

Over the next weeks we'll go down the rabbit hole of various interests. I'll introduce several kinds of college-level writing to you, providing you with examples and instructions on how to do it. Meanwhile I'll have some things for us to read and watch that I find interesting, and you'll be bringing in things you find interesting. We'll talk about ways to take those things, whether they're a meme, a song, a video, a reading, and use those as a way to jump into a college argument essay.

Beginning Considerations

The following outlines some of the introductory ideas you should keep in mind.

- **Style:** A formal essay should be written in your voice and from your perspective but will use a higher level of diction and language. However, it should not be forced.
- Formal essays are written in an objective tone and do not use personal pronouns.
 - Instead, you should use the specific noun or group you're referring to.
 - I.e.: audiences, readers, advertisers, consumers, teens, adults, men, women, children, etc.
- **Purpose:** The purpose of this essay is to look carefully at a topic and make a claim (thesis) about it, providing evidence in the form of facts, statistics, expert opinion, as well as examples from our world to back it up clearly indicating the value, importance, or compelling reasoning to see it this way.
 - That means you need to decide what value, importance, or reason there is for your overall position (thesis). That may be something that comes to you as you finish the essay.
- Do not try to convince or preach to your readers. Simply explain your analysis and why it's valuable, important, or compelling to see it this way.
- **Audience:** The audience for this essay is a college-educated audience. They are familiar general terms of most common fields, so you do not need to explain those general ideas. If you are looking at something very exclusive or esoteric, you may need to give some definitions or explanations. Ask your friends, teacher, and the writing center if they know what those things are or if they need a short explanation.
- You must use at least three sources. Two of them must be college-level sources; the third may be your topic or the thing that inspired you. (You can use more than three, but due to the length of this essay, you should not go over 5.)
- We will do formal documentation for this essay. That means you need in-text citations where required and must have a works cited page.
 - For this essay, we will use MLA format. We will also look at sample essays in that format.

Finding Sources and Developing Ideas

An argument essay is one in which you make a claim about an issue (thesis statement) that presents a clear point and indicates a value, importance, or reasoning for supporting the point of view offered. Argument is not about winning or losing or proving you're

right. It's about making your claim about something and providing evidence in the form of facts, statistics, expert opinion, as well as examples from our world to back it up.

Your evidence and writing should be college-level. At this point you should realize that college-level does not mean big words or elevated language. It means clear, straightforward, and logical. It should come from sources that are reliable and credible. As the [Library website for the University of Georgia](#) points out, "A reliable source is one that provides a thorough, well-reasoned theory, argument, discussion, etc. based on strong evidence."

Notice the relationship between the definition of a reliable source and the type of argument we're working on? In both cases it's about thoughtfulness and logical reasoning.



I found this on <https://cheezburger.com/25924613/a-shelf-full-of-book-memes-for-wholesome-bookworms-and-local-librarians>, but, there's a link under this image to an Instagram account, so I cite that:

@centrecountylibrary. Instagram, August 23, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CwSboUVPsNw/>

How to cite Instagram: <https://style.mla.org/citing-instagram/>

How to cite a meme: <https://style.mla.org/how-do-i-cite-a-meme/>

Finding Sources and Getting Started Laying Out Ideas

Once you've chosen a topic, one of the best ways to start is by giving yourself a question to answer. If I'm interested in comic books, I might do some research in the [library](#) and find out what topics are related to that which would lead me to an arguable (issue) thesis. And this is the key: your thesis needs to be an issue that is arguable. One that is not a fact, and that people can see differently. So, I did that. Here's my search and thoughts along the way to a thesis:

- I searched for this: comic books issues. I found this article "Why Comics Matter" The summary says this:

"The article highlights the challenges faced by comics and graphic novels, including book bans and challenges, while emphasizing their significance for neurodivergent readers, English Language Learners, and those developing reading skills. It underscores the importance of defending these mediums, as they have become best-selling book formats, with annual sales in the billions of dollars, and highlights the need to combat self-censorship among librarians."

