

Argument Analysis Exercise

Philosophy 130
O'Rourke

In class, you will work in your assigned groups to prepare an analysis and evaluation of an argumentative essay. You will be asked to use the time as follows:

1. 40 minutes (8:30-9:10): read and analyze the essay as a group; sketch the argument(s) you find in the essay on a sheet of paper; select one person to represent the group
 - a. Initially read the article through, marking it up to highlight what you take to be the conclusions and reasons of specific arguments – *remember that a single proposition might be **both** a conclusion and a reason* (~10 minutes)
 - b. Discuss in your group your interpretations, working toward a collective interpretation of the arguments in the essay – *be sure to focus on finding the main, overall point of the piece, as there will almost certainly be arguments at different levels of abstraction in the essay* (~15 minutes)
 - c. Identify someone in the group to be the reporter and a person to be the scribe (could be the same person)
 - d. Work as a group to write out as many arguments as you've agreed on, making sure that at least one of them that you present is the main, overall argument – *I would start with the main one*; be sure to write these in standard form (see below) (~15 minutes)
2. 30 minutes (9:10-9:40): report out in no more than 3 minute presentations, using the document camera to show the class one page of arguments (so pick the ones you take to be most important) – you will be timed to make sure you stick to 3 minutes!
3. 10 minutes (9:40-9:50): general discussion of the analyses

To represent an argument in standard form, identify the *conclusion* – i.e., a claim that the author is trying to establish – as well as the *reasons* for that conclusion – i.e., a claim or claims the truth of which give someone reason to believe the conclusion and thereby support the conclusion.

Once you have these for a given argument, put them in this artificial form on a piece of paper:

1. *Reason 1*
 2. *Reason 2*
 3. ...
-

C. *Conclusion*