# ENGLISH 1302 ESSAY 2: THE ARGUMENTATIVE RESEARCH ESSAY

Purpose

Essay 2 is a formal research essay that requires more extensive use of sources.

Any argumentative essay is the writer’s attempt to convince readers to accept an alternate way of viewing or thinking about a topic or issue. For this essay, too, you will argue with the ultimate goal of revealing a new or unconventional way of viewing or thinking about your subject. Essay 2 will consist of a thesis (the main claim of the argument), various support strategies and appeals, and opposing viewpoints that you refute and overcome.

For Essay 2, you will write a sophisticated argument that will enable you to become part of a larger argument, or conversation. You will still begin with a focused and relevant claim, but this argument should convey a broader cultural significance. Using Lesson 4, 5, and 6 as a guide, you will use Essay 2 to participate meaningfully in an ongoing public discourse.

You will select and refine a topic for Essay 2 from *They Say/I Blog* conversations. Your initial posts and peer responses to Journal 2 will provide insight into the conversations and help you narrow your choice of topic.

Your ability to choose, evaluate, incorporate, and cite sources will constitute a significant portion of your grade for the argumentative research essay. Visit Purdue OWL’s “Writing a Research Paper” before you begin.

Additionally, after you select a topic for your essay, review these characteristics of **inventive research** (*Inventing Arguments*, 361-2):

* Read beyond the most accessible source.  
  o For example, don’t stop with the first source listed in a database.
* Explore sources that are opposed to your position.  
  o Don’t seek out only those sources in line with your thinking.
* Be open to change.  
  o Be willing to modify your claim and/or approach as you encounter sources.
* Look beneath the meaning of each key word or phrase.  
  o See key terms and phrases as opportunities for more exploration.
* Go back in history to find the origin of words, attitudes, and beliefs related to your topic.

o Your initial understanding of a topic may be inaccurate.

* Look for principles and precedents.

o Imagine how your topic resonates with some broader set of rules or earlier cases.

* Imagine analogies.  
  o Make comparisons while reading and researching to see new layers of your

topic.

* Read for underlying values.  
  o All arguments reflect values and assumptions that lie beneath the surface.

Of course, as your text explains, not all research is exploratory. As you research your topic, you may need to conduct **seeking research** to locate specific information to support your claim. Evaluate your research needs by asking what “seeking” questions: (*Inventing Arguments*, 362).

What type of information do I need?

What discipline or field of study has explored this issue?

What type of publication is likely to offer such information?

What is the best way to access that information?

Remember: “Writers should proceed with caution when looking for particular information: The most prevalent mistake for beginning researchers is assuming that they should do seeking research when they actually need inventive research” (*Inventing Arguments*, 362). Understand when to use inventive research and when to use seeking research, and make note of the difference between the two.

Length  
The final draft of this essay should be 1500–2000 words, or 6–8 double-spaced pages (plus a Works Cited Page).

Academic Audience  
Direct this essay to a diverse audience of classmates. Assume various ethnicities, ages, and backgrounds, and assume your readers are both curious and reasonably educated.

Sample Structure  
You should be able to follow your preliminary “outline” (Journal Writing 2) to create your overall structure for this essay. Here is one way to organize your research essay:

Introduction: In the initial draft, include your topic, your claim (or viewpoint) that you plan to defend, and a brief summary of your plan of presenting the evidence. Return to this introduction when you begin your revisions and rework it in terms of voice and interest.

Body: Aim for 3-5 supporting points, and devote one or two separate body paragraphs to each point. State each point as a way of creating a topic sentence for an evidence paragraph. Each evidence paragraph should have specific support by way of facts, statistics, examples, or other details. Because your Essay 2 topic was more immediate to you, you might have used personal examples. Rely on more objective support here.

Counterargument: After you present your defense, devote one or two developed paragraphs to counterarguments. Begin this part of your paper with a clear transition that indicates an opposing viewpoint. For example, you could begin, "Critics disagree with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and feel that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is more appropriate. The counterargument portion should clearly state the most reasonable counter position, but it may reference more than one opposing viewpoint. Explain the most compelling counterargument(s); then refute the opposition. Be fair and respectful to your audience, keeping in mind that you are trying to win over readers who don’t agree with you. Offending, insulting, or demeaning skeptical readers will not convince them to accept (or even consider) your viewpoint. Remember: “Be confident but not overbearing...readers nearly always tune out a harsh or insensitive voice, and they are less likely to be convinced by a wishy- washy one” (*Inventing Arguments*, 164). Use strong, reasonable details to overcome opposing viewpoints.

Conclusion: The conclusion is an important summing up and review of your evidence and defense. Give your audience a satisfying sense of closure and leave them with a solid sense of your integrity and your reasonable voice.

Additional Instructions  
You must cite at least six reliable and authoritative sources, only two of which may be dedicated websites (you *may* use Web-based electronic journals and databases). At least one source must be a primary source, and you may cite one of the published essays from *Inventing Arguments* as one of your sources. Perhaps you would like to expand or take issue with an idea presented by one of the authors in your text.

Your sources may not include Wikipedia, as this interesting web encyclopedia does not control authorship and is therefore not recognized as a viable academic source. As always, regardless of what types of sources you select, you will need to evaluate your sources very carefully to ensure their **relevance**, **reliability**, and **authenticity**.

When incorporating information from sources into your essay, use Modern Language Association (MLA) Documentation Style. This requires that a source be cited parenthetically within the essay at the point of use, unless the source is identified within the context of the sentence, and then listed as a source on a Works Cited Page following the essay.

Format both the working and final copies of your essay according to MLA Paper Format. Specific details about this format are included in Lessons 2, 5, and 6 and in the MLA Format folder under “Lessons - Assignments” from our eCampus course menu.

When saving your essay file, be sure to save it as .doc or .docx. This step will allow the file to be opened by your instructor and your peers.

Revising any argumentative essay is especially challenging because you must carefully weigh your organization and content for accuracy and effectiveness, and you must consider your writing voice and how you come across in the working draft. This kind of revision requires sensitivity to the emotional quality of your language. You will need to tone down or eliminate emotionally charged words, phrases, or statements. Strive to achieve a reasonable, concerned, and fair-minded voice. This strategy will help you gain your academic audience’s confidence and credibility and trust in you as a writer.

Grammatical inaccuracies and careless errors of spelling also undermine a reader’s trust, so your final draft of Essay 2, like any final copy of a multi-draft essay, must be scrupulously proofread.