argument with Readings*. 8th Edition. Bedford/St. Martin's.

Additional Resource:

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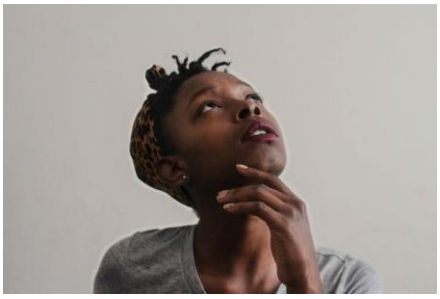
Argumentative Purposes - This webpage from The Excelsior College Online Writing Lab (OWL) provides more details and example essays of different types of arguments.

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MODULE 3: OPTIONAL DISCUSSION: ARGUMENTATION IN MY CLASSROOM

You Decide This task is OPTIONAL

Discussion



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You have been learning about arguments as an important concept for teaching academic writing. Now it is time for you to think about how and why you might apply what you have learned. Please discuss your ideas about teaching argumentation. Consider the following questions as you prepare your response:

- What do you think your students may not know about arguments in academic writing?
- How would you teach argument in your academic writing course?
- What kind of activities may help you better teach argumentative writing?

To help you brainstorm ideas, we asked two expert academic writing instructors to share their experiences with teaching argumentation in academic English writing courses. Below you can find their answers to two important questions. You may want to consider their answers to give you some ideas and insights about your own class.

Your post should be between 300 and 500 words. You should give specific examples to support your ideas. See the Self-Assessment Checklist for ideas that you may want to address in this discussion.

Expert opinions

Abram Anders, Director of ISUComm Foundation Courses, Iowa State University



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Question:
What strategies do you find helpful to introduce novice writing students to argumentation?

Response:
We help students develop their academic writing skills with activities for:

- *analyzing and diagramming arguments to better understand the use of claim, evidence, and reasoning patterns;*

- *using conceptual maps and using structured approaches to analysis to combine ideas and create claims;*
- *outlining arguments to help ensure that reasoning is not an afterthought and to make it easier to identify gaps in the structure and support of the main argument;*
- *practicing the use of referencing, quoting, paraphrasing, and communicating the significance of sources.* (January 23, 2022)

Jenny Aune, Director of ISUComm Advanced Communications, Iowa State University



"Jenny Aune" by Mark Woods of Munn Woods Studio is licensed under CC BY 4.0

Question:
What do your students need to learn about argument in writing?

Response:
Students need to learn everything: definition and expectations, lines of argument, context, structure, effective paragraphs, transition, etc. I teach advanced-level students. By the time students enroll in my class, they are juniors and seniors taking their last general education course. They have had 15+ years learning to write to show the instructor what they know - whether that is to showcase their handwriting skills, repeat concepts back to a professor in an essay question, or write an academic essay in MLA format. After all that experience, the most difficult thing for my students is audience. They have a difficult time stepping outside of themselves to consider what the audience needs. (January 23, 2022)

Self-Assessment Checklist

- ☐ My response is between 300 and 500 words.
- ☐ I considered one or two things that my students will need to learn about argument in academic writing.
- ☐ I considered how and when I should teach argument in my academic writing course.
- ☐ I considered what learner-centered assignments or activities I might give students to teach them about argument writing.
- ☐ I used ideas from my own experience and/or from the experts' comments.

REMINDER: This task is OPTIONAL, and it is NOT assessed, which means that it does not count toward your final grade. It is included in all modules as an additional challenge for those of you who want to express your ideas and share them with others.

"You Decide - This Task Is Optional", "Discussion", "Example", and "Self-Assessment Checklist" by Iowa State University are licensed under CC BY 4.0.

Module 3: Review

MODULE 3: QUIZ

Assess your knowledge of Module 3!

Take the Quiz for Module 3. You can take the quiz as many times as you need. It is set up to keep the highest score. As you take the quiz, you may refer to your notes if necessary. Be sure to read the feedback after you submit your answers. Please note that you must score at least 7 out of 10 points to move on to the next module.
Good Luck!

>>>> Please note that this quiz can only be completed in Canvas. <<<<

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MODULE 3: OPTIONAL TEACHING JOURNAL: ARGUMENT MAP MODEL

You Decide This task is OPTIONAL

Your teaching journal entries continue. Each journal entry will help you apply what you learn to develop useful instructional materials. We will help you along the way, and we will give you samples to exemplify the materials that you will need to create. As a result, at the end of the course, you will have created an Academic Writing Course (AWC) Materials Packet, which you will be able to use in the classroom and share with other professionals more broadly. **Here is the journal prompt for this week:**

Let's create an Argument Map Model!

You can teach students to use an argument map to analyze and identify the structure of an argument. In this journal entry, we invite you to create an example of an Argument Map Model of a text. You will then be able to use the example you create as a model for teaching your students how to map academic arguments.

To prepare for this task, you will first need to choose an argumentative essay. Then, take the following steps:



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1. Download and review the Guide to Argument Mapping Handout.
2. Download and read the Sample Argument Map Model Handout, which also includes the example essay used to develop the argument map. (If you want to read the example essay separately, click on Japanese Gardens Bridge Indoor, Outdoor Space or go to https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/japanese-gardens-bridge-indoor-outdoor-space/6288002.html.)
3. Find and read an argumentative essay appropriate for your teaching context. Review the Suggested OER Resources below if you don't have an argumentative text and would like to find one.
4. Create your own argument map in a chart similar to our sample based on your chosen essay. Make sure you save your Argument Map Model outside of Canvas. You will need to include it in your AWC Materials Packet when you get to Module 5.

