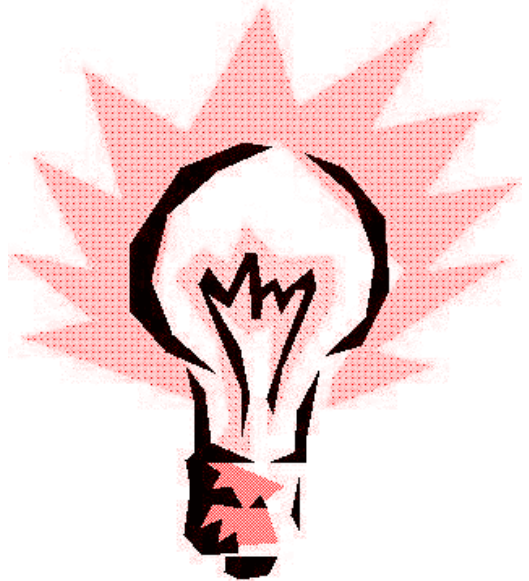


Project 1 Overview: Analysis and Response

This overview explains Project 1, which consists of a final essay and the assignments that prepare you to write the essay. You will upload the essay and homework to separate links on Moodle. For best results, read this before you work on those assignments.

What's the point of this assignment? What will I learn and/or practice?

We live in a swirl of arguments, some indirect, like fashion trends, some overt, like political ads, and some personal, like a conversation with someone who wants to change your mind. Our responses to these arguments are often automatic, quick, and intuitive. We tend to respond without fully understanding what the other person or message says.



Project 1 aims to slow down your response time and mitigate your snap judgements. The assignment asks you to summarize and analyze an argument *before* you respond to it. And when you do respond, you will use rhetorical concepts, including Aristotle's appeals and the classical pattern of persuasion, to carefully craft your own argument. Our practice with these rhetorical concepts will help you better dissect and respond to the arguments you encounter everyday as a student, employee, and citizen. Ultimately, your understanding of rhetoric can help you make better decisions.

What are we expected to write?

You will write a non-researched argument essay of at least 750 words responding to an argument by another writer. Your essay will include a brief summary of the original argument and your response to a particular aspect of the argument.

You will choose one of the arguments (opinion columns) listed here. A limited number of texts have been chosen for you so that you can discuss them with other students.

- [What Is the Purpose of High School?](#)
- [Dogs Are Not Here for Our Convenience](#)
- [Don't Flunk Lagging Michigan Third-grade Readers – Reduce Class Size](#)
- [Youth Tackle Football Will Be Considered Unthinkable 50 Years From Now](#)

How should I choose an essay?

Pick the topic that allows you to bring something new to the conversation. Your goal is to give your readers (instructor and classmates) a different way to think about the topic, so choose the topic that you know best. Then build your response using logic, common knowledge, and personal examples and anecdotes. If you wish to add an outside source to your response, that's OK, but research is neither expected nor encouraged and will not be reflected on the grading rubric. If you use outside sources, you must cite them using MLA style.

NOTE: If you aren't personally familiar with the main topics of the four arguments, choose a topic that parallels something you do know about. Just be sure to refer to the original argument.

How will I construct this essay?

Think of your response as joining a conversation, meaning you will need to "listen" carefully before you respond. (Shout out here to philosopher and rhetorician [Kenneth Burke](#) who developed this metaphor.) For that reason, a significant portion of your essay will involve summarizing and analyzing the original argument. Only after you have carefully considered the writer's points will you weigh in with your own ideas.

For best results, you should more-or-less follow the Classical Pattern of Persuasion, which you will read about as you work on the project. Here's how the pattern applies to this essay:

- **Introduction:** Introduce the general topic of the essay and work to capture your readers' interest. Explain any personal connection you have to the topic to establish *ethos*. Briefly introduce the original text, maybe.
- **Background:** Introduce the original text if you haven't already with author and publication information. Give a brief summary of the original text.
- **Possible Positions:** State your response to the original text. Focus on a main point of agreement or disagreement. State briefly why your position is correct. This is your thesis.
- **Support:** Explain why your position is a good one. Provide proof that your main claim is valid using facts, logic, and personal experiences. Avoid or limit use of outside sources. This section will be heavy on *logos*.
- **Counter-arguments:** Acknowledge that others might think the original argument is sound or misguided. Explain why they would be wrong or mostly wrong. You boost your *ethos* by saying that you aren't the only one with a valid position.
- **Conclusion:** Use *pathos* to persuade your readers to feel and believe a certain way about the topic. Evoke emotion and values to drive home your point.
- **Works Cited:** Include a works cited for the original argument.

If I strongly agree with the author, how will I avoid restating the original argument?

Good question! It's harder to agree with the original argument than to disagree because you will be tempted to simply summarize and add "like they said." This would add little to a spoken

conversation, and it would make for an uninspiring essay. Instead, look for several points that you think the author hasn't sufficiently emphasized or explained. Riff off these claims, explaining why they are important by using your own examples and logic. We'll read a model essay that makes these moves.

What if I strongly disagree with everything the author says?

If that's the case, you will be tempted to write a critique that skewers the original argument point by point. Resist! Critiques are a valid genre, but they tend to be highly detailed and work best for a specialized audience. Instead, you should write an argument that makes and supports a general idea. Zero in on the main idea that you disagree with, make your own contrary claims, and work to support them. For example, you might focus on a logical flaw or work to redefine a concept or correct a misunderstanding.

How will classwork and homework help me write this essay?

Our curriculum emphasizes the writing process, so you can trust that we will work on the essay in smaller steps. By the time you construct your rough draft, you will have a good idea of what you want to say. You might even be able to copy and paste some passages from your homework.

Here's how we'll proceed, more or less:

1. Review this project overview and take a quiz.
2. Choose one of the four opinion columns to respond to, survey its context, and review reading strategies for college level texts, and develop a reading plan. (HW #1.1)
3. Review rules for writing content summaries and take a quiz. Draft a summary of the opinion column and post it to a Moodle forum. (HW #1.2)
4. Read about Aristotle's appeals ("Three Ways to Persuade") and take a quiz. You will return to these concepts repeatedly throughout ENG 111 and 112.
5. Revise your summary of the opinion column based on feedback from the forum. Read "The Classical Pattern of Persuasion" and find the pattern of persuasion in the opinion column that you've chosen. Also, analyze how the writer uses appeals. (HW #1.3)
6. Explore possible responses to the main claim of the opinion column. Focus your response to the text and summarize your support for your position (HW #1.4).
7. Use the classical pattern of persuasion to create an outline of your response essay. (HW #1.5)

8. Write a rough draft and submit it for peer review (HW #1.6).
 9. Review strategies for strong paragraphs and dissect one of your paragraphs. (HW #1.7)
 10. Upload your final draft.
 11. Reflect on your work (HW #1.8)
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FYI: MODEL RESPONSES

The essays below show how writers join the conversation on a topic by responding to particular points made by another author.

[Are Pit Bulls Deadly Weapons?](#)

[Don't be scared, be prepared: A response to the New Yorker article "The Really Big One"](#)

[Is Alex Berenson Trolling Us With His Anti-Weed Book?](#)