Chapter Two
Responding to Arguments
Chapter 2 Responding to Arguments

Responding to Arguments

For the previous assignment, you analyzed the rhetorical strategies employed by a writer in an argument. This writer presented a perspective on a topic that many other writers have also written about. All arguments exist within broader conversations, with writers presenting their claims, reasons, and evidence in response to ideas and concepts from others. For this next assignment, you will participate in the conversation by responding to the content of the argument you analyzed in Chapter 1; you will present your own argument, responding directly to the ideas presented in the original text and moving the conversation forward.

To effectively respond to the argument, you will need to move beyond explaining how the argument works (which you did in Chapter 1) to engaging with what the writer says. Your essay should apply a response strategy that presents your views in relationship to the original article; you can agree, disagree, or agree and disagree simultaneously with its claim, reasons, and/or support. Additionally, in order to effectively respond, you will be required to incorporate two credible outside sources into your response.

When entering the conversation, you’ll need to be mindful of your audience. For the first assignment, you presented information without much concern for your own ethos because you were writing to a supportive audience. For this assignment, however, you will write to a neutral or undecided audience, which will require you to present yourself as fair and knowledgeable on multiple sides of the issue. Therefore, you will write a multisided argument, which requires your own argumentative claim, an awareness of alternative or opposing views, and fair and respectful responses to those views.

Response Strategies

If you agree with the original article, you’re in a position where you’ll need to move the conversation forward. Your response needs to distinguish itself from the original, providing your neutral audience a reason to read your paper as opposed to simply reading the original article. You might think of this as a “yes, and” response; your essay should build on the original argument, expanding or shifting the focus from the claim of the original to your own argumentative perspective. You might provide new kinds of evidence that the original author overlooked, provide a different perspective that develops an affirmative stance on the topic, or develop connections that the original writer did not.

If you disagree with the original article, you will need to identify exactly what you disagree with and why that disagreement is significant to the larger conversation. Your response needs to present your views in a manner that is appealing to your undecided/neutral audience. Therefore, you’ll need to be respectful to the original writer and his/her ideas as you articulate why those ideas are problematic and why your perspective should be considered instead. Remember that you will focus on why your own perspective is different than the original author’s, supporting your own counter-argument with clear and persuasive evidence.
Alternatively, you may agree with some parts of the original article yet disagree with others. In this case, your response needs to present both perspectives, articulating the relationship between the ideas with which you agree and disagree. In effect, this perspective automatically creates a multisided argument, allowing your audience to see your fairness and knowledge on different sides of the issue. Again, keep in mind that you are forwarding your own ideas about the topic itself, thereby entering the larger conversation around the issue.

Handling Alternative/Opposing Views

Whichever response strategy you employ, your paper will need to take into account views that oppose your own or are an alternative perspective on the issue. Handling alternative/opposing views demonstrates your fairness and knowledge to your neutral audience. You may provide brief summaries of views held by others in the larger conversation and/or you may quote or paraphrase views directly from the original article. Once you have fairly presented alternative/opposing views, you will need to respond to those views. You can refute central claims, rebut the evidentiary support, or concede to a strong idea. If you do concede, you may want to provide exceptions to your concession or emphasize other aspects of your own argument that outweigh the points that you have conceded.

As you develop your Response Essay into a 1300-2000 word (the equivalent of 4-6 typed, double-spaced pages, with standard 1-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman or Calibri font) document, keep in mind these standard essay conventions:

- provide a brief background about the conversation and the original article’s ideas.
- address a neutral or undecided audience in a fair and respectful manner.
- present a focused claim with reasons that respond directly to the ideas in the original argument.
- develop your claim and reasons by presenting and responding to ideas from the original argument.
- develop your argument by presenting alternative/opposing views and handling those views in an effective manner.

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, your Response Essay will meet the following objectives:

- argue a claim supported by reasons that a neutral audience will find persuasive
- present a multisided argument and apply rebuttal strategies
- identify weaknesses in an argument’s reasons, warrants, and evidence
- consider tone when responding to an argumentative text.
Beware of these common weak areas in Response Essays:

- The writer creates another rhetorical analysis rather than engaging the issue and creating her own argument.
- The writer does not consider his own ethos and uses offensive tone, language, or descriptions of the opposition.
- The writer shares from only one perspective without considering opposing/alternative views.
- The writer does not provide sufficient evidence to support her own claims.

Invention Activity: Analysis versus Response

In this activity, read the following paragraph from David Langley’s “‘Half-Criminals’ or Urban Athletes?” (pp. 106-107 in Writing Arguments, 6th ed.), which argues the claim: “cities need to change their unfair treatment of skateboarders.” Then, look at the differences between analyzing this paragraph, which is what you did in Unit 1, and responding to it, which is what you will do for Unit 2. Ask yourself these questions when looking at the analysis and the response:

- What are the main differences when writing a rhetorical analysis as opposed to writing a response?
- In what ways does the role of the writer differ when analyzing as opposed to responding?
- How can writers use a rhetorical analysis to help them generate ideas for the response?

Possibly because to the average eye most skateboarders look like misfits or delinquents, adults think of us as criminal types and associate our skateboards with antisocial behavior. But this view is unfair. City dwellers should recognize that skateboards are a natural reaction to the urban environment. If people are surrounded by cement, they are going to figure out a way to ride it. People’s different environments have always produced transportation and sports to suit the conditions: bikes, cars, skis, ice skates, boats, canoes, surfboards. If we live on snow, we are going to develop skis or snowshoes to move around. If we live in an environment that has flat panels of cement for ground with lots of curbs and stairs, we are going to invent an ingeniously designed flat board with wheels. Skateboards are as natural to cement as surfboards are to water or skis to snow. Moreover, the resulting sport is as healthful, graceful, and athletic. A fair assessment of skateboarders should respect our elegant, nonpolluting means of transportation and sport, and not consider us hoodlums.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhetorical Analysis Ideas</th>
<th>Response Ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rhetorical Purpose</strong></td>
<td><strong>Points of Agreement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langley’s purpose is to change his audience’s ways of defining and viewing skateboarders.</td>
<td>Skateboarders certainly are not “misfits” or “delinquents.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rhetorical Audience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Points of Disagreement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langley appears to address an audience of middle-class “adults” and “city dwellers”; these are the people who appear to be most concerned about skateboarders in city areas.</td>
<td>Skateboarding may not add to air pollution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Logos</strong></td>
<td><strong>Points of Disagreement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langley supports his reason that skateboarders are not “antisocial misfits” by showing how natural skateboarding is; the skateboard fits in naturally with the urban landscape of concrete.</td>
<td>There are other forms of “pollution” involved, including noise pollution (the scraping of the skateboard wheels) and damage to city streets and parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langley compares the skateboard to other modes of transportation (“bikes, cars, skis, ice skates,” etc.) that the audience will not object to.</td>
<td>Despite what Langley says, there is nothing “natural” about skateboarding; they do not fit into the environment as gracefully as snowshoes, skis, or bikes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langley hopes that his audience will accept his warrant that if people are doing something that is natural (skateboarding), then they should not be seen as “misfits.”</td>
<td>Skateboarders can be intimidating and dangerous for pedestrians; they are going too fast and are out of control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langley redefines skateboarding with qualities that the audience will not object to (“healthful, graceful, athletic” and “elegant, nonpolluting”)</td>
<td>Because of skateboarders, public areas of American cities become off limits to pedestrians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesis: Focusing my Response</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langley is focused on how people view skateboarders and is bothered by their negative stereotypes. I don’t think skateboarders are bad, but I still don’t like people riding skateboards on the streets/sidewalks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My concern is the fact that skateboards do not fit into public spaces in the city and do</td>
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</table>
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Ethos

Langley tries to find common ground by making comparisons with different modes of transportation.

Langley tries to connect to the audience’s values, especially by emphasizing that skateboarding is “nonpolluting.”

Langley is writing from an insider’s standpoint—he is a skateboarder himself—but he himself does not appear to be an “antisocial misfit.”

Pathos

Langley uses strong words to show how skateboarders are demonized (“misfits,” “delinquents,” and “hoodlums”).

Possible Response Strategies

If I agree and disagree with the original article, I will develop my agreement with Langley’s ideas about skateboarder stereotypes. I will also develop my disagreement with the impacts skateboarders make on the public environment and how they do not coexist well with other people in these public spaces.

If I disagree with the original article, I could concede the idea that skateboarders are not all “misfits” or “delinquents,” while asserting that they are still problematic for other people in the public environment/spaces.

Entering the Conversation

“Reasoning is itself a communal process, not just because we reason together but because we reason in response to others’ views.”

