**Title of Module: Writing *Arguments Part 2***

**Collaborators: Maria Zlateva and Pary Fassihi**

**Module Overview:**

Video 1: Introduction and Claim

Video 2: Reasons and Evidence

Video 3: Evidence (continued)

Video 4: Acknowledgement and Response

# Video 1: *Introduction and Claim*

In academic papers, you are typically asked to "make an argument" to support an answer to a conceptual problem. That doesn't mean *having an argument*, but rather creating a conversation with people who also want to find an answer to that question. They don't want to hear about your opinions but about reasoned claims you can support; they want to know what reasons led you to your claims and what evidence makes you think those reasons are true. They'll also expect you to consider their position and to address any questions or concerns they may have.

The core of an academic argument consists of: **Claim+ Reasons+ Evidence** or in other words, answering the following questions your readers may have:

   A) Claim: *What's the answer to your question?* What do you want to convince me of?
   B) Reasons: *Why should I believe that?*
   C) Evidence: *How do you know that?*

The typical move used in crafting an argument is to answer a possible question your reader may have: "What about my ideas on this matter?" This is the D) Acknowledgment and response element of your argument: to adopt a cooperative stance.

*Note*: In some cases, you will also need to explain your logic, make your reasoning transparent to the readers, as they may see the world in ways very different from yours and thus not recognize what general principle of reasoning connects your reasons and your claims.


*Claims:*

As we discussed in part I of our Argument module, a claim is a statement that would be contestable; it would declare something, and it would be supportable with evidence. A claim is generally expressed in one sentence (thesis).

Keep in mind that claims need to be **worth arguing**, and those that are tend to be controversial. Claims should be **debatable** and they will be demonstrated using logic and evidence. Remember that a claim answers your reader's questions: *So, what's your point? What do you want me to believe?*

Note that in academic papers it is expected to "get to the point" as directly as possible and to articulate the point efficiently and unambiguously. In order to "get to the point" as quickly as possible, such a claim would appear in the introduction paragraph.

Keep the following in mind when formulating your claim:

You may begin with a *working claim,* one that may change as you write your draft and provide reasoning and evidence.

*Drafting your claim*

1- Your *working claim* guides your outlining and drafting.
2- If you are having difficulty articulating your claim, try having pieces of your claim in bullet points. The most important thing is to have a central argument to give your draft a unifying and organizing idea.
3- Make sure to evaluate your claim constantly as you are supporting it throughout your writing. The following is helpful to remember when evaluating your claims:

*Evaluating your claim*

o Broad claims are more difficult to support effectively than focused claims. Specific claims also tend to give your reader more information than broad ones.

o Remember that claims really do convey your interpretation and are not simply a statement of fact.

o Claims should be supported with specific evidence

Occasionally, after drafting a paper, you may find you aren't entirely sure what you are claiming.

In such situations, it may be helpful to fill in formulaic templates that force you to think directly about your claims.

I am studying (name your topic _____ because I want to find out who/what/why (imply your question) _____ _____ in order to understand (state the rationale for the question and the project) _____.

## Video 2: *Reasons and Evidence*

*Reasons:*

A claim is supported by reasons. Once you have a claim, you should list the reasons you think that claim is valid.

Beware: reasons are ideas, actually claims themselves –debatable statements –not solid evidence. We base reasons on evidence (not the other way around). The reader may disagree with our reasons, so we have to provide better support in the form of <u>evidence</u>: something that can be observed and verified – empirical data; personal experience or observations, textual information…

*Evidence:*

For the most part, arguments should be constructed logically, or rationally, so that claims are supported by *evidence* in the form of facts or expert opinions. However, logic is only one component of effective arguments.

Speakers who attempt to persuade others to their viewpoints could achieve their purpose primarily by relying on one or more appeals, which are: *logos* (based on logic), *ethos* (based on credibility of the source), *pathos* (based on emotions).

Logos: logical arguments are typically of two types – a) deductive and b) inductive

*Note*: Keep in mind that even though the two types often work in combination, (a) is far more common in academic papers in the Western tradition.

The <u>deductive</u> argument begins with a generalization, then provides a specific case related to that generalization, and leads to a conclusion. <u>Inductive</u> reasoning begins with several pieces of specific evidence, like examples and statistics from which the writer draws a conclusion.

Of course, simple piling up of evidence cannot make the case, as data, statistics can be selected in a biased way and even manipulated. You have to be a critical, skeptical reader!

**Video 3:** *Evidence (continued):*

Not every piece of information in a source is useful for supporting a claim. Good evidence is verifiable, so it needs to be objective and reliable. It typically consists of *facts* (examples, statistics) or *opinions* (testimony of experts or common sense statements).

*Note*: In some cases, a source can be used as part of a counterargument – an argument opposite to your own – so that you can demonstrate its weaknesses and, as a result, strengthen your own claim.

The bottom line is that the argument is in your hands: you decide how to use the sources to support the claim expressed in your thesis!

*Collecting and organizing the support for claims:*

You will develop your skill of organizing and presenting the supporting **evidence** for your claims through practice. It's useful to keep in mind that evidence in the form of facts, statistics, and expert testimony helps make the appeal to logos (reason). Appeals to pathos or ethos are employed to get people to change their minds, to agree with the writer, or to decide upon a plan of action.

Here are some common **principles** to help you use and organize the support for your claims: Evidence and motivational appeals derive from *summarizing*, *paraphrasing*, and *quoting* material in the sources you are working with. Try to decide what techniques you will use to incorporate these sources into your own argument.

Tip: Typically, you would want to save the most important evidence for the end, to make it most memorable for your readers. When you have several reasons to support your claim, a good rule of thumb is to present the second most important, then one or more additional reasons, and finally the most important reason.

**Video 4:** *Acknowledgment and Response*

It's important to keep in mind that writing an argument is not a one-sided conversation, rather a two-sided one, in which you speak with your readers. You must acknowledge your audience by imagining questions or concerns they may have and answering those questions on their behalf.

Acknowledging your opposing views will not undermine your argument, rather it will enhance your credibility as a writer.

Your readers may raise two types of concerns:

1- Criticisms regarding your evidence or reasons, such as: having an out-of-date and inaccurate source, or weak and insufficient reasons.
2- Concerns that point to problems outside of your argument: Keep in mind that your audience may have a different world view and experience. They may simply reason differently. Avoid insisting that those ideas are wrong. You will just lose readers if you do so. Acknowledge these differences and walk your audience through your reasoning by comparing the two point of views. Your audience may not necessarily agree, but at least you have shown that you respect their views.

When you acknowledge a certain concern, you may choose to give it more or less weight. You can mention and dismiss it, you can summarize it quickly, or you can address it at length. You need to be very tactful in handling these concerns. For example, do not dismiss a position your readers take seriously, or do not address in detail and write at length for a point you have no good response to.

Note: Planting the opposing point of view or a *naysayer* in your text significantly improves your writing. You may refer to chapter 6 of TSIS for templates on planting naysayers in your text.

**This concludes our Writing Argument Part II module. Please come to class with any questions you have.**

**References:**

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