

## WRT 105 Rhetorical Outlining

*Sometimes as a writer it is tempting to outline one's argument in broad strokes about content (i.e. Introduction; Part 1: History of X; Part 2: The controversy over X, etc). But in order to create the best outline possible, it's important to think very concretely about one's reader. After all, the argument is supposed to actually persuade a reader to think or believe differently about your controversy, based on the text you've provided. This exercise provides a way for you to think more concretely about the audience for your argument, and then design a structure for your essay that best works to persuade the reader.*

### Part 1. Defining your audience

*Use your imagination to create a concrete image of the reader you wish to persuade. The reader should be someone who has the ability to think carefully about and ask reasonable academic questions about the issue in its complexities. Remember that the reader can't already agree with you, otherwise there is nothing to argue about!*

How much does this person already know about your topic (try to be specific) and how has the person learned about it?

What does the person already *believe* about your topic?

Why? What might inform these beliefs (life experiences? Education? Reading?)?  
What is at the heart of these beliefs?

### Part 2. Opening Gambit

*Imagine the reader is sitting in front of you, and you hope to provide a way to help him or her see why what you want to argue is important and relevant to the person.*

What would you say or show the person first? Why?

What is the next thing you would say, in order to maintain the reader's interest and attention in your point of view?

What terms, ideas or histories would be important to explain or define up front, in order for your argument to be comprehensible to the reader?

What would the reader be likely to say in response—would he or she have questions or counter arguments? How might you respond to these?

### Part 3. New Perspective

Where in the argument are you encouraging your readers to look at the issue from a new perspective or to see the issue in a new way? That is, where are you being explicitly analytical?

**Continue to design the outline, based on what would be next in a “conversation” with this imaginary reader. When and where, for example, would you offer up a particular source, and what moment or flashpoint from that source seems most useful?**

How will you leave the conversation? What parting ideas might be best to end with?