Unlike in Chapter 1, in which the rhetorical situation of the evaluation asks writers to remain objective and analyze and evaluate an argument, this chapter encourages you to “enter the conversation”—that is, you will need to directly engage with the issue, take a stand on it, and address and cite writers, researchers, readers, and anyone else who has a stake in the issue.

The extended metaphor of the “conversation” comes from a well-known twentieth-century rhetorical and literary scholar, Kenneth Burke:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while until you decide that

you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally’s assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.²

As this metaphor suggests, you are going to be entering the conversation connected to the issue you are interested in. For example, how about the conversations swirling around single-use plastics (e.g., bottles, bags, and straws) and their impact on the oceans? Even if you only hope to focus on advocacy groups that are interested in this issue, you’ll find that the conversation you are entering into will be very heated:

- **Our Last Straw** ([https://www.ourlaststraw.org](https://www.ourlaststraw.org)): A Washington D.C.-based group advocating for the removal of all single-use plastic straws from area restaurants, bars, hotels, and event spaces.
- **The Earth Day Network** ([https://www.earthday.org](https://www.earthday.org)): Similarly, this organization is spreading images and information about the amount of plastics in the environment.
- **Competitive Enterprise Institute** ([https://cei.org](https://cei.org)): This organization counters the environmental impact of single-use plastics, as an argument on their website makes clear: “Counterpoint: Plastic Bans Won't Solve Ocean Plastic Problem.”
- **International Bottled Water Association** ([bottledwater.org](http://bottledwater.org)): This organization, devoted to advancing the interests of the bottled water industry, affirms the industry’s commitment to the environment and claims that “bottled water's environmental footprint is the lowest of any packaged beverage.”
- **Center for Disability Rights** ([http://cdrnys.org](http://cdrnys.org)): This organization, an advocacy group for people with disabilities, is concerned that some able-bodied people are ignoring the necessity of straws for people with disabilities and chronic illnesses. For example, Erin Vallely in “Grasping at Straws: The Ableism of the Straw Ban,” writes: “The latest push to ban single-use plastic straws is well-intentioned but does not take into consideration that such straws are a tool disabled people rely on, rather than a frivolous, planet-killing item that can easily be done away with without impacting consumers.”

Regardless of what position you hold on single-use plastics, you’ll want to become knowledgeable about the arguments that make up the several sides or perspectives of this issue. By conducting research, and understanding the logos of the various positions, you will be able to better position your own argument about single-use plastics, shape your audience’s views, and respond to the other researchers, writers, or others who disagree with you.

Multisided Arguments & Undecided Audiences

As the Audience Continuum Chart below indicates, the audience for the Response Argument is neutral: they are neither strong advocates of your position nor are they antagonistic to what you have to say. They may be newcomers to the issue, or they may have good reasons to be ambivalent: they can appreciate the benefits, arguments, and values of multiple sides of the argument.

![Figure 1. Audience Continuum Chart]

When writing for these undecided audiences, you’ll want to try multisided argument strategies, in which you demonstrate understanding of the different sides and positions that constitute the issue. Returning to the rhetorical appeals from Chapter 1, you can enhance your ethos by appearing fair, objective, and knowledgeable; your readers may feel uncomfortable if you are “preaching to the choir”—that is, you are addressing them with a one-sided argument as if they already agree with your position. Additionally, audiences might feel resistant if you attack positions that aren’t your own.

For example, consider the proposal to tax snack foods with high sugar content. Imagine that you agree with this position because you have read research that shows how this type of tax helped reduce diabetes and obesity in the United Kingdom, Hungary, and Mexico. Yet, when writing for neutral audiences, you’ll still want to be tuned into other participants in the “snack tax” issue, including

- the National Association of Convenience Stores (https://www.convenience.org/), which will be concerned about the effects of higher taxes on their consumers
- SNAC International (Snacking, Nutrition, and Convenience [https://www.snacintl.org/]), which will provide counterarguments about the importance of these food items in smaller retail stores
- major corporations that produce high-sugar foods
In addition to these perspectives, you’ll want to consider the concerns of your neutral readers. What if they are made up by people who are consumers of sugary snacks? Or, if they hold negative assumptions of the “tax” label? Or if they see this as the government’s attempt to regulate dietary choices and don’t believe that’s something the government should do?

See the following chart as a reminder for how to shape different arguments depending upon the level of accord or disagreement of your intended audience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Argument</th>
<th>Type of Audience</th>
<th>Rhetorical Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monological (One-Sided)</td>
<td>Supportive audience, who is already in agreement with your position. You are “preaching to the choir.”</td>
<td>You can directly and explicitly announce your position, aware that your audience will already be in total agreement with you. You can choose evidence that is biased towards your readers’ perspective. You do not have to carefully consider opposing or different views from your own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multisided Argument</td>
<td>Neutral or undecided audience. You are trying to get your readers “off the fence” and commit to your position.</td>
<td>You’ll need to show your understanding of your own position as well as that of others who are making claims about the issue. Consider these other positions, either through summarizing, rebutting, and/or conceding points, and treat them respectfully. Include sources your audience will find reliable and fair. Provide evidence to counter alternative viewpoints and support your own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogical Argument</td>
<td>Skeptical or even resistant readers. You are attempting to find moments of common ground to open them up to the possibility of persuasion.</td>
<td>Though you have taken a stand on an issue, you are addressing an audience that you know disagrees with you; therefore, you are less likely to use direct approaches of persuasion. Instead, you might find yourself inviting your audience to the possibility of persuasion, perhaps by providing an intriguing story, asking questions, and trying to make yourself likeable and trustworthy for your readers. You may delay your claim as a way to keep your audience engaged in your points. You will need to choose your sources carefully, making sure that your resistant audience will find the sources credible and reliable. You might have to provide more research and reasons to support the</td>
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underlying assumptions than you might in other forms of argument. Tone will be especially important in a dialogic argument.

Figure 2. Different Types of Arguments

Multisided Argument Strategies

When crafting a multisided argument, you are paying attention to those alternative perspectives that your neutral readers might hold—or the authors’ arguments in the sources that you are using or responding to. Though you may be fearful that acknowledging these alternative views may hurt the chances of your own argument succeeding, remember that these strategies are also giving you the opportunity to identify weaknesses in your own argument and in those of the sources you are responding to. If you have a good grasp over the concerns that your readers will have, you can anticipate these concerns and then begin to plan for ways to rebut or concede to these concerns. It also shows readers/listeners that you have considered these viewpoints and are able to speak back to them. For example, if you are working on an argument attempting to get restaurant owners and customers to stop using single-use plastic straws, you’ll need to work through the concerns expressed by such groups as the Center for Disability Rights (please see above) and address these issues in your response.

In this section, three multisided argument strategies will be explored:

- Summarizing
- Rebutting
- Conceding

Summarizing

One initial step for responding to another writer’s position is to summarize it -- fairly and respectfully -- for your own readers. Using Margaret Woodworth’s “Rhetorical Précis” strategy, you can summarize keeping these four parts in mind:

- **The main point that the author is arguing**: highlight the author’s name and the title of the source, and then fit this statement into a sentence frame such as, “The writer argues that ________________.” Avoid using “about,” which will allow you only to describe the general issue, not the specific argument that the writer is making.

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3 These methods for summarizing a source come from Margaret K. Woodworth’s article, “The Rhetorical Précis,” *Rhetoric Review*, 7, 1988, 156-64.
• **Important sub-points and vital specifics**: list, in order of importance, the main reasons or sub-points that the author uses; only refer to specifics (statistics, examples, etc.) when they clarify the argument for your neutral readers.

• **The goals or main purpose of the author**: as you approach the end of your summary, consider a more general statement about what the author is attempting to do with their argument; what is their overall rhetorical purpose?

• **The intended audience of the source and the ways in which the author is interacting with those readers**: consider the intended readers for the argument and then think about tone and style: what is the relationship that the author is building with their readers? (Thinking back to the ethos and pathos appeals from the Introduction and Chapter 1 may be helpful for you here.)

Below is an example of these four parts of this summary strategy, which focuses on Alison Malmon’s “Creating a Culture of Caring,” a blog addressing college faculty and raising their awareness of mental health concerns in their students:

• **The main point that the author is arguing**: In “Creating a Culture of Caring” on the ACUE Community blog, Alison Malmon argues that professors and instructors are one of the most important intervention strategies for students struggling with depression.

• **Important sub-points and vital specifics**: Malmon summarizes the programs at four major universities that have been training faculty how to work with students who are experiencing serious mental-health issues.

• **The goals or main purpose of the author**: Malmon’s main goal is to raise awareness about the role that professors can take in intervening with the mental-health concerns of college students.

