Analyzing Argumentation

Module 2, Reading Complex Texts

AP Seminar Scored Tasks

A Review

Task 1, Team Project and Presentation (20% of final score)

- ◆ Includes: Individual Research Report, Team Multimedia Presentation
- ◆ Students investigate individual lens in broad group inquiry; groups collate evidence in support of a single argument related to group inquiry

Task 2, Individual Research, Presentation, and Oral Defense (35% of final score)

- ◆ Includes: Individual Written Argument, Multimedia Presentation, and Oral Defense
- ◆ Students individually investigate inquiry questions based on stimulus materials; students research and support arguments based on inquiry, and present and defend

End-of-course Exam (45% of final score)

- ◆ Part A: argument analysis and evaluation of provided source (30 min)
- ◆ Part B: synthesis argument from four provided sources (90 min)

End-of-course Exam

Language of Part A

⭐ **Suggested Time:** 30 minutes (approx.)

⭐ **Impact:** 45% of total score

⭐ **Text:** selection varies (generally it's argumentative, oftentimes slightly elevated, maybe more academic, journalism)

⭐ Questions:

- *Identify* the author's argument, main idea, or thesis (3 points)

- *Explain* the author's line of reasoning identifying the claims used to build the argument and the connections between them (6 points)

- *Evaluate* the effectiveness of the evidence the author uses to support the claims made in the argument (6 points

What is an Argument

- ✓ **Simply:** the total of a set of premises and support for a conclusion

- ✓ **In other words:** claims backed by reasoning and supporting evidence

- ✓ **Social process:** requires taking a stance, and a level of tension (ability to agree, disagree)

- ✓ Often includes defense, dialogue

- ✓ Exercise central to communication and understanding - aims to "make a point" and convince

- ✓ **Quality is important:** arguments are neutral, but there is such a thing as 'good' argument and 'bad' argument (in form) - content more difficult to judge

Argument Parts - Claims

Claims = statements about what is to be believed (the 'arguable,' as in that which can be agreed with, or disagreed with)

> Ex. 1: Cookies are better than cake.

> Ex. 2: Toby McGuire is the best Spider-man.

> Ex. 3: Pineapple does not belong on pizza.

> NOT a claim: I like books (this is a 'self-reported statement - what I like isn't arguable, it's personal).

Argument Parts - Reasons

Reasons = statements in support of a given claim (answers "why would you say that?" or "what justification do you have for believing that?")

> Ex. 1: [because...] Cookies don't require a wasteful and environmentally unfriendly plate and fork.

> Ex. 2: [because...] Original actors set the standard.

> Ex. 3: [because...] The herbs in the spaghetti sauce clash with the pineapple.

Argument Parts - Evidence

Evidence or Support = what tangibly substantiates the claim/reasoning

> What constitutes evidence changes between argument types, subject matter of the argument, field of study, methodology, etc.

> Common types: statistics, data, examples/events, testimonies/narratives, etc.

> Ex. 1: [*This is shown by*] how much trash there is after a cake vs. the trash after cookies.

> Ex. 2: [*This is shown by*] the amount of excitement and applause his appearance received when appearing in *No Way Home*.

> Ex. 3: [*This is shown by*] research of pizza topping taste tests and survey evidence suggest it is an undesired flavor combination.

Argument Parts - Warrants

Warrants = underlying inferences or assumptions that are unstated in the explicit argument

> Addresses the question: "What has to be believed in order to believe the support justifies the reasons?"

> Ex. 1: [to be a valid reason, one must believe that…] waste is an important factor when choosing consumption, especially in a large group setting.

> Ex. 2: [to be a valid reason, one must believe that…] audience applause is enough to indicate not just preference, but actual actor skill.

> Ex. 3: [to be a valid reason, one must believe that…] being an undesired flavor generally is enough to dismiss a topping altogether.

An Analogy

Five-paragraph Essay Structure

- ✓ **Topic sentence** = paragraph claim

- ✓ **Analysis** = generally, reasoning (or definitions, context)

- ✓ **Quotations** = evidence, support

- ✓ "What do you have to believe in order to believe that the support justifies the claim or reason being made?"

Word of Caution: not *all* arguments are this linear!
(Introduction paragraphs *end* with a claim!)

Sample Argument #1

Every citizen should have access to a free, universal health care system. This would allow medical professionals to concentrate on healing their patients rather than dealing with insurance procedures and liability concerns. Each person has a right to be cared for and having access to free medical services provides patients with the opportunity for regular checkups when otherwise they may not be able to afford them.

[example courtesy of *Wilfrid Laurier University Library*]

Sample Argument #2

Universal health care is an impractical system where total costs end up being much higher compared to privatized care. Doctor flexibility is decreased due to government policy and those that are healthy are forced to subsidize the health benefits for smokers and those that are obese. Everyone should be given access to health care, but not in a publicly-controlled system.

[example courtesy of *Wilfrid Laurier University Library*]

Things that are *not* Arguments

- ✓ **Reports**: primary function to give voice to something someone else said (restatement)

- ✓ **Explanation**: given phenomena are already taken to be the case (something generally accepted, inarguable), given an account of *how* or *why* [*why* it's true, not proving *that* it's true]

- ✓ **Illustration**: accepted phenomena through an example (i.e., general principles)

Practice Exercises - Instructions

Prior to engaging with complex arguments across published texts, students will practice identifying important aspects of argumentation based on given terminal argument examples. For each argument example, students will identify:

- The argument's claim
- The reasoning provided for the claim
- Support/evidence for the reasoning in support of the claim

For extra credit, students may also supply what warrants the argument. This will help students think about the implied aspects of the claim upon which the argument rests. This will be a good skill to develop over the course of the modules, especially as students begin to evaluate arguments in support of their own research or begin making their own arguments.

Practice Exercises - Argument #1

Though science fiction writers and fans would be disappointed, it is scientifically unlikely that extraterrestrial intelligent life exists in our own galaxy. Dating studies and theories strongly suggest that the sun is about 4.6 billion years old, and that life took nearly that long to form and evolve from Earth's formation. Using the same dating, studies also show that about half of the stars in the galaxy are even younger than our sun; so, if it takes 4-5 billion years to develop life, young stars cannot yet have intelligent life. To add further support, research finds that at least half of the stars in our galaxy are part of binary systems, and evidence concludes that life-supporting planets cannot withstand that kind of gravitational force. As a result, only a small percentage of stars in our galaxy could even possibly suit intelligent life.

Practice Exercises - Argument #2

History has shown the evolution of music technology time and time again. Record sales diminished when cassettes became available to the public, and cassettes were eventually dropped in favor of CDs. Today, market research indicates that digital music sales outpace all other forms of physical music consumption. Because of this shift to digital, music can now be consumed one track at a time, rather than needing to be purchased as a full album. While digital piracy may have some impact, it is really the change in format that is negatively affecting album sales.

Next Step

Mind-Mapping

To prepare for module 2.2, complete readings:

- ✓ Article "Become a More Productive, Empathetic, Creative Person with the Help of AI-Based Tools" opinion piece published by *The Wall Street Journal* (2017)

- ✓ Selections from Henry Ford's *My Life and Work*

- ✓ Selections from Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory* (on Labour, and on Time*)*

- ✓ Selections from Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*

Complete Module 2 Discussion Questions/Reflections related to the sample readings