

English 3302
Fall 2019
Templeton

Unit 2: Researched Argument

Draft Length: 1,700 words (min.)
Final Paper Length: 2,000-3,000 words (min. - max.)
Audience: Academic
Draft Due: Thursday, February 21st (1:35 p.m.)
Peer Reviews Due: Monday, February 25th (12:00 p.m.)
Final Due: Sunday, March 3rd (11:59 p.m.)

The Unit 2 paper is longer than the others but more traditional and defined; you may therefore find it easier to write. This paper will give you a chance to witness and practice the virtues of academic argument and analysis. You will apply the principles of academic writing to your own work, adding your voice to an ongoing debate within your field and using individual research and evaluation, in-class source critiques, and writing workshops to do so.

For this Unit, you will write a researched argument or a proposal for a scholarly audience. Consider both words. First, a researched argument makes active use of current *research* in your academic field. It deploys that research through appropriate methods of citation and bibliography. Second, it uses that research in the service of a central *argument*—that is, a claim supported by relevant evidence.

Let's unpack these terms a bit more.

Research. What does it mean to conduct research? In many fields, research typically means gathering and analyzing field data or performing laboratory experiments. Because this is an English class, we won't be performing that kind of work here. Instead, you will perform secondary research. This means you'll locate a few related pieces of recent primary research in your field, interpret those sources, evaluate their quality, and synthesize your interpretations to create a picture of what we will call the knowledge front.

Argument. Note that a researched argument is not the same as a "research paper." Students typically think of a research paper as a document that presents information gleaned from massive amounts of reading. You'll do a lot of reading here, to be sure; you'll also cite sources carefully and showcase your reading in a deliberate fashion. But you are not writing this paper to provide information; you are writing this paper to make an argument. In order to do this, you'll have to see—and then show—how the papers you're using in your research make arguments already.

The centrality of argument in academic writing can be hard to recognize. Even the most innocuous academic papers make evaluative arguments all the time simply by highlighting some texts and downplaying others; by their very existence, academic texts argue for the importance of the field of inquiry. And then, when they describe the problems that remain, they cast their lot with the success of some research (and, by implication, with the failure of other agendas). However, argumentative elements are muted by the protocols of academic writing. A tone of modesty and reasoned discourse prevails, giving even the most strenuous objections an impression of politeness.

A researched argument typically begins with a *research question*. In your other classes, you have probably encountered, or perhaps formulated, possible research questions. But you must choose carefully; this paper will not work if the question has been answered definitively within your scholarly community. You must choose a questions that has *not yet been answered*. Your research question sets the tone for the rest of the assignment; part of the challenge is delving into a question that is compelling, timely (relevant), and arguable, meaning there is a new or alternative way of looking at an issue worth bringing to light. Through research and analysis, you will ultimately offer some sort of solution or suggestion to your

research question that colleagues in your field can use.

To answer your research question and compose your research argument, you will evaluate current scholarship in your field and use this knowledge to make your argument. You will make evaluative arguments throughout by highlighting some texts and downplaying others. You must use at least five scholarly sources; with discretion, you can also implement (no more than) two popular sources.

You should begin with a background section, giving some of the history of your investigation into the problem (question). Remember, though, that you are writing to scholars and researchers in your field so they are more familiar with the current state of the field than say, the primary audience of your Unit 1 paper (i.e. myself). The body of your essay should then move through your research in an organized manner. You should also consider counter perspectives to your argument; in responding to why existing methods or ideas about your issue are incorrect, you inherently strengthen your own stance. The conclusion or discussion section of your essay will synthesize what has been covered and describe the likely future direction of research based on the suggestion or recommendation you have advocated throughout your argument.

The following characteristics are important to your process and product:

- An intimate understanding of the scholarship in the field.
- A sense of what is happening in the field *with attention to chronology*, even if it's not a stated subsection of your researched argument. This means that you should acknowledge and understand your sources according to the relative time they were published.
- A tone, vocabulary, and writing style appropriate to an academic audience.
- A fair and responsible attitude toward multiple sources. By this, I mean that you accurately and respectfully represent all of your sources as you present them, through summary and/or paraphrase, in service of your own argument.
- Successful use of ACM, IEEE or other citation conventions.

Unit 2 Grading Criteria:

- Demonstrates a careful understanding of a research problem
- Demonstrates an understanding that is current and relevant
- Consistently uses tone appropriate to audience
- Consistently uses writing style appropriate to audience
- Consistently uses vocabulary appropriate to audience
- Demonstrates careful attention to differences among positions
- Demonstrates fair and responsible attitude toward multiple sources
- Demonstrates successful use of appropriate citation conventions

- Shows a strong understanding of the uses of writing in the discipline
- Fulfills length and genre requirements