

Essay 3 — Declamation Argument

I never allow myself to have an opinion when I don't know the other side's argument better than they do.

—Charlie Munger

Topics and Rhetorical Purposes

What is a problem, an event, a program, an issue, an idea that you are interested in, are affected by and/or have experience with, and think your audience should care about, too? Or, what is a current social, political, ethical, or moral problem or issue you're affected by and think others should be concerned about as well? How would you like to affect your audience's thinking and/or actions?

At the same time, how will you demonstrate that you are a virtuous arguer, one who, among other qualities, displays the virtues of good judgment, courage, open-mindedness, and accountability?

This essay's audience is now broader than the audience for our last essay, wherein you presented an argument to a limited, identifiable audience. Now you are writing an argument to a larger audience, more diverse audience. To varying degrees, you may already know this audience, or they may be strangers to you. Regardless, there will almost certainly be more variance regarding the audiences' individual experiences and perspectives regarding your topic and position.

Several General Task Options:

While thinking of potential topics, audiences, and purposes, you have several approaches available as options:

- **Suggested Approach:** You can write a speech to your Writing and Rhetoric classmates. This argument could attempt to accomplish several things: It could educate your audience about the issue, topic, or problem. It could also, then, attempt to persuade your audience to accept your position or point of view on the issue, topic, or problem. ("Here's what you need to know about the issue, and here's my stand.")
- You can write a speech to members of another class (e.g., your Moreau class), an organization, club, or any other gathering of individuals. This argument could attempt to accomplish several things: It could educate your audience about the issue, topic, or

problem. It could also, then, attempt to persuade your audience to accept your position or point of view on the issue, topic, or problem.

- You can write an Open Letter (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_letter) to specific, real people. This would be an argument intended not only for the recipients but also for anyone else who would happen to read the publication in which the open letter appears. Dr. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" is an example of this genre of argument: It is addressed to the seven clergymen, but Dr. King knew it would appear in other publications and be read by many other people.
- You can write a response in reply to another, published argument, one that appeared, for instance, in our campus newspaper, *The Observer* (in the "Viewpoint" (<http://ndsmcobserver.com/section/viewpoint/>) section). If you chose this option, remember that you're addressing your argument to the writer of the original argument, but you also assume others will read your argument as well. Also, if you chose this option, you will need to submit a copy of the original argument with your response.
- Be sure to specify, in the Situation Statement that will accompany your essay, which of the above choices you have selected.

Sources, Documentation, and Other Citation Issues:

- MLA documentation will be used, with a separate Works Cited page.
- Similar to your use of sources for the last essay, you will need to use and cite sources for this essay as well. This time, a minimum of **five different** outside sources are required. We'll discuss examples in class--how to cite, when to cite, why to cite, etc.
- Wikipedia is a great site to gather some preliminary, background information, but for most topics, it is not a good source for a college-level argument.
- In the majority of instances, a dictionary is not a valid source. Do not use a dictionary as a source without consulting with me first.
- I take the following pledge seriously: "As a member of the Notre Dame community, I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty." You should take it seriously, too.
- NB: It is plagiarism to recycle or reuse a paper written for another (current or previous) class. This includes an essay written in high school (e.g., your senior English research paper).

Other Relevant Criteria:

- Weight: 10 (0 to 120 points)
- Length: 8-9 pages, not including the Works Cited page (1" margins, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt font or its equivalent)
- Due Date: to be announced

- Highlighted Criteria: content (claims and evidence or data); organization; recognition of complexity of issue(s); recognition of (and response to) reader's beliefs, values, and needs; virtuous argument practices
- A situation statement is required: Your qualifications and role, audience, and ultimate goal identified at the top of the paper, single-spaced just above the title. Also include how your audience will see and/or receive your argument. (Will it be a speech to your classmates, for instance? Will it appear in The Observer (<http://ndsmcobserver.com/>) or another publication?)
- Can you use "I" in this argument? Absolutely.

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