Really great info on citing social media!

This meme gives me a lot of ideas: comics as banned books, comics as helpful to different types of readers. I also notice this part: "It underscores the importance of defending these mediums, [. . .] and highlights the need to combat self-censorship among librarians." Which means that some of the pushbacks about whether or not comics are worthy reading even comes from librarians. (The source this is from *Booklist*, is a publication for librarians.)

- That gives me a place to start. I will then read the article and see if it has stuff I can use and that helps me come up with a question. I make sure and get the PDF if it's available since it will make my citation easier.



I made sure to get the citation from the library search while I was there:

White, Adriana L. "Why Comics Matter." *Booklist*, June 2023, pp. 12–14. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib&db=lfh&AN=164174435&site=eds-live.

- One thing I noticed while I'm looking the PDF version of that information to the left of the article lists other articles in that issue of *Booklist*. It so happens that there's another article that I might look at there too: "The Power of Manga for Struggling Readers."

- Now I have two possible topics:
 - I can talk about the issues in the original article and find other sources outside of *Booklist* to support it. (That's me making sure I have varied sources—not just info from one place)
 - Or I might decide to focus on how comics and/or manga are helpful for struggling readers. (Look: A question I can answer: How can comic books and/or manga [I'll have to decide which way I'm going] help struggling readers. Also, here's a possible answer: Helping readers can be tricky, but both comic books and manga stand out as something that can help many struggling readers.

- Here are some other ideas I might look at, but then again, I'm not done reading or thinking, so I might end up going in another direction. ~~~neurodivergent, second language, "good" books vs "bad" books, etc.—I'll see where the research goes.

- Before I go, I'll make sure to click on the "Find Similar Results" link from the original library listing for this source to see if there are other sources I can use.



Once I have a couple of sources, I can begin thinking about what stands out for me. Reading through those, I will take notes on not only quotes, statistics, and facts that I want to share, but also what I think about those things. That should help me identify the subtopics or main points I want to share.

One way I can do that is through using an outline. Here's a [basic outline form](#) we will use as a prewriting. As it points out on the form, I don't need to start in the beginning. I can fill out any of the parts in any order. Those parts represent the basic argument outline:

I made sure to get the citation from the library search while I was there:

Mora, Samantha Archibald. "The Power of Manga for Struggling Readers." *Booklist*, June 2023, pp. 20–23. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib&db=mat&AN=164174437&site=eds-live.

Notes to self:

Now I've started thinking about what we call "good" reading versus "bad" reading. Comics vs books, romance, or science fiction vs "literature."

Who decides? Why? How are we still in this judgmental place?

Another note to self:

New topic: All reading is valuable. ???

Okay, so what do experts say about that? Find that and then maybe you can link these ideas.

Another-note to self:

Uh-oh, this contradicts the idea of all reading good—maybe. Read it carefully.

Remember, that's okay, you might change your mind, or it could be this is right in certain circumstances. See what the writer has to say, and then decide.

The Basic Structure of an Argument Essay

The essay has a general structure that you can use whether you're writing about a current issue, a literary work, or explaining and defending a point of view. The following outline illustrates that structure.

INTRODUCTION

- Provide an opening that gets readers into the topic. You might discuss the overall subject in general, provide some history or background, or use narrative to set the scene.
- A clear thesis statement
Your thesis (main point) should be expressed in one clear sentence. It should meet these criteria:
 - It should be arguable (not a fact), and state your position clearly.
 - It should bear further explanation.
 - It should be supportable with credible sources and facts.

BODY

Decide on a number of subtopics or reasons to support your thesis. For each of these you need a section that does the following. It may be a paragraph or a few paragraphs for each topic.