• **The intended audience of the source and the ways in which the author is interacting with those readers**: Malmon addresses an audience of college professionals with honest and proactive strategies.

Put together, this is how this small summary (88 words) reads:

In “Creating a Culture of Caring” on the ACUE Community blog, Alison Malmon argues that professors and instructors are one of the most important intervention strategies for students struggling with depression. Malmon summarizes the programs at four major universities that have been training faculty how to work with students who are
experiencing serious mental-health issues. Her main goal is to raise awareness about the role that professors can take in intervening with the mental-health concerns of college students. She addresses an audience of college professionals with honest and proactive strategies.

After you have summarized the author’s alternative position, you can then focus your readers on how your position differs: given your summary, what are the key ways in which you see the issue differently? As you’ll see in the two following sections, you can counter the author’s argument or position through rebuttal strategies and/or concession. For example, returning to Malmon’s “Creating a Culture of Caring,” perhaps you are arguing that a faculty member’s main role is to be an educator and a subject matter expert, not a counselor. You could then find ways to counter Malmon’s overall main claim, reasons, assumptions, and evidence. Or, you could concede to several of Malmon’s points, accepting that student mental health is a rising concern on U.S. campuses; yet, then after this concession, you would shift your readers back to your own main concerns.

**Rebuttal Strategies: Rebutting Reasons, Assumptions, and Evidence**

Thinking in terms of the Toulmin Model, you can rebut or criticize several aspects of alternative positions in order to enhance your credibility and make your position stronger:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Reasons</strong> (the “because” statements that support and justify the main claim(s))</th>
<th>What about the core features of the argument do you disagree with? Why should your neutral readers feel dissatisfied with or concerned about these supporting reasons? What reasons can you provide that your neutral readers will find more compelling?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumptions</strong> (the values or beliefs that the readers need to hold for the claim and reason to logically link together)</td>
<td>What are the assumptions from the alternative position that your neutral readers will struggle with? Clarify how the values and beliefs of your own position better accommodates the views of your readers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence</strong> (research, examples, and other types of information that support the claim and reasons or the assumptions)</td>
<td>What doubts should your neutral readers have about the use of research in the source you are rebutting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>Bias &amp; Fairness</em> – is the use of research obviously ideologically slanted? Are the evidence and statistics being used unfairly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>Currency</em> – is the research too dated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>Comprehensiveness</em> – is the evidence based on examples or samples that are too small?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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- **Credibility** – is the source author using evidence from sources who lack authority and credibility?
- **Ethics** – is the source author using evidence in ways that are attempting to mislead readers?

For example, if you were to rebut Michael Wilbon’s 2011 editorial, “College Athletes Deserve to be Paid,” you might start with one of his reasons: College football and basketball players at revenue-producing schools deserve to get paid because of the fact that they are the key elements in the money that is being made by the NCAA and the universities. Wilbon writes, “How could anybody stand on principal and argue against paying the people who make the events possible in the first place?”

Yet, you could rebut this reason by raising a concern: as Wilbon emphasizes revenue-generating schools, what happens to all of those men’s football and basketball programs across the country that do not make any money? Will what Wilborn proposes end up creating even more of an unequal playing field among college teams and conferences and, in the end, a less attractive -- and less lucrative -- sport?

Wilbon’s editorial is largely based on the assumptions of capitalism: he explicitly says that he is not writing about fairness but about how capitalism works: “That's right, football and men's basketball players get paid; lacrosse, field hockey, softball, baseball, soccer players get nothing. You know what that's called? Capitalism.” Here, you could focus on a critique of capitalism – it may work well in the professional sports world, but what role should it play in the university? Universities are, for the most part, institutions that are based on different economic values. Capitalism plays less of a role in the classroom, where popularity and consumption may be downplayed in favor of rigor, integrity, and excellence. Additionally, you may want to point out that Wilbon’s assumptions may have unintended consequences, such as resentment against elite athletes at a university, more of an imbalance between male and female athletics, and less of a feeling of community among all student athletes.

Two more obvious examples of rebuttal appear in Kitty Richards and Joseph E. Stiglitz’s *New York Times* editorial, “Doesn’t Feel Like a Recession? You Should Be Paying More in Taxes,” published on September 3, 2020. This editorial is directed toward the affluent, highly educated, and liberal readers of the *New York Times*, and it reminds these readers that they probably have not suffered financially from the recession caused by the coronavirus epidemic; therefore, they should be willing to pay higher taxes to help support those who have suffered.

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In both cases, you will see what Richards and Stiglitz do: They start off each paragraph voicing a concern that readers or others invested in this issue might have with this increase in taxes. Then, they rebut these perspectives either with statistics (Rebuttal #1) or with explanation (Rebuttal #2).

**Rebuttal #1:**

Some worry that state residents and businesses can’t afford a tax increase during the pandemic, but the truth is that many can, and it’s easy to target them through progressive taxation. Tens of millions of workers have lost their jobs since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, but almost half of Americans report that their household has not lost any employment income at all, according to Census Bureau data. That figure jumps to two-thirds for households bringing home more than $200,000 per year.

**Rebuttal #2:**

Some will argue that states can’t raise taxes by themselves because of interstate competition, but economic evidence shows that even in boom times progressive state tax increases don’t harm state economies or lead rich people to flee. Now, with education and public health on the chopping block without higher taxes, moving to a low-tax, low-services state is likely to be still less appealing, even for the wealthy: States that institute ruthless cutbacks will prove to be far less attractive places to live.

**Concessions**

Another strategy that you have in your “multisided argument toolbox” is the concession. In this case, you acknowledge the strength of an alternative argument, one that you don’t think you can ethically and adequately rebut. Instead of rebutting it, therefore, you concede the point and then quickly shift your readers back to the overall strengths of your argument and to the ways in which your reasons benefit them. In other words, despite the strength of this one part of the alternative viewpoint, you argue that your own view is still stronger for the reasons you explain to your readers.

Thinking back to the argument that single-use plastic straws should be banned, you may need to acknowledge that these straws will no longer be available to those with disabilities. That being said, you would want to shift your readers back to your own argument focused on the environment and single-use plastics yet in ways that are sensitive to your readers’ values and needs: you could discuss how the environmental impact of single-use plastics will also have detrimental effects on people with disabilities.
When planning for this concession strategy, you might want to imagine that you are in a dialogue with readers who are questioning you. For example, if we were to consider the environmental issue of carbon tax, here’s what this imagined dialogue might look like:

Writer’s Claim: The United States and other developed economies need to take the lead and impose a significant carbon tax on industries that still rely on fossil fuels.

Neutral Reader’s Response: But, won’t that increase the costs for driving and transporting goods across the United States?

Writer’s Concession: Yes, carbon taxes will be eventually felt by consumers. Yet, this is a necessary part of our efforts to make consumers less reliant on fossil fuels. We want to encourage taxpayers to consider other alternatives.

**Activity: Student Examples**

Examine the Student Examples at the end of this chapter. In the margins, identify the different multisided argument strategies that the students are using and how they function within the larger argument.

**Invention Activity: Play the Believing and Doubting Game**

Even though you have already completed a thorough rhetorical evaluation/analysis of the argument, you have not yet been asked to contemplate your own thoughts on it. What follows here is a dialectic activity, the Believing/Doubting Game, which is designed to facilitate your own critical engagement with the issue at the heart of the argument.

The Believing/Doubting Game is a reading and writing strategy that asks you to see the text your are examining from two perspectives: first, that of the author, in which you attempt to see the writing -- and the world -- as sympathetically as possible; and second, that of the critic, in which you are attempting to find concerns, doubts, problems, and contradictions.
Here is how Peter Elbow, in his "The Believing Game—Methodological Believing,"5 has described these two positions:

**The believing game** is the disciplined practice of trying to be as welcoming or accepting as possible to every idea we encounter: not just listening to views different from our own and holding back from arguing with them; not just trying to restate them without bias; but actually trying to believe them. We are using believing as a tool to scrutinize and test. But instead of scrutinizing fashionable or widely accepted ideas for hidden flaws, the believing game asks us to scrutinize unfashionable or even repellent ideas for hidden virtues. Often we cannot see what's good in someone else's idea (or in our own!) till we work at believing it. When an idea goes against current assumptions and beliefs—or if it seems alien, dangerous, or poorly formulated—we often cannot see any merit in it.

**The doubting game** represents the kind of thinking most widely honored and taught in our culture. It’s sometimes called “critical thinking.” It’s the disciplined practice of trying to be as skeptical and analytic as possible with every idea we encounter. By trying hard to doubt ideas, we can discover hidden contradictions, bad reasoning, or other weaknesses in them—especially in the case of ideas that seem true or attractive. We are using doubting as a tool in order to scrutinize and test.

