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# Lecture 12: How to Write an Argumentative Essay

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PHIL2830-Business Ethics

# What is an Argumentative Essay?

- You have an argumentative essay anytime the author has a **conclusion** (a main takeaway) that they don't expect their reader to take for granted and they provide **reasons** for that conclusion
- Textbooks, biographies and most news articles *aren't* usually argumentative, because you are meant to take the contents as facts
- Some argumentative texts contain multiple arguments for the same conclusion, and sometimes they contain multiple arguments for different conclusions
- A good argumentative essay will make it very clear what the conclusion is and what the structure of the reasons supporting it look like

# The Layout

1. Introduction (short paragraph)
2. Provide the author's Argument (one or two paragraphs)
3. Provide a Counter-Argument (one or two paragraphs)
4. Provide a Counter-Counter-Argument (this is optional) (one or two paragraphs)
5. Conclusion (one or two sentences)

# Introduction

- Introduction:
  - State the *thesis* of your paper and provide a brief description of how you will support your thesis (what will your reasoning be)
  - This should be a short paragraph (around 3 sentences). Don't actually write your paper in the Intro
- Thesis
  - Your thesis is the goal of your paper
  - Your goal should be to defend a **view**
    - The view will typically be one of the following: the author's view, the denial of an author's view, or an adjustment to an author's view

# Author's Argument

- Provide a summary of the author's position and argument:
  - This is where you summarize the argument you will be responding to and define any relevant concepts (e.g. What is Friedman's argument, what is utilitarianism?)
  - Only summarize the parts of the paper that are relevant to supporting your thesis (so the ones that are crucial to the author plus any that you will respond to)
  - You may use additional resources
  - For example, you can back the author's argument (whether you ultimately agree with the or not) with additional reasons

# Counter-Argument

- Provide a Counter-Argument:
  - This is an argument against the author's position
  - Start by saying whether you ultimately agree or disagree with the conclusion of the author's argument
    - If you ultimately agree with the author, then provide a possible objection to the author. Then you will need to provide a counter-counter-argument in the next section
    - If you ultimately disagree with the author, then you just need to make your counter-argument as strong as you can, or provide two counter-arguments

## Counter-Counter-Argument (optional)

- Provide a Counter-Counter-Argument (this is optional)
  - If you ultimately agree with the author, then you will respond to the counter-argument which you raised in the previous section



# How to Argue against an Argument

- You can either deny a premise (argue that the author makes a false claim in support of their argument)

OR

- You can argue that the argument is not logically strong (argue that even if I accept the premises, the conclusion is still false)

# Citations

- Include at least **three** citations including the main paper you will be responding to (my slides don't count towards this number)
- You can use citations of studies, other argumentative papers or any other type of information source
- It doesn't matter what style you use *as long* as it is possible for me to find the source you are citing based on the information you give
  - E.g., if it's online, provide the page name and the url
  - E.g., if it's a book, cite the author, title and publication information
  - E.g., if it's my slides, refer to "Lecture 10" from the course slides

# General Tips

- Use premise and conclusion indicators to flag the structure of your reasoning
  - Premise indicators: “because \_\_\_\_\_”, “since\_\_\_\_\_”, “for one, \_\_\_\_\_”, etc.
  - Conclusion indicators: “therefore\_\_\_\_\_”, “hence\_\_\_\_\_”, “and so\_\_\_\_\_”, etc.
- Paraphrasing is typically better than using a direct quote
  - Except when the author’s wording is noteworthy or the author says it so well that paraphrasing it seems wrong



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