Suggested OER Resources

You may find the following resources helpful if you need to find an argumentative essay.

- Multiple examples, both in text and linked: Writing for Success
- Linked professional essays: 1, 2, 3, Write!
- Articles from Voice of America, Learning English

Optional: Additional engagement

Let's review how the Guide to Argument Mapping Handout provides questions to analyze a text. The first column shows the features of argument that we should look for: Audience, Claim, Background, Support, and Reasoning. The second column lists the questions that need to be asked in order to find these features. The third column suggests the best places to look for each feature of the argument.

Now let's look at the Sample Argument Map Model Handout. If you have not read the example essay, please take the time to read it. The sample essay is from Voice of America News. It is titled "Japanese Gardens Bridge Indoor, Outdoor Space." This essay presents an Argument of Definition. It explains how Japanese-style garden design is used in America, and it builds an argument to define that style.

The argument map we created for this text lists the answers to the questions we asked about the text. For example, to understand the audience, we asked, "Who are the readers? When and where was it published?" The answers identify the audience, the publication, and some of the characteristics of the writing style.

- **Find the claim.** For example, the thesis in this text can be found in the second sentence of the introduction: "Japanese-style gardens continue to be a great part of American garden design"
- **Look for background context.** We found the definition of a very key idea about the Japanese garden style. This definition helps the reader understand what the design style is.

- **Search for supporting evidence.** We found quotations and statistics. We also found topic sentences for each body paragraph. These topic sentences are the smaller claims supporting the larger claim.
- **Identify the reasoning.** For example, the author makes statements that connect the supporting evidence to the claim, like, "…more Americans like the idea of 'connecting the indoors and the outdoors" and "Over time, Japanese gardens in the U.S. changed to look more authentic."

When we put these answers together in a chart, we can see a *map* of the structure of the argument. This helps us see how the elements of the argument work together.

You can now create your own argument map of a text that is appropriate to your context. Your map will be a model you will use to teach your students how to analyze arguments. They can use a similar argument mapping guide to analyze their own arguments following your model of an example text.



Self-Assessment Checklist

- ☐ I reflected on the module's topic and considered its relevance for my teaching context.
- ☐ I revised the main features and types of arguments.
- ☐ I carefully examined the Guide to Argument Mapping Handout.
- ☐ I carefully examined the Sample Argument Map Model Handout.
- ☐ I found and used an argumentative essay.
- ☐ I drafted an my own argument map in a chart similar to the provided sample based on the argumentative essay I had chosen.

REMINDER: This task is OPTIONAL, and it is NOT assessed, which means that it does not count toward your final grade. It is included in all modules as an opportunity to systematically record ideas for those of you who want to prepare materials for teaching an academic writing course. Please write in your own journal (a notebook or an electronic file) because this optional assignment is not to be submitted in Canvas.

"You Decide - This Task Is Optional", "Brainstorm", "Optional", "Video", and "Self-Assessment Checklist" by Iowa State University are licensed under CC BY 4.0.

MODULE 3: SUMMARY

Video: Module 3 Summary

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Watch the Module 3 Summary video to review the main ideas. This will remind you of what you have learned in this module.

>>>> Please note that this video is available for online viewing. See the transcript below. <<<<

Transcript: Module 3 Summary

Congratulations, you have completed Module 3 Teaching Essay Writing and Argumentation!

In this module, you have learned:

- about essay writing in general;
- about writing an effective essay required of applicants applying to a college or university in the United States;
- how to identify the features and structure of academic arguments;
- what defines the different types of arguments;
- strategies for guiding students through the analysis and evaluation of arguments.

Let's review the key ideas!

Personal essays are used for a variety of purposes, such as a personal narrative or a college application essay.

An essay has three main parts:

1. introduction (including the thesis statement);
2. body paragraphs (developing the topics of the essay in detail);
3. conclusion (highlighting the significance of the thesis idea).

Before drafting an essay, a writer needs to pay attention to the audience and purpose of the text. People write for a variety of purposes, including:

- to express creative ideas;
- to tell a story;
- to describe or explain something;
- to convince someone;
- to document something.

As writers draft their essays, they can develop content using:

- appeal to emotions;
- citation of authority or common assumptions;
- definition;
- amplification;
- qualification,
- analogy,
- association.

Additionally, writers can make their work more original by developing a dominant impression that conveys their perspective on the subject.

Arguments are everywhere. The simplest definition is that they are a tool that helps us explain what we think and why we think it.

The main elements of an argument are:

1. Claim - main point, or thesis;
2. Support - research-based evidence;
3. Reasoning - explanation of how the evidence proves the claim;
4. Background - context and why it matters.

The structure of academic arguments connects the elements.

- The Introduction gives the Background and Claim.
- The body paragraphs give the Support and Reasoning.
- The Conclusion relates the Background and Claim to the audience.

The five main argument types are:

- Argument of Fact;
- Argument of Definition;
- Argument of Cause and Effect;
- Argument of Evaluation;
- Argument of Proposal.

Argument analysis is the best way to teach students how to write an argument and what makes it work.

We are glad you have engaged with these content ideas in these assignments:

- Optional Discussion: Argumentation in My Classroom;
- Optional Teaching Journal: Argument Map Model.

Our topic for Module 4 is Teaching Source Citation.

We look forward to working with you on Module 4!

MODULE 3 CHECK



Module 3: Check

Please answer one question to verify that you have completed all activities in Module 3. You must choose "yes" in order to move on in the course. This quiz will count as 1 point toward your grade.

>>>> Please note that this module check can only be completed in Canvas. <<<<

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