A. Individual Work: Play the “Believing and Doubting Game” for the text you analyzed in Chapter 1. Then, create either an idea map or written paragraphs in response.

B. Small Group Work (as directed by your instructor):

1. Share your “Believing and Doubting” idea maps/paragraphs.
2. As a group, identify ideas that group members see in a “believing” manner: What points showed up in the believing game for more than one group member? What points were only mentioned once? Even if you didn’t write about an idea yourself, can you see it in a “believing” manner?
3. As a group, identify ideas that group members see in a “doubting” manner: What points showed up in the doubting game for more than one group member? What points were only mentioned once? Even if you didn’t write about an idea yourself, can you see it in a “doubting” manner?

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4. What ideas did group members see differently? (Perhaps someone can see it in a “believing” manner while someone else sees it in a “doubting” manner.) Explore these different perspectives. Politely challenge or complicate each others’ ideas, remembering that practicing a respectful tone is a crucial aspect of this assignment.

5. How can these believing and doubting perspectives lead to framing a reasonable response? With which ideas do you agree? Disagree? What ideas can you concede? Which ideas can you rebut?

**Invention Activity: Developing Your Response Ideas**

Now that you have the “big picture” of your topic in mind, you can begin to situate yourself as a writer in the argument. Choose a paragraph from the original text that you analyzed in Unit 1 and fill in the chart below with your own ideas about the content of that paragraph. If you need a model, see “Analysis Versus Response” in the preceding pages. You may find it useful to repeat this activity for each body paragraph of the original article.

- **Points of Agreement**

- **Points of Disagreement**

- **Synthesis: Focusing my Response**

- **Possible Response Strategies**
Drafting Activity: Summarizing and Handling Opposing/Alternative Views

In a brief paragraph, fairly and accurately summarize one of the opposing/alternative views that you have identified. Remember to use a professional tone and to not misrepresent this perspective.

In another brief paragraph, draft a response to the above viewpoint. Remember that you’ll need to rebut the viewpoint without offending someone who holds that view. Make sure to use a professional and appropriate tone and craft your response for an undecided reader.

Drafting Activity: Developing Your Logos

Answer the questions below to develop your own response claim, reasons, and warrants.

**What is your main claim in response to the original argument within the text?** Consider your Synthesis and Response Strategies from the “Developing Your Response Ideas” Activity. How are your ideas different from the original argument? What perspective differentiates you within the larger conversation? Articulate your position in 1–3 sentences to draft a working thesis.

**What key reasons support your main claim?** What key responses to the original argument will the audience need to understand in order to see your point of view? What other ideas would help your audience see the issue from your perspective? What assumptions/warrants will these reasons rely upon? Will you need to develop support for those assumptions/warrants?

**What alternative/opposing views should you consider?** What points would your audience raise in response to your reasons? What other perspectives have you considered and refuted when developing your own points? How might the writer of the original article respond to your ideas?
Research Information: Incorporating Sources—The Source Sandwich

Evidence is an important component of your argument’s logos, ethos, and pathos. Evidence is necessary to support your reasoning, demonstrate your awareness of others’ ideas, and connect your audience’s values to your perspective. Therefore, you need to appropriately incorporate sources in a rhetorically effective manner by attributing authorship of ideas, quoting accurately, and connecting the source content to your own points. (Remember, too, that you’re required to include at least two credible outside sources for your response.) The concept of the “Source Sandwich” is one strategy to help you incorporate sources. The “Source Sandwich” metaphor is composed of three parts: the top slice (of bread), the filling of the sandwich, and the bottom slice.

The Top Slice:

The first time you use a source, you should introduce it to your reader with an introductory lead-in statement. This statement should present the author’s full name, their credentials, and the full title of the source.

Example:
In the textbook *Writing Arguments*, authors and composition and rhetoric scholars John Ramage, John Bean, and June Johnson state: “Because undecided audiences are like jurors weighing all sides of an issue, they distrust one-sided arguments that caricature other views. Generally the best strategy for appealing to undecided audiences is the classical argument” (102).

Once a source has been introduced, the next time you use it, you do not need a full introduction, but you still need to make clear that the information is coming from that outside source. To do this, you can use an attributive tag. Keep in mind, too, that you should never refer to an author solely by first name. The first time you introduce a source, use the author’s full name; after that, use the author’s last name.

Some Templates for Attributive Tags

- X states, “______________________.”
- According to X, “______________________.”
- X writes, “______________________.”
- In her editorial, ______________________________, X maintains that ________________________.
- X argues that ________________________.
In X's view, “____________.”

**Sandwich Filling:**

Once you have introduced and/or made clear the source of information, you can present the information as a paraphrase, a summary, or a direct quote. A direct quotation needs to be exactly word-for-word from the source; you must also use quotation marks around the source text, with the last quotation mark before the parenthetical citation. Put the sentence punctuation after the parenthetical citation. (Note: the punctuation and formatting for block quotes is slightly different).

*Example:*

In the textbook *Writing Arguments*, authors John Ramage, John Bean, and June Johnson state: “Because undecided audiences are like jurors weighing all sides of an issue, they distrust one-sided arguments that caricature other views. Generally the best strategy for appealing to undecided audiences is the classical argument” (102).

**The Bottom Slice:**

To completely incorporate the idea from the source, you need to include an explanation of what the quote means, as well as how the source information relates to your own ideas and what implications it has for your argument. These explanations are essential to fully develop your points.

**Templates for Explaining Quotations**

- Basically, X is warning that the proposed solution will only make the problem worse.
- In other words, X believes ________________.
- In making this comment, X urges us to ________________.
- X is corroborating the age-old adage that ________________.
- X’s point is that ________________.
- The essence of X’s argument is that ________________.
- Essentially, X is saying that ________________.
- This illustrates my point that ________________.
- The evidence that X provides here contradicts Y’s claim that ________________.
Drafting: Organizing Your Response

Your response includes three sections: the introduction, body, and conclusion. Each of these sections can, and likely should, be made up of many different paragraphs. The outline below lists several different functions each section might perform. Remember, the outline below simply provides the larger functions of different sections within a response; it is not a hard-and-fast template for how to write an effective response essay. We encourage you to continue to experiment with different organizational approaches as you build your argument.

**Introduction** (in one or more paragraphs)

- Provide relevant background information
- Interest and engage your readers in the issue (e.g., explain why the issue is controversial, why it might impact them, etc.)
- Inform your readers whom you are responding to; summarize this previous position fairly, accurately, and respectfully
- Tell your readers your explicit purpose and main claim and reasons
- Provide a “blueprint” statement for what your readers should expect

**Body**

Provide your position

- Organize according to your main reasons on the issue
- Provide and explain evidence
- Make connections to your readers
- Enhance your ethos

Summarize alternative or opposing views

- Anticipate objections from your readers or from others who have a stake in the issue
- Fairly summarize views that are different from yours

Rebut or concede to these alternative or opposing views

- Question or challenge the alternative reasons, use of evidence, or assumptions
- Question the validity and credibility of the opposing research, when appropriate
- Concede to opposing points that are strong and reasonable, if necessary
Conclusion

- Summarize your overall main argument
- Enhance your own credibility
- Leave your audience with a strong impression of yourself as a writer
- Encourage your readers to act

Revision Activity: Topic Sentences

When revising an early or discovery draft, one of the quickest strategies to enhance your draft is to focus on your topic sentences—typically, these will be the first sentences of body paragraphs.

You can use topic sentences

- To remind your readers what your overall main claim is
- To focus your readers on your reason or sub-point
- To state the purpose of the paragraph

Take a look at this paragraph, which is from a response argument to Marty Nemko’s 2014 “Legalize Pot? You Must Be High.”

In Nemko’s article, he makes a point about marijuana use and the workplace. According to Nemko, “Legalize pot and you have a workforce that is worth not more, but less—more likely to suffer from the poor memory, reduced motivation and emotional problems cited above.” I disagree with this completely. If marijuana is legalized more, it will be important for companies to treat marijuana use similar to how it treats alcohol. You’re not allowed to drink on the job and get away with it, right? Companies will need to expand their current policies. Nemko also brings up a story about workers who “pull such pranks as deliberately dropping a bolt into a car’s axle so that, when driven, the car would rattle.” I disagree with this. There are going to be bored workers who are also trying to entertain themselves by doing stupid stuff like this. Marijuana doesn’t have to be involved.

Offer this writer some revision advice:

- What main response points are they trying to make in this paragraph?
• What is their main reason to support their overall claim?
• How could they revise their topic sentence to focus their readers on this claim and reason?

Then, consider your own draft and revise several of the topic sentences in order to better reflect the goals above.

