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FOURTH EDITION

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In essence, your assignment for Essay 3 is to:

Write a position paper that takes a stand on a controversial issue. Your introduction should present your issue, provide background, and state the claim you intend to support. The body of your argument will summarize and respond to opposing views as well as present reasons and evidence in support of your own position. You need to choose whether to summarize and refute opposing views before or after you have made your own case. Try to end your essay with your strongest arguments.

In class, I have used the terminology "making a claim" to describe what your thesis needs to do. Here's another explanation:

Stating a Claim

Your claim is the position you take on the issue. It is your brief, one-sentence answer to your issue question:

The family was not ethically justified in killing the starlings.

The city should build skateboarding areas with ramps in all city parks.

You will appreciate argument as truth seeking if you find that your claim evolves as you think more deeply about your issue and listen to alternative views. Be willing to rephrase your claim to soften it or refocus it or even to reverse it as you progress through the writing process.

To support your claim, you will need reasons:

Articulating Reasons

Your claim, which is the position you take on an issue, needs to be supported by reasons and evidence. A *reason* (sometimes called a "premise") is a subclaim that supports your main claim. In speaking or writing, a reason is usually linked to the claim with such connecting words as *because*, *therefore*, *so*, *consequently*, and *thus*. In planning your argument, a powerful strategy for developing reasons is to harness the grammatical power of the conjunction *because*; think of your reasons as *because* clauses attached to your claim. Formulating your reasons in this way allows you to create a thesis statement that breaks your argument into smaller parts, each part devoted to one of the reasons.*

Often a thesis will have a formula, echoing the above, like this:

We should / should not _____
because _____.

So, your claim needs to be attached to a strong reason ("because clause") in the thesis sentence itself.



Here is a handy strategy for writing a paper such as the one you have been assigned.

Reflect on the two class days you spent working on developing ideas. Then...

Your next step is to plan out an audience-based argument by seeking audience-based reasons or reasons whose warrants you can defend. Here is a process you can use:

1. Create a skeleton, tree diagram, outline, or flowchart for your argument by stating your reasons as one or more *because* clauses attached to your claim. Each *because* clause will become the head of a main section or *line of reasoning* in your argument.
2. Use a planning schema to plan each line of reasoning. If your audience accepts your warrant, concentrate on supporting your reason with grounds. If your warrant is doubtful, support it with backing. Try to anticipate audience objections by exploring conditions for rebuttal, and brainstorm ways of addressing those objections.
3. Using the skeleton you created, finish developing an outline or tree diagram for your argument. Although the organization for each part of your argument will grow organically from its content, the main parts of a classical argument are as follows:
 - a. *An introduction*, in which you engage your reader's attention, introduce your issue, and state your own position.
 - b. *Background and preliminary material*, in which you place your issue in a current context and provide whatever background knowledge and definitions of key terms or concepts that your reader will need. (If this background is short, it can often be incorporated into the introduction.)
 - c. *Arguments supporting your own position*, in which you make the best case possible for your views by developing your claim with reasons and evidence. This is usually the longest part of your argument, with a separate section for each line of reasoning.
 - d. *Anticipation of objections and counterarguments*, in which you summarize fairly key arguments against your position. This section not only helps the reader understand the issue more clearly, but also establishes your *ethos* as a fair-minded writer willing to acknowledge complexity.
 - e. *Response to objections through refutation or concession*, in which you point out weaknesses in opposing arguments or concede to their strengths.
 - f. *A conclusion*, in which you place your argument in a larger context, perhaps by summarizing your main points and showing why this issue is an important one or by issuing a call to action.