

Essay 4: Inquiry into an Issue— The Argument Essay

Knowing how to argue well has practical value ---Bruce Ballenger

WHAT'S THE ASSIGNMENT?

You'll write an essay in which you **assert and support a position on a current issue of public debate**, using elements of **academic argument**. An academic argument begins with an effort to understand a complex problem more fully; only after becoming well informed does an academic writer move to assert a reasonable position, one that takes into consideration opposing viewpoints. (There are never just two sides.)

You should plan, then, to investigate an issue that **you are interested in but have not yet established a position on**. The issue must be **current**—in the news right now—and **specific**: something that actually is affecting or could affect people you care about. As Ballenger says in *The Curious Writer*, “the best arguments are built to carefully establish...how a certain action, belief, or idea might make a difference in the lives of those who are the argument’s audience.”

HOW DO I APPROACH THE ASSIGNMENT?

For this essay, you'll **identify** an issue that you want to understand better, **research** the issue, **articulate** a position you want to argue for, and then **write** an essay that works to persuade readers who have not yet made up their minds. To be persuasive, your essay should demonstrate that you understand multiple perspectives on the issue, articulate a clear and reasonable position, and support that position with sufficient, appropriate evidence, drawing on Aristotle's three kinds of appeals: *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*.

This paper is an opportunity to use all of the strategies from your previous work: drawing on valid and relevant sources and synthesizing information, as you did in the Discovery Essay (**plan on citing at least five reputable sources—two must be from 2017**); incorporating narrative or stories as you did in “This I Believe;” and in some cases, using observation and interviews as you did in the Profile. This essay also launches you into the work you'll do in ENGL 20803, which focuses on argument.

Note: For this essay, we'll be doing whole-class workshops instead of small group workshops. If you fail to submit a complete draft (including a draft of your Works Cited) in time for peers to comment on it or if you fail to attend class on the day your paper is workshopped, your Portfolio Grade for your Essay 4 Portfolio will be affected. See rubric.

Final Draft: 1,600-2,100 words (approx. 5-7 pages) with works cited in MLA format, plus author's note

First Draft Due	
Second Draft Due	
Portfolio Draft Due	

Course outcomes met:

- ❖ Demonstrate competency in reading, quoting, and citing sources, as well as competency in balancing your own voices with secondary sources
- ❖ Write in a range of genres, using appropriate rhetorical conventions
- ❖ Demonstrate the ability to employ flexible strategies for generating and revising their writing