**Response Workshop: Self-Evaluation Revision Rubric**

Carefully reread your response draft and then, considering the questions in the rubric below, evaluate yourself. When you are finished, write up a brief revision plan keeping the rubric criteria and questions in mind.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus/Purpose</strong></td>
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<td>In your response, do you identify the original article and its author?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you focus on a clear main claim?</td>
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<td>Do you present a multisided argument?</td>
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<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>What are your reasons for supporting the main claim?</td>
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<td>What types of evidence do you use?</td>
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<td>What alternative/opposing views do you consider?</td>
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<td>Do you offer enough of your own explanation and interpretation of your sources?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you present your position in relationship to the original argument and/or the larger conversation in an appropriate place given your audience and purpose?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you use easy-to-follow transitions that guide your readers?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

96
Does each paragraph present a focused point?

Are your reasons presented in a logical manner?

Are shifts within paragraphs made using internal transitions?

Are your sources (summaries, paraphrases, and direct quotes) integrated effectively?

**Tone/Style**

Is your tone appropriate for a neutral/undecided audience?

Are opposing views presented and rebutted respectfully?

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**Response Essay Workshop: Peer Scavenger Hunt**

Carefully read your partner’s draft and then, either on a hard copy or an electronic version of the draft, mark it up with these following questions in mind:

1. Underline the writer’s main claim in the paper. (Remember, the main claim might not be at the end of the first paragraph.)
2. Find the response strategy your partner is using and mark it: is your partner agreeing, disagreeing, or agreeing and disagreeing simultaneously?
3. Find and number every reason that supports the main claim.
4. For each numbered reason, put brackets around your partner’s use of evidence to support those reasons. (You can highlight if you are working on an electronic draft.)
5. Find a moment where your partner uses alternative or opposing views effectively and mark this spot in the draft.
6. For this moment of alternative or opposing views, indicate how your partner responds to these views (rebut, refute, concede)?
7. Find an especially good moment of tone. Then, find an example of tone that is inappropriate for a neutral/undecided audience. Where might the tone become combative, sarcastic, dismissive, aggressive, offensive, or insensitive?
8. Find a moment where your partner effectively integrates a secondary source and uses, possibly, the "quote sandwich." Find a moment where your partner could enhance their integration of secondary sources.

9. Write down two overall strengths that you see in your partner’s draft.

10. Write down one overall revision suggestion.

**Revision Activity: Direct Quote Workshop**

Direct quotations are most effective in these four circumstances:

1. When writers need testimony from an authority
2. When you want to reproduce a source’s voice, particularly if the language is striking or memorable
3. When you intend to analyze or critique the quotation
4. When the flavor and language of testimonial evidence is important

Using this information, follow the workshop steps below to check your own use of direct quotes:

1. Label each quotation with corresponding number (1-4) from the circumstances listed above. a. If the quotation use does not match one of these 4 points, ask yourself why the quotation is necessary. b. If your paragraphs do not contain any quotations, try to identify an appropriate place where one might be useful in developing the point, again, paying attention to the numbered reasons above. c. Reflect on the numbers you listed: are you using quotations largely in the same ways throughout your essay? Do you need to vary how you use quotations?

2. At the end of each paragraph, and in reflection of your peers’ feedback from workshop, consider these final questions:
   - Where might more evidence be necessary to persuasively make your point?
   - How might you use quotes more effectively?
   - Where should you explain evidence more thoroughly or convincingly?
   - How can you use attributive tags more rhetorically?
Chapter 2 Responding to Arguments

Designing Arguments

Student Example

Carter Jones wrote this response in Molly Burt’s ENGL 200 class.

Counterargument to Grade Inflation

Society has altered education in many ways over time, including technology, curriculum, and funding. These adjustments and advances have had significant impacts on how education affects students, their subsequent careers, and society at large. However, the way in which we evaluate students, grading, has not altered much since its foundation. The letter grades that students received in 1918 are the same types of grades that students receive in 2018—to an extent. Many researchers claim that grades have been changing in the form of grade inflation—an increase in average grade point average of students over time without an increase in actual student achievement. Opponents of grade inflation such as George C. Leef (the director of research at the John W. Pope Center for Higher Education Policy) contend that the phenomenon hurts students, professors, and the entire education system. However, there is clear indication that grade inflation is not harmful to our education system because its statistics are substantially flawed, its prevalence and impacts are limited, and the grading system itself is more detrimental to students.

In his article “Grade Inflation Eats Away at the Meaning of College,” Leef contends that grade inflation harms students by devaluing grades overall and allowing them to believe that they are more competent than in reality. Primarily, grade inflation tends to occur because of administrative pressures on faculty. Leef claims that “low grades can delay student graduation”
thus “undermining state funding and faculty salaries” at universities (par. 8). Therefore, professors must allow for students to graduate by enhancing their scores. Additionally, Leef argues that students do not deserve the grades they are receiving because their study time has decreased. Students spent “only about two thirds as much time [in 2010] as they did some fifty years ago,” which is “hardly consistent with the notion that students today are really earning all those A grades” (par. 20). Because students do not utilize the equivalent amount of time on studying for exams, they are not be achieving as much as past generations. As a result, higher grade point averages for students are undeserved, according to Leef. He makes meritorious points against grade inflation, and it is certainly understandable why he and other educational researchers are concerned by supposed increases in grade inflation. However, there are multiple flaws with his argument, including statistical discrepancies.

Leef and other researchers have contended that grade inflation is an issue, yet their statistical methods may be flawed. According to Evangeleen Pattison, a research fellow at the National Science Foundation and a graduate student in the department of sociology at the University of Texas, multiple studies have highlighted how grade inflation is a nonissue (e.g., Kohn). Unlike sources supporting grade inflation, these emphasize “the necessity of using representative, transcript-based data” (Pattison et al. 2013). Likewise, per Nathan R. Kuncel, an assistant Professor of Industrial and Organizational Psychology at the University of Illinois, student-reported results distort the data “with nearly a third of college students reporting inflated estimates of their grades” (Kuncel et al. 2005). Utilizing self-reported data harbors numerous possibilities for response bias. Primarily, some students might feel embarrassed about sharing inadequate grades with others. As a result, studies contending that grade inflation is an ever-increasing problem overstate the extent of the inflation, meaning that its potential harms are drastically limited. Additionally, there are other statistical limitations that hamper these studies’ conclusions. “Low response rates or biased samples” of students can contribute to “compressed distributions of grades or lead to inflated estimates of GPA” (Pattison et al.). Low response rates lead to a bias in the results because only certain types of students, such as highly successful ones that might want their grades to be known, would answer the survey. The issue of grade inflation has its potential impacts limited by significant statistical errors. In conjunction with data-collection methods, grade inflation’s overall prevalence is actually heavily limited.

Grade inflation is not as pervasive as Leef and others arguing against it claim. In fact, the opposite phenomenon could be occurring. Pattison et al. analyzed whether average education scores have increased and what economic outcomes correlated. While average high school GPA has increased from 1972 to 1992, “the mean GPA among students who attend a 4-year college dropped gradually” as well as “students who attend a selective 4-year college” (Pattison et al.). This significant decline contradicts findings that grades have been increasing for decades on end for every level of education. Additionally, the economics results from grades have not shifted at 4-year colleges. Grades there are “consistently associated with occupational prestige” and the small decrease in earnings is not “statistically significant evidence of attenuation in [their] signaling power” (Pattison et al.). Thus, the impact of mean grade adjustments has not had a substantial impact on students’ economic outcomes. Grade inflation is clearly not prevalent as
Leef and others say; moreover, even if it were, it would not have an impact on student occupation. Finally, the potential impacts of grade inflation do not matter when compared to the value of grades in general.

