

Essay III Assignment

Rogerian Argument: Reporting on Past Research

(see chapter 9 in *Perspectives on Argument*, including an example of an essay using a Rogerian argument on a non-literature topic, on pages 290-293)

This paper should be **3-4 pages long** in MLA format (this means that the words must at least reach the bottom of the third page).

In this unit, we are focusing on ways to reconcile conflicting ideas. For this assignment, you will be asked to find **two sources** that have **conflicting ideas** about a work of literature. Then you will write a short essay considering both sides of the issue and arguing that **one position would benefit by adopting elements of the other position**. (This may or may not involve formulating a third compromise position.)

Both of the sources must be **scholarly sources written by experts** in a field (not, for example, journalists writing for newspapers or other periodicals). (Examples of scholarly sources include articles in peer-reviewed academic journals, and books published by university presses.) These sources might not disagree on an entire issue, but they might disagree on a small part. Your **imagined audience is researchers in the same general field**—in this case, literary criticism—including people unfamiliar with the specific topic, people who agree with one source, and people who agree with the other.

Process

First, find two scholarly sources that you will use in your final research project. Make sure you know what the main claim and the important sub-claims of both articles are. Start this process early so you have time to find and read the articles/book chapters in the early part of the unit.

When you possess and understand the arguments of both sources, consider where they share common ground. Remember that an important part of Rogerian argument is pointing out commonalities and emphasizing agreement before moving into an analysis of disagreement.

Next consider where these sources differ. After you determine what the disagreement is, decide what the root of the disagreement is and if / how the two sources can be reconciled.

Finally, based on the common ground between the sources, argue that your readers/audience would benefit by adopting elements of one or both positions—either disbelieving one source completely and believing the other, or believing elements from both sources. See page 283 in *Perspectives on Argument* for some suggestions on navigating disagreement.

Basic Outline

Introduction: Understanding (might not have a dramatic hook)

- Briefly summarizes issue (background)
- Briefly restates/summarizes the arguments in both sources (shows that you *understand* both positions)

1st Section: Common Ground

- Describes common ground that the sources share

2nd Section: Conditional Validity

- Describes root of the disagreement and the valid points given by both sides
- Shows in in which contexts and under what conditions each side's points are valid

Conclusion: Reconciling Positions

- Shows how the two positions complement each other and that each supplies what the other lacks: how each position would benefit by adopting elements of the other position
- Tells reader how to reconcile the two sources

A Non-Literature Example

Introduction: Understanding (might not have a dramatic hook)

- Summary of Gun Control issue
- Summary of Pro-Gun Control Source
- Summary of Anti-Gun Control Source

1st Section: Common Ground

- Common ground: concern for safety of children, acknowledgement that world is a dangerous place

2nd Section: Conditional Validity

- Root of the disagreement: Assumption that fewer guns make situations more/less safe
- Contexts and conditions where each position is valid: examples of both kinds of situations

Conclusion: Reconciling Positions

- Tells reader how to reconcile the two sources