

The Primary Essays and Argumentative Modes Taught in English 110

We focus on argumentative writing in English 110 as opposed to expository (explanatory) writing. An argument is fundamentally a claim supported by reasons. In formal arguments, writers also support the reasons with evidence and explanation and anticipate and answer opposing viewpoints. Along with the argumentative components, we expect students to write in clear and correct prose and organize their essays carefully (so assume these features are included in the descriptions below).

Rhetorical Analysis: With this expository assignment, students read a sample argument and break it down into its components. The aim is to explain how someone else's argument operates. Students summarize the article's argument, analyze the article's rhetorical appeals (logos, ethos, pathos), characterize the style of the essay, and support their analysis with evidence from the article and their own explanation.

Evaluation: This argumentative essay requires students to judge if something is good or bad, effective or ineffective. Typically, students will evaluate a film, CD, essay, or object (i.e., running shoes, department store, or restaurant). They often need to fit the subject (*The Apple Dumpling Gang*) into one particular class (comedy, children's comedy, Disney movie, western comedy) in order to make the evaluation. Students are required to present their subject clearly; make a clear and balanced judgment with appropriate reasons/criteria; and anticipate and answer alternative viewpoints and judgments. Please note: students also write evaluations of an article's argument for the diagnostic and final exam essays.

Position: This argumentative essay is the most generic type of argument and the type that students may have written in high school. Typically, students take a stand on a controversial issue (legalizing recreational drugs, capital punishment, etc.) and support that stand with clear reasons, evidence and explanation, and refutation of opposing views. Many instructors emphasize refutation with this unit and ask students to anticipate and answer critics who are opposed to their positions.

Proposal: With this assignment, students must argue for a solution to a particular problem. Students must have a well-defined problem; a clearly proposed solution; a reasonable tone; and a convincing argument in which they explain how the solution will solve the problem, demonstrate that the solution is feasible, anticipate reader's objections and questions, and evaluate alternative solutions. Many faculty members ask students to write about local problems related to one of the communities to which they belong (hometown, sports team, MC, former high school, workplace, etc.).

Sourced Essay: This is the culminating "research" paper that students write for English 110. However, instructors provide the research articles for students (they all write about the same basic topic though may have different stands) and emphasize argumentation skills, integration of sources, and maintaining their own voices. Instructors may stress evaluation, position, or proposal modes of argument or let students select/combine modes for a particular topic. We place special emphasis on entering a climate of controversy in which student articulate (and cite) opposing viewpoints and refute those viewpoints effectively.