Grading used as a tool for evaluation is highly flawed and leads to many detrimental effects that outweigh those of grade inflation. While high grades still correlate with occupational attainment, they are not the direct cause. Mark Oppenheimer contends that “GPA was seventh out of eight factors employers considered in hiring” because there is “‘a clamor’ from employers ‘for something more meaningful’ than the traditional transcript” (Oppenheimer). While Leef asserts that employers disregard grades because of grade inflation, it is clear that grades themselves are to blame. Employers ignore high GPAs because students cannot be distinguished primarily by their objective performance. Therefore, as Alfie Kohn (American author and lecturer in education) writes in the Chronicle of Higher Education, we must challenge the view that grades are the most correct and ethical method to evaluate academic achievement. The idea that there is an objective way of analyzing student success “reflects a simplistic and outdated view of knowledge and of learning” that restricts our perspective to one of “inputs and outputs, incentives, resource distribution, and compensation” (Kohn). Researchers such as Leef who argue against grade inflation have a narrow, pre-disposed belief that grades are ultimately the most effective tool for assessing student accomplishment. To fully understand the significance of student achievement and how to evaluate it, our minds must transcend the tunnel vision that grade inflation discussions create. Most importantly, it is not the professors’ primary job to sort out students for the workforce. Instead of “[rating] students like blenders for the convenience of corporations” educators should be offering “feedback that will help students learn more skillfully and enthusiastically” (Kohn). In essence, professors should not be primarily evaluating students on the basis of grades nor test scores; students should be subjected to qualitative feedback that opens their minds to specific strengths and weaknesses. Scores say nothing about the quality of a student’s learning or effort. A student could spend arduous hours each day studying hard for a concept they want to master. Another student may spend all night partying with his friends and then cramming the studying in at the last minute. While both might receive the same exam score, which one is the better student, the better learner? Grades do not reflect what each student deserves, and they never will, because some students can give their best effort towards a class while others disregard any struggle while still receiving the same unwarranted grade. Thus, the grading system exponentially increases student inequality and destroys real effort in learning, undermining the importance of grade inflation.

While grade inflation has been a widespread topic of discussion among educational researchers, there are statistical flaws in studies arguing against it, its effects and extent among university institutions are significantly limited, and the grading system itself has much more detrimental impacts. In order to alter education for the better, we must not necessarily analyze what grades students are getting on average, but why they are getting grades at all, and how we should better evaluate their successes and failures.
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Works Cited


Student Example

Mary Winzer wrote this response in Maia Carlson’s ENGL 200 class.

Response to “The Myth of Police Reform”

Michael Brown. Walter Scott. Alton Sterling. Tony Robinson. Eric Garner. Anthony Hill. How many of these names spark some recognition? Or, at this point, do the victims of police brutality all blur together, lost in an ongoing stream of case after case? There is no question that, in recent years, police conduct and credibility has become a controversial theme in most news outlets and across social media platforms. The typical result of outrage is to point fingers at the police directly involved in such incidents, but while officers using unnecessary amounts of force should see consequences, there are deeper roots to this issue that run beneath the surface. In Ta-Nehisi Coates’ article, “The Myth of Police Reform,” published in The Atlantic on April 15, 2015, Coates claims that the real issue is that people believe police are always well-equipped when in fact their skillset only effectively facilitates the use of force, yet we still send them in to de-escalate problems they may not be trained to understand. In response, I agree with Coates’ claim that police should not be deployed to solve every situation and that we, as a society, place
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too much overall trust in our criminal justice system, but I disagree with Coates’ points that body cameras and direct officer accountability are not steps in the right direction.

Coates’ primary overarching claim in his article is that police officers are not equipped to appropriately handle every situation they are sent to fix because they are not trained in all the intricacies of social work required to effectively de-escalate issues such as homelessness, drug abuse, mental illness, etc.—a point in which I wholeheartedly agree. Before I wrote my full support into this claim, though, I felt obligated to discuss it with someone in my life who could offer insight into the training practices of police departments. My father, Ken Winzer, who was a police officer for the Kansas City, Kansas Police Department for 27 years, explained his experiences to me in a personal phone interview. An important thing to note is that police departments across the country vary greatly, but Winzer insisted that extended training was becoming “the trendy thing right now in law enforcement”—that is, many departments were suddenly beginning to employ it before he retired about three years ago. He cited something called the Critical Incident Training (CIT) Program that was put in place to better help officers understand issues such as homelessness, drug addiction, and mental illness, but he also mentioned that while this was an effective program, he did not believe, from a police officer’s standpoint, that he or his colleagues could always offer the best solutions to certain situations—and his department agreed. The KCK police department hired actual social workers to ride with police officers on call in order to provide a second skill set. While the profession requires a certain level of empathy, Winzer stated that these additions to the team were invaluable in de-escalating confrontations. “Sometimes people just need someone to talk to,” he said. “Sometimes arresting them will just make the situation worse.” In other words, if officers were to answer a call regarding someone with one of the complications discussed above, and these officers had the agency to arrest and even incarcerate said individuals, but lacked the understanding to effectively approach the situation from a place of social insight, no problem is actually solved. Winzer, at the end of our discussion, made sure to emphasize that even without such programs and employment practices, police departments still tell their officers that they are everything—social workers, law enforcers, meter maids... They must wear many different hats in order to do their jobs effectively. But while many officers and citizens may believe that they are trained in a wide range of skills and are capable of approaching a whole range of situations with the required amounts of both empathy and force, I would still counter with Coates’ idea that this mindset is actually a sign of a concerning problem in the criminal justice system. No matter how much training or experience is currently being given to officers, there are situations that they should simply not be present in at all—and yet we keep sending them.

Last year in Oklahoma City, 35-year-old Magdiel Sanchez was shot and killed at his own home by police officers. Sanchez was deaf, as well as developmentally disabled, and the officers who showed up because Sanchez’s father was allegedly involved in a hit-and-run gave only verbal commands for Sanchez to put down the pipe he held to ward off dogs before opening fire (Perry). Situations like this happen far too often—people with disabilities or impairments being injured or killed by law enforcement. This sort of pattern reinforces the criminalization of certain behaviors that should absolutely not be criminalized. Another example cited in David Perry’s
article “4 Disabled People Dead in Another Week of Police Brutality,” published in *The Nation*, is Conner Leibel, an autistic teenager walking by himself in Buckeye, Arizona while stimming with a length of string who was tackled by officers and sustained multiple injuries. Stimming should certainly not be criminalized behavior, and noncompliance should not be repeatedly used as an excuse for violent escalation in these encounters. Programs like Critical Incident Training certainly have their place in encouraging education amongst those with authority, but the root issue is that they run on the idea that disabilities/impairments themselves are the problems rather than extreme escalation. Programs and registries amongst departments are not enough; what Coates is calling for is the reframing of policework. He encourages the idea that police should simply by removed from as many situations as possible, and while anyone could easily counter that this solution is just a setup for more risk of crime and unsafety in communities, I would argue that the biggest concern of any community should be ensuring that everyone has equal civil rights. The power the criminal justice holds now has continuously displayed trends of being misused, of targeting certain demographics. A study conducted by Stanford University analyzing traffic stops in major North Carolina cities showed that police were repeatedly more likely to search black and Hispanic (mostly from lower socio-economic backgrounds) motorists with a lower threshold of suspicion than they exercised with white drivers, while those searches yielded less discover of illegal drugs or weapons than when they searched white drivers’ vehicles. Coates’ claim is that the criminal justice system, as it exists now, holds power over these marginalized communities rather than authority, or control with consent, and the data exemplifies this. Not everyone is treated equally by law enforcement, and that should be more than enough reason to start considering ways to adjust the system overall. Removing officers from certain situations could easily result in a safer, more equitable criminal justice system.

Coates points out towards the end of “The Myth of Police Reform” that body cameras are a flawed solution, that they are the “least divisive and least invasive step” towards reform. He believes that they are tool to avoid a deeper conversation about the major flaws of the criminal justice system, and while I agree that body cameras are absolutely not a panacea, I would disagree with Coates that they are not an important step in the right direction because I believe the accountability they provide is a step towards regulating excessive uses of force in criminal situations. With the swaths of misconduct amongst law enforcement confrontations, body cameras are a typically reliable source of evidence when these issues are brought to light. Being able to have that insight at what dangerous escalation looks like is important not only to raise awareness amongst officers and citizens alike, but it provides a constant reminder of accountability which is, ultimately, a democratic idea. Video evidence of an encounter between an officer and 15-year-old Jordan Edwards in Balch Springs, Texas provided proof that was inconsistent with the officer’s initial statement. The officer was then fired and faced with murder charges (Wiley). That kind of accountability is invaluable to those seeking justice. It curbs misconduct amongst officers who may have unjustified prejudices that corrupt their work decision. It pushes an unsafe system in a safer direction. While police departments, at the moment, lack comprehensive guidance for proper structured use of such recording devices, this tool has the capacity to be employed nationwide and encourage more understanding of proper law enforcement practices, instead of further cultivating a culture that typically likes to shove every problem into the hands of the criminal justice system without looking further into which
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situations should really be under its power as opposed to, as Coates puts it, “the authority of other branches of civil society.”

Ultimately, while I disagree with Coates’ points about the ineffectiveness of body cameras and similar accountability tactics, I agree completely with his overall claim, and believe his call for a more restrained criminal justice system that exercises authority over its citizens rather than power is justified. In order to ensure everyone, no matter than physical or mental ability, socio-economic status, or race, is treated with equal rights in criminal situations, the reform should not begin and end with the police themselves, but should rather run deep into the roots of unjust practices in the criminal justice system as a whole.

