CDTL Workshop

Introduction to Argumentative Essay Writing

©Lee Gek Ling and Lee Ming Cherk
©CELC
Welcome! Today we will answer:

• What’s in it for you? What do you expect?
• What do your professors expect to see in an argumentative essay?
• Is there a reason why for their expectations? Theory on argumentative essays

• What are your professors’ expectations of a good argumentative essay?
  – Evaluating reasons (Fact, opinion and fallacy)
  – Acknowledging an opposing point (qualifiers and supporting reasons)
  – Evaluating and refuting arguments
• BREAK

• Can you apply the theory?
  – Drafting an outline, writing an introduction and a conclusion
  – Citations (in-text and end-text citations)
  – Pointers for revision (register, first and second person pronouns)

• Can you recall the key learning points?
So what’s in it for you?

- Turn to the person next to you and ask them
- Report their answer to the class when called
What can we cover in 3 hours?

• What’s your wish list?
Pause for thought

• What is an essential quality of a university education based on the Greek model?

Clue - Socrates
So what’s a dead Greek for to do with live Geeks?

Everything

• Learning by asking questions
• Learning by debating and arguing
• Learning by using rhetoric to prove one’s argument
Rhetoric? Isn’t that hot air?

• Not really
• Rhetoric refers to the literary (formal written or spoken) conventions that show a reasoned argument or thesis.
• Rhetoric includes language structures, expressions, tone, as well as cultural expectations such as providing evidence or using logic.
So what’s the link?

• Academic essays and academic argumentative essays have certain characteristics.
• What are some of these?
Characteristics of the Academic Essay

- Purpose
- Structure
- Content
- Linguistic features
- Format
Purpose

• Educate/show understanding
• Inform/explain
• Argue/persuade
• Compare and contrast
Content

• Evidence of research
• Evidence of summary and synthesis
• Evidence of critical thinking (originality/value add)
Structure

• Introduction
  – Thesis, or controlling idea very important
  – Outline
  – Transitions

• Body paragraphs
  – Topic sentences
  – Supporting details (evidence from research)

• Conclusion
  – Summary
  – Reiterate thesis
  – Final word
Linguistic features

• Tone is objective (no obvious emotion)
• Vocabulary is formal
• Syntax is clear and concise
• Paraphrase of sources is used
• Quotation may be present
Format

• In-text citation
• End of text references
(Evidence of honesty)
Practice

• Using recyclable bags brings wonders to the environment.
• Therefore with so many benefits, I do not see why more people do not use cloth bags.
• Making a decision about cloning can be quite tough.
How did you do?

• Using recyclable bags brings wonders to the environment.
• Therefore with so many benefits, I do not see why more people do not use cloth bags.
• Making a decision about cloning can be quite tough.
Practice 2

• Each recyclable bag will save thousands of plastic bags which will end up as ugly litter.
• Parents who would consider cloning a child so as to have spare parts for their existing child cannot really be loving parents.
How did you do?

• Each recyclable bag will save thousands of plastic bags which will end up as ugly litter.
• Parents who would consider cloning a child so as to have spare parts for their existing child cannot really be loving parents.
So what about argumentative essays?

• Let’s recap on the basic academic essay and then go on to the academic argumentative essay.
Academic vs. Argumentative essay structure

- **Introduction**
  - Thesis, or controlling idea very important
  - Outline
  - Transitions
- **Body paragraphs**
  - Topic sentences
  - Supporting details (evidence from research)
- **Conclusion**
  - Summary
  - Reiterate thesis
  - Final word

- **Introduction**
  - Background to argument
  - Thesis, or controlling idea very important
  - Outline
  - Transitions
- **Body paragraphs**
  - Topic sentences
  - Supporting details (evidence from research)
    - Counter argument
    - Refutation
- **Conclusion**
  - Summary
  - Reiterate thesis
  - Final word
Structure of academic essay

• Introduction
  – Thesis, or controlling idea very important
  – Outline
  – Transitions

• Body paragraphs
  – Topic sentences
  – Supporting details (evidence from research)

• Conclusion
  – Summary
  – Reiterate thesis
  – Final word
Academic argument

Persuades by:
• Logic
• Facts
• Considered view points (critical thoughts)
• Objective tone
Academic Argumentative Essay

• Has all the features of the academic essay PLUS the addition of:
  – Background to debate in the introduction
  – Counterargument and refutation in EACH body paragraph
    • TS – being vegetarian one day a week is good to detoxify the system
    • CA - however, some critics say once a week is not much help
    • R – nevertheless one day is better than no days
Academic Argumentative Scientific Essay

• Academic

Language = objective, concise, cohesive, circumspect

Hedging seen e.g. “some critics argue”, “in general”, “in certain situations”, “possibly:, “more likely”
Academic Argumentative Scientific Essay

• Argumentative

Organisation – as previously shown

• Introduction = b/ground, thesis, outline, tranistion

• Body Paragraphs = topic sentence, supporting details, counter argument, refutation

• Conclusion= reiteration of thesis, summary
Academic Argumentative Scientific Essay

• Scientific
Content = research (primary) or secondary (articles – reliable, refereed)

Synthesis of opposing viewpoints
Is this the only model?

- No, but it is a start.


**Model 2**

**Introduction**
Quotation/ Rhetorical Question/ Background Information / Scope of Essay/ Thesis

**Body paragraph 1**
Opposing view- Rebuttal (topic sentence with elaboration, e.g. examples, causes, problems)

**Body paragraph 2**
Opposing view- Rebuttal (topic sentence with elaboration, e.g. examples, causes, problems)

**Body Paragraph 3**
Opposing View- Rebuttal (topic sentence with elaboration, e.g. examples, causes, problems)

**Conclusion**
Comment/ Resolution/ Evaluation/ Restatement/Quotation
Model 3:

Introduction
Quotation/ Rhetorical Question/ Background information / Scope of Essay/ Thesis

Body paragraph 1
Opposing view (topic sentence with elaboration, e.g. examples, causes, problems)

Body paragraph 2
Rebuttal 1 (topic sentence with elaboration, e.g. examples, causes, problems)

Body paragraph 3
Rebuttal 2 (topic sentence with elaboration, e.g. examples, causes, problems)

Conclusion
Comment/ Resolution/ Evaluation/ Restatement/Quotation
Model 4:

Introduction
Quotation/ Rhetorical Question/ Background information / Scope of Essay/ Thesis

Body paragraph 1
Topic sentence---supporting ideas---

Body paragraph 2
Topic sentence ---supporting ideas---

Body paragraph 3
Counter-claim---rebuttal
(elaboration with examples, causes, problems etc.)

Conclusion
Comment/ Resolution/ Evaluation/ Restatement/ Quotation
Practice Session – alternative prompt

• “The use of gender neutral terms such as ‘parent one and parent two’ reflects the ‘topsy-turvy world of left wing political correctness’”. Do you agree with this statement?

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/07/AR2011010706741_pf.html
Recap – key learning points

• Academic conventions punctuate academic argumentative essays.

• An argumentative essay has three components – content, organization and language.
Three things

• Content – thesis, selection of points, primary and secondary sources, critical thinking

• Organisation – tight structure, logical flow of ideas, TS/SD/CA/R

• Language – the rhetoric of academic essays, tone, hedging etc
Communicating with the Academy

• Please also see Chapters 1 to 6 for an in-depth reminder of the workshop

• Developing an academic vocabulary – see 572 word list by Avril Coxhead of Massey University, New Zealand, see also http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~alzsh3/acvocab/index.htm