**Persuasive or argumentative writing**

The goal of persuasive writing is to influence a reader's thoughts or actions. The writer may appeal to the reader's mind or emotions or both. A good argument always includes non-biased evidence, such as facts, examples, or expert opinion.

In this class, you will write persuasive essays that use various modes of development to advance your position.

**How to argue persuasively**

We are surrounded by arguments and persuasion every day. They can take the form of anything from television ads to family members. Often the purpose is to get the audience to change his/her thoughts or behaviors through persuasive appeals. During this semester, you will study argument from the standpoint of a reader and as a writer.  The better arguments use a variety of techniques to sway readers. This is a quick summary of ways to approach an argumentative essay; in class we will look at specific examples.

Use evidence.  The evidence must support the thesis. The strongest evidence is relevant, unbiased, accurate, and representative. It can be

* examples
* facts, statistics, study
* expert authority

Use appeals

1. logic. (logos) Logical appeals support a point of view through reason and a presentation of factual evidence. Logic appeals to common sense. The evidence can include statistics, specific instances, documents, test results, expert testimony, fictional examples to illustrate ideas, eyewitness testimony, and surveys. Logic is used in academic, business, and government writing.  It should form the basis of your essays.

2.  ethics. (ethos)  Ethics reflect deeply held convictions, like patriotism, religion, and humanitarianism. Referencing any of those can show the reader that the writer is a well-informed person of good will who is to be believed. Arguers who demonstrate fair mindedness and good character are more convincing than individuals who lack these qualities. It establishes the credibility of the author and seeks to form common ground with the reader. The ethical appeal is the basis of many sermons, editorials, and political speeches that emphasize shared values and beliefs. This can be a powerful motivator, but only works on audiences with common moral philosophies.

3. emotion. (pathos) Emotional appeals touch and arouse the feelings or emotions of the reader. Emotion also taps into his/her needs to be creative, independent, or popular. It uses images, sensations, or shock techniques to lead people to react. It can include emotional language, personal narratives, and vivid description of events. Emotional appeals are used in public relations, marketing, advertising, and political campaigns. For example, sex appeal is used to sell products from shampoo to cars. Images of starving children will provoke pity and empathy. Emotional appeals engage the reader and can be appropriate when the subject is emotional. These appeals can produce strong responses, but can be short lived and distract from the issue. Your argument should not rely solely on this appeal.

Anticipate objections. When you know your audience and their objections to your point of view, you can fairly stating their case and then refute their argument. This technique may help the writer win over a hostile audience. It shows that you are aware that others may disagree with you and that you have an understanding of and an answer to their concerns.

Arrange ideas. Build to your strongest point is usually the best way to organize your essay .  Also, your points should flow seamlessly from beginning to end.

Use humor. Humor can lighten the mood or cast a new light on the subject.

Don't insult your reader. It hurts an argument. No one wants to read, "if you cared about children, you'd agree with me."  Demeaning and negative language alienates the reader.

Argument from induction. Inductive arguments provide a number of examples and draw a conclusion (claim). The examples must be accurate and representative. The examples could be responses to a questionnaire, interviews, car sales, or blood test results, etc. The claim is a generalization made on the basis of the examples. Scientific conclusions are reached inductively.

Argument from deduction. Deductive arguments start with a true statement (major premise), provide a specific example (minor premise), and draw a conclusion about the the example. The true statement could be a contrast, will, insurance policy. The minor premise is tested against the major premise. If both the major premise and minor premise are true, the conclusion should be also.

 Avoid fallacies. Fallacies are errors in reasoning that lead to wrong conclusions. These are the most common.

* non sequitur (from the Latin "it does not follow"): stating a conclusion that doesn't follow from the premise. "He has a new computer, so he must be highly skilled in the use of computers."
* oversimplification: supplying neat and easy explanations for large and complex issues.
* hasty generalizations: leaping to a generalization from inadequate or faulty evidence. They can lead to stereotypes. "Women are too weak to fight in combat"
* either/or reasoning: assuming that a reality can be divided into only two parts or extremes or two solutions to a situation. "This country can have a strong defense program or a strong social welfare program."
* argument ad hominem (from the Latin "to the man"): attacking a person's views by attacking his character. "What does he know about marriage? He's been divorced twice.)
* Begging the question: repeating that what you stated in your premises is true because it's true. The writer should prove that it's true not argue in a circle. "It's true because I know it's true."
* post hoc, ergo propter hoc (from the Latin "After this, therefore because of this"): assuming that because B followed A that B was caused by A. (see modes of development, cause and effect writing). Sometimes no causal relationship exists. "People will be attractive and popular if they drink a certain soda."
* bandwagon appeal: assuming that since everyone is doing it, that it is good.  Polls use this to promote a candidate or fashion trend.