

# ACADEMIC SKILLS

Week 8

Project Execution Seminar 1: Arguments

Richard Nowell

# **Agenda**

## **Structure**

Argumentation and Everyday Life

Argumentation and Academic Work

## **Targeted Learning Outcomes**

Argument-driven work

# **A Memorable Disagreement You Had...**

What did you disagree with someone about?

What did you contribute to this discussion?

What did your “opponent” contribute?

Did either of you revise change your views?

# **Not Leaving Your Skills at the (Classroom)** **Door**

In my experience, there is one surprising quality that distinguishes the very-top students from others who find their studies more of a struggle

Top students do not approach academia as a hermetically sealed bubble that operates to different rhythms than the outside or the “real” world

After all, we all spend some of our free time discussing the world as we see it, often disagreeing with others, sometimes learning from them

Through are disagreements, reconciliations, and revisions we are all clearly well-versed with the minutia of argumentation and positioning

Yet, most students and scholars leave this aspect of everyday life at the classroom door, assuming they must relearn things: they are wrong!!

# **Argumentation: Or Your Thesis Statement**

Having formulated our topic and research question, we need to think about the most important aspect of academic work: argumentation

Without argumentation there is no scholarship – instead we will have are some disconnected observations partially commenting on a topic

This sub-wikipedia quasi-encyclopedic collection of musings perhaps better represents the start of the process than the end of it: it is our notes

Instead, we should aspire to the production of focused, direct, argument-driven work wherein **all content** supports a main hypothesis

We are talking her about an assertion that is supported by evidence: this is argumentation in a nutshell - “In this paper I will argue that ...”

# Positioning

It is nice to dance alone, but it is better when you have a partner to dance with; and in much the same way your argument needs a partner

Your argument ideally needs a “foil”; by which we mean that it is elevated if you can also find a counter-position to argue against

By doing this, you can demonstrate how your own argument – your own thesis statement, and your paper – teaches us something new

This does not have to be a counter-position derived from existing academic work, it may be better still if it derives from everyday life

Therefore, explain to folks why this counter-position is limited or even inaccurate, so you can spotlight how your position enlightens us

# **Positioning Snoop**

**Foil:** Understandings of gangsta rappers largely derive from their personas as young performers, and controversies these provoked

**Limitations:** This tendency has resulted in their being associated with antisocial traits: namely violence, misogyny, and criminality

## **Thesis Statement**

Snoop at the Olympics shows how gangsta rappers rehabilitate their personas as they age away from their initial youth market

**Contribution:** This paper expands the terms under which a key aspect of popular culture has newly developed as performers age





## **Exercise: Write One Sentence per Point**

1. Decide on something you care quite strongly about
2. Tell us what the people you disagree with think
3. Tell us why you feel their view is wrong/incomplete
4. Tell us what you feel is a better way of seeing things
5. Tell us why the other people should share your view



# **Takeaways**

With our research topic and question in place, we now need to think about what we want in a general sense to say in our research paper

Top papers are organized around argumentation wherein they offer a clear, focused, and direct response to our research question

This involves an assertion or thesis statement – “In this paper I argue that ...”, ensuring all of the paper supplies evidence in support of it

Ideally, this part of a paper should be positioned against a perspective different to ours, so we can offer an expansion of or corrective thereto

And, don't forget, you are already an expert of argumentation; you do it whenever you try to persuade folks of your perspective in everyday life

# **Next Time**

**Date:** 14 November

**Instructor:** Richard

**Topic:** Project Execution Seminar II: Organization

**Outcome:** Arranging our work into manageable parts

**Preparation:** Think about the major points you want to make in your paper