- Provide reasons for belief in your thesis (subtopic). Do this in clear topic sentences.
- Provide evidence (facts, quotes, statistics, or narrative with a personal essay),
- Explain and interpret how the evidence fits into or illuminates the thesis, and
- Connect the evidence to your position in your thesis.
 - Sometimes the last two kind of merge

CONCLUSION options include:

- Discuss how all of the points you've given in your essay add up to illustrate something bigger about the issue.
- Explain how the points you've made lead to a logical view or way to progress on the issue.

This is a general outline, and much like a basic recipe, it is designed to be adapted. Writing, like cooking, uses a number of basic concepts, then allows the creator to play with and embellish on them to create something distinct and unique. However, this basic outline is present in everything from semi-formal to very formal writing.

Sometimes when you write, you might find that as you work on parts of your outline, you just want to stop thinking about the outline and get to writing the essay. That's fine. Go ahead and do that. Don't stop the processes that help you get words on the page. Once you're done, go back through what you've written and paste it into the outline. If you're not able to fill in spots, then you know what you need to develop to fill out your argument.

If you've checked to see if you have all the parts and you do but your essay is still shorter than it should be, then develop another paragraph or two (or three or. . .) to fill it out. Of course, going to the writing center or reading this with a friend or classmate before doing this is also good since as readers, they can give you some advice on what will help them understand your argument even better.

Final Essay

Begin work on putting this essay together by reviewing the grade sheet at the end of this handout. I grade looking for those things, so you need to make sure you keep those things in mind as you write. Once you've done that, look over your prewritings, and use those as a starting point to organize. Below are some important tips to remember. Since this is a formal paper, it should follow a fairly strict structure.

Remember, this is your goal:

- Write a formal essay in which look carefully at a topic and make a claim (thesis) about it, providing evidence in the form of facts, statistics, expert opinion, as well as examples from our world to back it up clearly indicating the value, importance, or compelling reasoning to see it this way.
 - That means you need to decide what value, importance, or reason there is for your overall position (thesis).

General Requirements

The essay should:

- Be correctly formatted: typed in a standard 12-point font, double spaced, correct heading and header
- Be at least 3 pages long, exclusive of your Works Cited page.
- Utilize and correctly cite at least 3 sources. At least two of them must be credible and reliable sources. The third may be your inspiration—a meme, video, song, tv show, etc. Do not use more than 5 sources.

Tips

- ❑ Avoid the personal pronouns I/me/my. Instead, go with readers, viewers, consumers, buyers, advertisers, or something similar.
- ❑ Avoid you as if it will give you the plague, Ebola, or anything else equally frightening and life threatening. REALLY!
- ❑ Focus on your claim about an issue and presents a strong argument, clearly indicating the value, importance, or reasoning for supporting the point of view offered. That means you need to decide what value, importance, or reason there is for your overall position (thesis).
- ❑ Analyze and discuss how specific points
- ❑ Conclude by explaining what the ad reveals about contemporary culture: values, goals, acceptable roles in society, etc., and what this implies or reveals about our culture, desires, aspirations, or expectations.
- ❑ If a source is in your paper, it should be on the Works Cited page.
- ❑ If a source is on the Works Cited page, it should be in your paper and easy to find.
- ❑ In-text citations go at the *end* of the sentence or section.
- ❑ Quotation marks mean you are using the exact words—they usually require an in-text citation.
- ❑ With a paraphrase, you don't need quotation marks since you're putting it in your own words, but you still need an in-text citation and/or a clear signal phrase.
- ❑ Have someone read it out loud to you for a real idea of what you've said in your essay as opposed to what you think you said.
- ❑ Proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, proofread, and proofread again!

Turning Your Essay In

See your schedule for specific instructions.

Grading Criteria

Your essay will be evaluated based on the following standards. Please review them and take them into consideration when finalizing your essay.

