

## ASSIGNMENT SHEET *for* UNIT 4: ACADEMIC ARGUMENT

### *Arguing about Language in U.S. Culture*

ENGL 001-1075 (Tu/Th 12:35-1:50)  
 ENGL 001-1083 (Tu/Th 2:00-3:15)  
 FALL SEMESTER 2005  
 MR. GOGAN  
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### I. ASSIGNED WRITINGS

- 1 Academic Argument Essay
- 1 D2L Posting
- 3 Short Writings

### II. ARGUMENT ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

#### *Writer's Task*

*Argument* means “to make a claim about a debatable issue and to provide a reasoned defense of your claim” (CL 217). *For this academic argument assignment, you may select an ENGL 001 Unit 4 CL reading and argue why you agree and/or disagree (you may do both) with a claim that the reading makes.* (Note: you may use more than one reading if you like). You may argue for/against John Simon’s stance on “good English” or Richard Rodriguez’s claims about the costs of academic literacy. The choice of essay(s) is yours.

Unit Focus: To write a successful academic argument in which you state what you think and why, consider the following moves:

- (1) Define your **issue**, demonstrating your awareness that you are entering a conversation that contains competing perspectives on the issue;
- (2) Make a focused **claim** about your issue (i.e., state an arguable thesis that locates your stance among the competing perspectives);
- (3) Provide **reasons** that support your thesis;
- (4) Provide **evidence** for each of your reasons (e.g., your own reasoning plus research if necessary);
- (5) Anticipate **objections** from people with other perspectives and, when necessary, provide **refutations**;
- (6) Be aware of the **unspoken/unwritten assumptions** (values and beliefs) underlying both your claims and reasons as well as the claims and reasons of competing perspectives.

Because you have been writing thesis-support essays all semester, you have in fact been writing argument papers all along; this assignment simply helps you conceptualize the strategies of argument that you have been using all along and adds to your knowledge (via stages 4&5 in ABGW 395).

For this assignment, you should note the distinction between academic argument and classical persuasion. *Academic argument* entails your telling a professor what you think and why. *Classical persuasion* adds another step: it entails stating what you think and why *plus* trying to persuade your audience to agree with you. Most writing you do in the university will be to prove to the professor (your audience) that you can think logically, not necessarily persuading her to agree with you. [*But please note:* you never totally escape the persuasive function. In academic argument you may not be trying to persuade a professor to agree with you; however, you are trying to persuade him that you’re reasoning logically.]

#### **Purpose:**

- To familiarize you with the difference between academic argument and classical persuasion
- To help you conceptualize strategies of academic argument so that you may use them consciously and, hence, more efficiently

#### **Audience:**

Your teacher who is deciding *not* whether he agrees or disagrees with you but, rather, whether or not your argument is clearly stated, reasoned, supported, and written.

#### **Format:**

4-5 pp. double-spaced. Use the following heading in the upper left-hand corner of your essay:

Your Name  
 English 001

Mr. Gogan  
Fall 2005  
Essay #4

**Grading Criteria:**

1. Purpose/Audience Negotiation:
  - How well is the issue from the reading defined in the introduction—i.e., how well has the writer acknowledged the complexity of the issue (think: competing perspectives)?
  - How well does the writer’s thesis present an arguable stance for the paper?
  - How well has the writer made an attempt to negotiate with the selected reading (via listening, finding common ground, refuting a claim, qualifying a claim, etc.), paying attention not just to its claims but to its assumptions as well?
  - How well does the writer address the teacher as an audience who is deciding *not* whether she agrees but, rather, whether or not the writer’s argument is clearly stated, reasoned, supported, and written?
2. Organization: Given the purpose and audience,
  - How rhetorically effective is the organization (a) of ¶s in the paper and (b) of ideas in each ¶?
  - How well does the thesis statement organize the paper?
  - How effective are the introduction and conclusion?
3. Development:
  - How effective is the argument—does the writer come across as logical?
  - How clearly are the writer’s reasons stated in each ¶ (often as topic sentences)?
  - How well is particular evidence used to support each reason?
4. Writerly *ethos*:
  - How well does the essay employ an *ethos* of student expert, someone whose voice is dominant when talking back to the readings?
5. Readability
  - How effective are the choices about sentence punctuation, subject position, parallelism & transitions, action verbs, and clarity/conciseness?
  - Are there any spots where sentence shape (length, punctuation, wording . . . ) interferes with meaning?
  - How effective are academic citation practices: i.e., MLA parenthetical citation and Works Cited page?

**Due Dates:**

Tu 11/29 Peer Review & Style Workshop: draft of essay 4, along with author sheet & 2 peer review sheets  
Th 12/1 Unit Four Portfolio due: and Essay 4, SWs 1, 2, 3, Peer Review Sheet, and Author Sheet

**III. SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (SW):**

**Writer’s Task and Due Dates:**

These sequenced writings are intended to help you think about your essay topic so that you can revise your ideas as we proceed through the unit. If appropriate, your SW’s *may be incorporated into your final essay*.

**SW 1:** Th 11/10 Outline the structure of VV’s essay; critique the logic of the structure  
*Discourse Conventions:*

- Detailed outline plus a 250 word, 1 ¶ critique; bring 1 copy to class
- use topic sentence to make your ¶’s claim (main point)
- use details from the outline to provide evidence for your claim

**SW 2:** Th 11/17 Explain one claim in either Davis or Simon & refute it  
*Discourse Conventions:*

- cite quotation
- write refutation 3 ¶s long @150 words each ¶
- 1 ¶ on logos, 1 on pathos, and 1 on ethos; bring 1 copy to class

**SW 3:** Tu 11/22 Discuss your paper topic  
*Discourse Conventions:*

- Select a CL reading as a “topic”
- (1) write a tentative thesis
- (2) list at least 3 objections to your thesis; explain each with 1 ¶ @100 words

- (3) roughly outline your essay
- bring 2 copies to class

***Audience:***

Teacher & classmates who are trying to determine whether you are arguing logically

***Format***

Use same paper heading as for your essay.

***SW Grading Criteria:***

1. Completed and brought to class on assigned dates for use on in-class work
2. Evidence of having employed the stated discourse conventions for each

**IV. UNIT 1 D2L DISCUSSION BOARD: (1 point) 1% of final course grade**

Your discussion board posting will not be reflected in your unit portfolio grade. Instead, each posting will contribute to your final course grade. See D2L for specific topic instructions.

**V. UNIT 4 GRADE: (25 points) 25% of final course grade**

The unit grade will be awarded to the final essay; *however*, short writings must be completed on due dates AND turned in with Portfolio Two in order for you to receive full credit for the unit; otherwise, you may lose 1/4 (percentage) point for each SW not completed on time or included in your portfolio. (cf. Course Policy Statement for other grading policies).