Works Cited


Winzer, Ken. Personal interview. 23 September 2018.

Student Example

Nate Williams wrote this response argument in Wendy Matlock’s ENGL 200 class. It provides a good example of an agree-with-a-difference claim.

Four Score, and Every Hundred Years Ago

Since the year 1720, the world has experienced a pattern of pandemics that have spiked almost exactly one-hundred years apart from each other. The last bubonic plague outbreak in the 1720s, the cholera outbreak of the 1820s, the Influenza Pandemic of 1918, and now, the
Chapter 2 Responding to Arguments

Coronavirus (or COVID-19) Pandemic of 2020. The rather consistent, one-hundred-year cycle of the outbreaks is not the only pattern that can be found when analyzing the history of these pandemics. In the article “Study Ties Racial Disparity’s Impacts on 1918 Pandemic to Similar Effects of COVID-19,” Michael E. Newman of Johns Hopkins University explains the effect that influenza had on the world over a century ago. More importantly, Newman addresses the lesser known history of the pandemic and how it disproportionately affected “Black Americans” due to their lower economic status and lack of access to proper healthcare (para. 2). Today in the U.S. similar disparities are being shown within the Black and African American communities with COVID-19. Newman argues that knowledge of history is crucial when dealing with the current pandemic we are living in and will allow us to create educated plans for dealing with COVID-19 moving forward. Knowledge of the history of past pandemics can be beneficial in understanding how to deal with some social and economic issues caused by COVID-19; however, it is important to trust medical professionals and the research they are doing in order to learn how to control the spread of this pandemic.

There are many ways in which analyzing historical pandemics, like the Spanish Flu of 1918, can help build our understanding of the current effects of COVID-19. One such effect, as Newman explains in his article, is the disproportionate impact that both viruses have on “communities of color” (para. 2). It would be ignorant to assume that both of these viruses are able to tell the skin color of the individual it may infect. Instead, this information reveals the disadvantages that Black Americans still face today, such as lacking access to quality health care, and many being trapped in unfavorable living conditions. The virus itself has little to do with this situation and is simply exposing the history of discrimination and inequality that has forced many people of color into areas of poverty and unequal opportunity. By studying the historical connections between the two viruses and the effect they have on Black Americans, a strong foundation can be established for creating future strategies for relieving such disparities for disadvantaged groups, even past when COVID-19 is able to be controlled. This is just one example of how an understanding of historical pandemics can aide our communities during the current Coronavirus Pandemic.

Gaining an understanding of past pandemics not only provides insight into handling social issues but also some of the economic downturn that has occurred due to COVID-19 shutdowns. In his article “Here’s One ‘Remarkable’ Difference Between COVID-19 and the 1918 Spanish Flu,” Market Watch personal-finance editor and columnist Quentin Fottrell presents the many similarities that the two pandemics share, as well as how they differ. Ultimately, Fottrell is analyzing the negative impact that both pandemics have had on the economy and how utilizing strategies from the 1918 Spanish Flu can help alleviate the economic stress. In the article, Fottrell explains how “during the 1918 flu, cities that implemented non-pharmaceutical interventions” ended up having “better economic outcomes” over time (para. 5). One such intervention being social-distancing, which is being implemented in our current pandemic strategy. Along with social-distancing, mask wearing has now become the norm when going out into the public. These are both examples of non-pharmaceutical controls that slow the spread of the Coronavirus that have increased the safety and confidence of consumers when they need to leave their homes, ultimately allowing many businesses to keep their doors open for the
time being. Some individuals may argue that the history of past pandemics is useless when
determining how to handle the effects of the current pandemic. They may claim that in its most
explicit, biological form, COVID-19 is not the Spanish Flu and therefore should be treated
uniquely. However, these interventions have helped in recovering the United States’ economy
and are another example of how knowledge of historical pandemics can guide the plans of the
current pandemic. We are now able to attend modified, in-person classes, go out to eat
socially-distanced at restaurants, and more, because of a plan that was used to control a virus
from over one-hundred years ago.

On the other side of the conversation, many will notice the number of similarities between the
Coronavirus and past pandemics and suggest that knowledge of past pandemics can aid in
controlling the Coronavirus itself. It is important though to realize that while historians and the
media can draw connections between past and current events, they are limited in their ability
to predict the future of the pandemic. In his article “Covering COVID-19? Perhaps Leave the
Black Death and Great Influenza Out of It,” Tim Newfield of Georgetown University expresses
the problems with comparing our current pandemic to deadly diseases of the past. Newman
states that “no two diseases nor any two moments in time are the same” and that it is not the
job of historians to attempt to be experts in the field of epidemiology (para. 3). There are
countless “parallels to uncover” for historians; however, “we have to ignore a lot to find them”
(para. 8). These parallels are limited in what they can contribute to our current efforts and will
never allow us to truly control the spread of COVID-19. Social-distancing and mask wearing are
good temporary measures for handling the spread of COVID-19 but are not the end-all
solutions. Proper treatment of the virus and potential vaccines are the key to potentially going
back to “normal life,” and are only going to come from the research of medical professionals.
Individuals must consider where they are getting news about the Coronavirus from and
remember to trust the educated researchers working to treat and prevent this virus every day,
for within their work lies a solution.

History can give a myriad of useful information to make connections between past and present
issues exposed by a pandemic, but when it comes to the virus itself, it is best to trust the
experts of the medical field. Pandemics of the past and of the present continue to highlight the
work our country has to do in terms of social equality. Interventions like social-distancing have
been adopted from historical pandemics and paired with other non-pharmaceutical controls to
slow the spread of COVID-19, allowing individuals to go back out into the public safely.
Ultimately though, the only way to potentially control this virus is through the research
conducted by qualified scientists, not historians. If history continues to repeat itself, some other
novel disease will spike around the year 2120 and reach the status of pandemic. At that time,
historians will likely draw connections to what we are experiencing today, looking at both what
we did well and what we did that was completely wrong. They may even be able to give
suggestions on how to handle some of the large-scale effects that pandemics have on
communities. However, just like today, it will take the efforts of those educated in diseases and
viruses that will put an end to pandemic altogether.
Works Cited


Student Example
Nicholas Sixbury wrote this response argument in Christina Hauck’s ENGL 200 class. Please note the ways in which Sixbury uses section headings to focus his readers on the different parts of his response.

The Andrew Jackson Courthouse Statue in Jackson County Should be Removed

Introduction
In June 2020, a statue of Andrew Jackson outside a courthouse in Jackson County, Missouri in Kansas City was vandalized, leading to a wider political discussion about whether the statue should stay up. After the statue was vandalized, Jackson County Executive Frank White, Jr. released a statement advocating for the removal of the statue (Greenstein 4), stating that as long as both the Andrew Jackson statue which was vandalized (and the other Andrew Jackson statue in front of a different nearby courthouse) stay up, “our words about fairness, justice and equality will continue to ring hollow for many we serve” (Greenstein 5). Art conservationist Karri Vaughn released an article the next month in The KC Star, titled “Don’t Remove KC’s Andrew Jackson Courthouse Statue. Create New Art to Challenge It,” in which she argued against removing the statue. Ultimately in November of the same year, the issue was taken to a vote amongst residents of Jackson County, a county named after Andrew Jackson in 1826, nearly three years before he was elected president (Cruz 16). Voters in Jackson County decided to keep the statue up in a “72-23 majority” (Cruz 1). Instead of removal, the statue will have a plaque placed upon it, explaining why the county chose Andrew Jackson as a symbol (Cruz 6). Despite the vote, there are still those who think the statue should eventually be removed. After the results of the vote had taken place, White, Jr. expressed disappointment at the outcome, stating, “I remain committed in my belief that the statues of a man who owned slaves, caused thousands of Native Americans to die and never stepped foot in our County should be removed from our public facilities” (Cruz 9). Vaughn argues that the Andrew Jackson statue in KC shouldn’t be moved because of its artistic merit.
Summary of Source Editorial
In Karri Vaughn’s “Don’t Remove KC’s Andrew Jackson Courthouse Statue. Create New Art to Challenge It,” she argues that the Andrew Jackson statue in front of the Jackson County Courthouse shouldn’t be moved from its current location because it would ignore the history of the statue and the artist’s intent in making the statue to be put there. She doesn’t mention the other statue, which stands “outside the Historic Truman Courthouse in downtown Independence” (Greenstein 7), perhaps because it wasn’t vandalized. Her reasoning as to why the statue shouldn’t be removed is that the statue itself has great artistic merit, which makes it relevant to artists today, and the original intent of the artist is an important part of the current production of art, so moving it would diminish positive effects it has on art today. The main goal of the author is to conserve the art we have today and ensure the production of new art. She writes to a local, educated audience who likely already have their own opinions on the potential removal of the statue.