Essay 2: Down the Rabbit Hole	
Format/Professionalism	
Was the document uploaded in the correct file type? (doc, docx, odt)	✓ X
Is the essay correctly formatted? (MLA)	✓ X
Does it meet length requirements?	✓ X
Is it turned in on time?	✓ X
Is there a Work Cited page?	✓ X
Introduction	
Does the introduction move the reader into the subject the essay and focus on the topic? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing down the Basics, pp. 48-50 for discussion and examples. • Writing an Introduction: 3 Steps (Slideshow version) 	✓ X
Is the thesis a clear statement that makes a claim about an issue and presents a strong argument, clearly indicating the value, importance, or reasoning for supporting the point of view offered? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a Thesis, • Creating a Thesis Statement, • How to Write a Thesis Statement (text and video) 	✓ X
Content	
Is the essay making an argument about an issue? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argument (UNC WC) 	✓ X
Does the essay use at least 3 sources? While one may be uncredible or not college-level as an example or primary source, the other two should be college-level sources. (No more than 5 sources) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing down the Basics, pp.62-65, Establishing Credibility. 	✓ X
Are sources smoothly integrated into sentences using signal phrases and transitions as needed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writer's Reference, p. 727+ (pdf page number) Pay special attention to the section on Dropped Quotations and Signal Phrases, 	✓ X

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding Dropped Quotations • Ashford University Writing Center: Integrating Research and their Video Tutorial • Signal Phrases and How to Use Them • A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success: Signal Phrases 	
<p>Is research cited with correct parenthetical citations as needed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See pages 78-82 of <i>Writing down the Basics</i> • Citing Tables, Graphics, and Images in MLA • The Pearson Guide, pp 37-41--MLA in-text citations 	✓ X
Development	
<p>Does the writer support the thesis with the right amount of logical, clearly discussed points, using specific details as support?</p>	✓ X
<p>Does the writing explain how the quotes/facts/statistics/examples support the thesis going beyond simply restating what the source information said?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Body Paragraphs 	✓ X
<p>If appropriate, does the writing bring up and address any opposing views?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concessions & Counterarguments 	✓ X NA
<p>Is the work organized to lead the reader through the thinking process that led to the writer's outlook on the topic?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing Your Argument • Writing Conclusions and Examples • Organizing Academic Research Papers: 9. The Conclusion 	✓ X
Style	
<p>Does the style—voice, tone, sentence style, and word choice—reflect the type of writing expected in this essay? (No I/me/my/you/your; formal tone and word choice.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to Avoid Using Personal Language 	✓ X A few things to work on
Clarity	
<p>Does the writing reflect grammatical and mechanical correctness expected at this level?</p>	✓ X A few things to work on
Works Cited Page	
<p>Are all sources correctly cited on the Works Cited page?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing down the Basics, pp 83-86 	✓ X
<p>Are all sources used listed used in the essay?</p>	✓ X
<p>Are all sources cited on the Works Cited page, used in the essay?</p>	✓ X
TENTATIVE Grade (if you don't change anything for the final)	

-10 Missing Grammarly Report or ignored obvious advice from it	-
- Late points	-
+5 Writing Center	+
If you don't revise, this will be your final essay grade: Tentative Grade	
Grade for turning in this DRAFT	
	100
+5 Writing Center	+
-10 Missing Grammarly Report or ignored obvious advice from it	-
- Late points	-
Draft Grade:	
<p style="text-align: center;">↓ FINAL DRAFT INSTRUCTIONS ↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">IMPORANT INSTRUCTIONS: READ SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY</p>	
<p>If you're happy with the grade listed as your TENATAIVE grade,</p> <p>✓ Don't do anything else. I will enter that grade in the Final.</p> <p>➤ If you turn in the same version, you turned in for the draft and make no changes, I will deduct 5 points for the time it takes me to compare both.</p>	
<p>If you want more points</p> <p>✓ Review my comments and suggestions here and in the video and the links in this grade sheet to help you improve your work.</p> <p>✓ Use Grammarly, go to the Writing Center, and then ask me any questions you still have. (Very short video on how to get your Grammarly report.)</p> <p>✓ Turn in your final version by the due date on your schedule.</p>	