

PHIL08

Ramirez

Argument Paper Description

As indicated in the syllabus for our course, you may earn up to 5 extra percentage points toward your final grade with the submission of an optional **argument paper**. These papers do not need to be structured formally like the longer essays you will write. Rather, the aim of these papers is to construct a persuasive argument relevant to a topic we address in the course.

Substantive Requirements:

- You may write about any topic discussed in class (or in readings) in the period since the last argument paper date. For example, if you are submitting an argument paper on January 7, and the last argument paper submission date was December 31, you may write about any topic addressed between December 31 and January 7. Please *do not* write about topics addressed prior to the last argument paper date.
- Your paper **must contain at least one argument**. An argument consists of a conclusion supported by premises. The purpose of this paper is not to “explore”, “describe”, or “express feelings” about anything. These are valuable activities, but they are not the aim of this paper. Your aim here is to *argue*. That is, you should attempt to persuade your reader to accept your conclusion.
- Ideally, you should defend your own views on the topic you have chosen. Your argument need not be entirely original, but you should avoid merely reconstructing an argument presented in lecture. If you have any questions about the originality of your argument, I’d recommend meeting with me.
- The best argument papers will be those that anticipate potential objections. Assume that your reader disagrees with you, and try to address any objections that you think he/she is likely to raise. Remember, you’re trying to persuade your reader to accept a conclusion that he/she does not already accept.
- You do not need to provide extensive expository remarks in these papers. That is, you do not need to provide more information about your topic than is necessary to motivate your argument. We will have the opportunity to cultivate expository skills elsewhere in the course.

Structural Requirements:

- The length of each argument paper should be 1-2 pages (200-400 words).
- The argument paper must be typed.
- You should **not** put your name on the front of your paper. Instead, please write your name lightly on the back of the last page. This will help to ensure fairness in grading.
- Papers will be selected at random and read aloud in class. The arguments contained in your paper may be discussed critically by the group. At no point, however, will the identity of a paper's author be revealed in class discussion. Again, this will help to ensure fairness in the exchange of ideas.
- You must submit your paper prior to the beginning of class on the appropriate submission date. Late papers cannot be accepted, as they will not be usable for class discussion.
- You may choose any of the submission dates on our syllabus, but you may not submit more than one paper on any submission date.

Evaluative Criteria:

- Unlike the other papers you will write for this course, the evaluative criteria of this paper will pertain solely to the argument you present. Grammar will not factor in to the evaluation of this paper, nor will structural elements such as organization (though they may affect your grade if they make it difficult to understand what you're trying to say).
- Your argument will be evaluated according to three criteria:
 - Originality (33%): You should demonstrate *some* original thought in your argument. This might come in the form of raising an entirely new argument, but it might also come in the form of raising an original objection to an argument that we have addressed in class.
 - Coherence (33%): You should make sure that your conclusion actually follows from your premises. You don't need to present your argument in a formal deductive format, but you'll want to make sure that your reader understands how you've arrived at your conclusion.
 - Addressed objection (33%): Assume that your reader disagrees with you, and that he/she has at least one reason for disagreeing. Try to anticipate his/her objection, and explain why you don't think it defeats your view.
 - Picture of a cat (1%): You've just done some serious mental work. Time to unwind a little. Draw a cat somewhere on your paper. I don't care where. Yes, I'm serious.

Please don't hesitate to ask me ANY questions you might have about any of this!