While the statue might have great merit as a piece of art, the statue should be moved because that merit would not be diminished by relocation to a museum, art gallery, or similar facility, and its current location puts the efficacy of the local government into question.

Why Artistic Merit Isn’t an Issue
While the statue may have great artistic merit, that merit does not overshadow the public reception of the statue, and moving the statue would not significantly harm that merit. First off, the claim that because “artists use works from the past to contextualize contemporary pieces[,]... art conservation is essential to the current production of art” is dubious (Vaughn 3). While artists may imitate or be inspired by past works, plenty of them create original artwork; it would certainly be absurd to claim that no original artwork is created. After all, if all artwork requires a past reference, then where did the original reference come from? The definition of art itself is also rather vague, as Vaughn herself acknowledges when she contends that “art has a slippery definition and is no longer limited to high-quality, handmade or even material objects” (Vaughn 3). Many things not even created by humans could very well be considered art (or at least artful), such as beautiful landscapes, for instance. Vaughn also argues for the importance of the original artist’s intent, as “by upholding the artist’s intent, new artists can incorporate others’ work into their own” (Vaughn 4). She states that “if a conservator damages the artist’s original intent, viewers begin engaging with a facsimile” (Vaughn 4). It’s not clear exactly what she means the significance of viewers engaging with a facsimile (meaning an exact copy) to be, as she doesn’t clarify, but from context it’s clear that this is something negative. This argument doesn’t really work for art created by natural processes, as there arguably isn’t intent behind the processes that created them. Instead, the humans who view such sights determine the significance and beauty for themselves. It’s also not clear what exactly it would mean to “damage the artist’s original intent” (Vaughn 4), but if understanding the original intention of the artist when they made a piece of art is so important, then the relocation of a piece to a museum shouldn’t be an issue. Within a museum, viewers can be educated on the context of the time when the artist created the piece, and this is already quite normal. Often when learning about a literary piece from a different time, it’s standard to learn about the
history behind the writer and what was going on historically at the time that might influence their views. The same can be done for other pieces of art, including the statue. In fact, even before the statue became controversial, there were plans to put a plaque on the statue specifically to give context as to why the statue is there (Cruz 3). Given the fact that the reasoning why the statue is still up was considered unclear enough that it needed a plaque to provide explanation, the statue’s current location probably isn’t doing much to inform viewers of the artist’s original intent, but moving it to a museum where its context and history can be explained to the public would likely give people a better idea of the artist’s intent. Vaughn argues that moving the statue somewhere else would damage the artist’s intent, and that that would be a bad thing, but she fails to properly establish why moving the statue would be bad.

Why Andrew Jackson Is A Bad Symbol
The artistic merit of the statue also doesn’t overshadow the figure depicted by the statue itself. Vaughn largely ignores who the statue depicts until she briefly mentions his past in the second-to-last paragraph, but the person who the statue depicts should also be a consideration (Vaughn 11). The courthouse is meant to be a place of justice, where cases are tried fairly under the law without prejudice, but a figure of Andrew Jackson right outside puts that into question. Andrew Jackson is an individual who flaunted the law and put policies into effect that killed thousands based on his own prejudiced ideas, and a statue of him on government property calls into question the efficacy of the system that a courthouse is meant to carry out. In the article “Andrew Jackson was a Slaver, Ethnic Cleanser, and Tyrant. He Deserves No Place on Our Money,” Dylan Matthews, a writer at Vox, states that “Andrew Jackson deserves a museum chronicling his crimes and dedicated to his victims, not commemoration” (Matthews 6). Jackson is a particularly bad symbol to be put in front of a courthouse because of the way he has flaunted rule of law. In terms of the Indian Removal Act which started the Trail of Tears, Jackson believed that instead of negotiating with Native Americans, “the government should simply impose its will on them” (Matthews 12). In addition to this, Jackson committed war crimes while he was in the military. In 1818, he ordered “two British subjects, Robert Ambrister and Alexander George Arbuthnot, executed during the First Seminole War in Spanish Florida” (Matthews 32) without having sufficient evidence of them actually doing anything wrong. In fact, he “carried both sentences out the next day so there would be no chance of an appeal” (Matthews 34). In addition to this and “kill[ing] his own men for petty infractions” (Matthews 35), he was also fined by the government for behaving tyrannically when he took New Orleans in part because “he defied a writ of habeas corpus, the legal privilege recognized by the Constitution which allows someone being detained to insist that a judge look into his case” (Matthews 30). Someone who illegally prevents another person who is detained from seeing a judge is an awful symbol for a courthouse. Jackson not only has a horrific past, but his flaunting of the law and fair process makes him a particularly bad symbol for a courthouse.

Why Government Image Matters Now
With recent events like the murder of George Floyd and the now-canceled building of the Dakota Access Pipeline, public perception matters more now than it might have previously, as events like these make people doubt the effectiveness of the system they are largely forced to live in. It can be seen from the fact that “in a vote for Kansas City, Missouri, 60% voted to take
the statues down” that at least in Kansas City as a whole, public opinion is on the side of taking the statue down (Harris 4). When George Floyd was murdered, the issue of police brutality was brought to public attention, bringing the system’s failure to reform into focus for many people that might not have been as aware of things before. The Dakota Access Pipeline represents another instance of the government showing its prejudice. Originally, the pipeline was designed to go through Bismark, North Dakota, but the citizens there rejected it because they didn’t want to risk contaminating their drinking water (Anubias 10). As such, the pipeline was diverted through Standing Rock (a Native American Reservation) even though it would contaminate their drinking water and damage sacred burial sites (Anubias 10). The Native Americans didn’t want the pipeline going through their land either, with “an estimated 10,000 people... in the region to join in the demonstrations,” including “hundreds of US military veterans,” “Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein and Democratic presidential contender Bernie Sanders,” and “Robert Kennedy Jr., environmental activist and nephew of former president John F Kennedy” (BBC 26). Even so, their protests were dismissed and met with “excessive force, including dousing crowds with pepper spray and freezing water as well as firing sound cannons, bean bag rounds and rubber bullets” (BBC 29). Police action against the protesters was bad enough that the United Nations spoke out about the excessive use of force against protesters (BBC 33). And yet, all of that was not enough to stop the building of the pipeline until recently when a change of administration was made after the election, and the building was canceled by presidential order. Events like these make people (very understandably) doubt that the government is really fair, or even that it has its citizens’ best interests at heart. This is worsened further when a county decides to keep up a memorialization of someone who is known for committing genocide against Native Americans, not only on public property, but in front of a building that is meant to carry out the law, ostensibly without prejudice.

**Conclusion**

The treatment of minorities by our current system of justice is an ongoing problem. Citizens are murdered in public by officers of the law without provocation. Indigenous people are exploited by corporations and the government for profit. And statues commemorating a figure who committed genocide against those he should have protected as people living in the nation he led are upheld in public. Vaughn argues that such a statue should stay up, not only on public display, but right in front of the courthouse where it has been for years. Largely ignoring the larger context of why people want the Andrew Jackson statue taken down, she argues the statue should stay up because, among other things, it “contextualize[s] contemporary pieces” (Vaughn 3). She says, “We should begin our evaluation of the Andrew Jackson statue with a historical backdrop,” but perhaps the history which should be focused on in this situation is the proposal to continue memorializing such a problematic figure in front of a courthouse after a history of abuse of native peoples both by the modern government and Andrew Jackson himself, the figure which the statue depicts (Vaughn 4).

**Works Cited**


## Conclusion: Summary of Key Rhetorical Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative/Opposing Views: Positions, arguments, and messages on the issue that differ from those of the writer.</th>
<th>Concession: A rhetorical move when writers anticipate objections to their claim and reasons and accept these objections.</th>
<th>Dialogical Arguments: Arguments in which writers are responding to potentially hostile audiences; they need to be mindful of these readers' positions and beliefs/values to make the conditions of persuasion possible.</th>
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<td>Monological Arguments: Arguments in which writers focus only on their particular position; they do not acknowledge other positions.</td>
<td>Multisided Arguments: Arguments in which writers are aware of their position and those of other writers and arguers.</td>
<td>Neutral Audiences: Audiences who do not hold a strong stance on the issue or claim.</td>
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<td>Rebuttal Strategies: Ways in which writers anticipate other arguments and perspectives and then use points and evidence to counter them. Also referred to as &quot;counterargument.&quot;</td>
<td>Response: Taking a stand and making a significant contribution on an issue.</td>
<td>Summarizing: Acknowledging other perspectives and arguments on the issues by fairly representing them to readers.</td>
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