

Reading Analysis

Arguments are a dominant theme for this class—offering claims or reasons in logical support of a specific conclusion. You will see arguments in every reading. Some of them will be obvious and explicit, others much more subtle (perhaps with assumed or implicit premises, not actually written out). Some of them will come in a discreet passage, and some of them will be spread out over the course of a whole reading.

Note our fourth Course Goal:

Practice and demonstrate your ability to recognize, extrapolate, explicate, and evaluate arguments and assumptions found in our texts and other forms of media.

This writing assignment is a chance for you to jump in and begin doing so on your own. Learning to recognize the arguments in the texts we read is also a critical step in learning to write your own, thus preparing you for Goals 2c and 5.

Your assignment is to first, find an argument in a course reading. **Carefully familiarize yourself with the passage, making sure you understand what is being claimed, what the support is for that claim, the logical connections between those supports, and how the argument fits into the author’s overall point in the text.** Then articulate all of this to your reader. **You will be assessed on how well you are able to make each of these things clear**, as well as your ability to use standard writing conventions and mechanics.

See the Rubric below for more detail on how this assignment will be assessed. Also, please review and use the Rubric as a guide when you comment on your peers’ papers.

This is a very short paper—300 words, with a 10% margin of error (note: titles, footnotes, and works cited do not count against the word limit—this is true for all of our writing assignments). There is no room to do anything other than explicate an argument. Your thesis statement should come in the first sentence or two, and you should jump immediately into the work of explication.

A note on audience: **In all of the papers you write for this class you should assume that your reader is educated and interested but not a member of this class.** In other words, neither myself nor any of your peers in this class is your assumed audience. **Assume that your reader has not read the texts your reference.** Also, please note that **in all writing assignments, use of personal pronoun ‘I’ is perfectly acceptable.** You will see many of our authors using it. This is not because philosophers are writing informally or more personally, but because we place such a high premium on clarity. Stating explicitly what *you* will argue is a good thing.

I recommend using either Chicago or MLA citations—but with either, **please always include page numbers in your citations** and a works cited at the end.

	Capstone 4	Milestones		Benchmark 1
		3	2	
Writing mechanics	The thesis actually organizes the whole paper—meaning the	A strong thesis is articulated, not only identifying the purpose of the essay,	An organizing thesis is clear and easily identifiable. All necessary	Essay is free from distracting grammatical and other typographical

	structure and coherence of the paper is clear throughout and transitions elegantly made; the reader is not left to make abstractions or guess at the relevance of any passage	but also alluding to the student's reasons or arguments. A version or variation of the thesis is also clear at the end, tying the essay together	citations (and bibliography) are given, including page numbers when relevant	errors; standard writing conventions are used
Explicating Arguments	In a similar manner, the overall relevance of the argument is made clear, including its connection to the author's main thesis and themes; if relevant the argument is contextualized within the overall historical dialogue	Additionally, key assumptions or enthymematic premises are made explicit, and a nuanced reading of the importance and plausibility of the various premises is given	Additionally, the overall logic or connections are made; premises are identified <i>as</i> premises, and how these work to support the conclusion is made explicit	A significant passage of text containing an argument is identified; key quotes are highlighted and explanations are attempted