

Syllabus: English 15—Rhetoric and Composition

Instructor: Phillip Zapkin

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Office Hours: W 11AM-2PM, or by appointment

Section	Time	Location
083	TuTh 9:05-10:20AM	Osmond Lab 202
086	TuTh 10:35-11:50AM	Business Bldg. 009
120	TuTh 3:05-4:20PM	Huck Life Sciences Bldg. 301D
124	TuTh 4:35-5:50PM	Thomas Bldg. 208

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The main goal of this course is for you to learn about rhetoric. Rhetoric is the art and science of persuading people to listen to and accept, or at least consider, your ideas. Central to rhetoric are the strategies we use to shape our writing, speaking, creating, etc. *for* other people. A big part of our focus this semester will be how we engage with others.

Our other big consideration will be epistemology. That’s a fancy way of saying “how we know what we know.” Rhetoric is meant to be a tool to find and express truth—so we will consider how knowledge is constructed through rhetoric. Throughout the semester, we will return to these key epistemological questions:

- What do we know?
- How do we know it?
- How reliable is our knowledge? (And how do we know?)

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND SOFTWARE

Ramage, John, John Bean, and June Johnson. *Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric With Readings*, 11th ed., Pearson, 2019. ISBN: 9780134759746 (paperback)

Morales-Reyes, Javiera, ed. *Penn Statements*. Volume 41, 2022.

- These textbooks can be purchased from the [Penn State Bookstore](#). *Penn Statements* can only be purchased electronically.
- This course requires you use Microsoft Word for assignments. Unless otherwise specified, files should be submitted as either .docx or .doc file types.
- If you do not have Microsoft Word, Penn State makes the full Microsoft Office suite, which includes Word, available to Penn State students for free. To get this free version of Microsoft Office, simply login to <https://office365.psu.edu/> using your Penn State credentials.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Graded Assignment	Percentage
Audience Profile	15%
Education Manifesto	20%
Philosophical Debate Video	20%
Letter to My Younger Self	15%
Exploratory Writing	10%
Peer Reviews	10%
Participation	10%

To pass this course you *must* submit all four major projects. Failure to submit a project will result in an automatic failing grade for the course.

- Assignment sheets for the projects, exploratory writings, and peer reviews are on Canvas. These sheets give you specific details about what the assignments require. We will also go over each assignment sheet in class.
 - If you're unsure about what an assignment requires/allows, please ask me in class, during office hours, or over email.
- For every project you must get a proposal approved. Not doing so before the project deadline will cost one full letter grade from the project. This proposal will be done as a Canvas quiz.
- All assignments must be submitted by *11:59PM Eastern Time* on the date assigned. Submitting a project after the deadline will cost one full letter grade per late day. Similarly, submitting an exploratory writing or peer review late will cost one point per late day.

PARTICIPATION

Participation is crucial to our classroom community—this is an interactive class where, in large part, what you get out of the course depends on what you put in. The participation grade is a holistic and comprehensive grade evaluating your contributions over the semester to full class discussions, group work/discussions, writing conferences, and attendance.

- Writing Conferences: Coming to discuss your work, writing, or ideas with me during office hours will add $\frac{1}{3}$ letter grade toward your participation grade per visit. Especially if you're nervous about talking in class, this can be a great way to simultaneously get useful feedback and boost your participation score.

INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT GRADES

- Projects will receive letter grades based on the PWR Grading Standards (see “PWR Grading Standards” in *Penn Statements* pp. 9-11) and the grading criteria for that individual project.
- Exploratory Writings and Peer Reviews will each be graded out of five points.
- Proposals will be marked Complete/Incomplete and do not count toward the overall course grade.

GRADING SCALE

This class uses the LionPATH standard grading scale to determine final course grades:

Letter Grade	Point Range
A	94-100
A-	90-93.99
B+	87-89.99
B	84-86.99
B-	80-83.99
C+	77-79.99
C	70-76.99
D	60-69.99
F	0-59.99

POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

You are allowed to two unexcused absences with *no penalty* to your grade. *Each class missed beyond those two will cost 1/3 letter from your overall course grade.*

- Excused absences do not count against you. In order for an absence to be excused you must notify me as early as possible beforehand (at least 24 hours). Reasons for excused absences include: religious holidays, military service, university required activities (i.e., participation in a university sports team), or severe illness or injury.
 - Quarantining for Covid-19 will count as excused absences.
- If you miss class, *it is your responsibility to make up the missed material*. Ask a classmate to take notes for you, and then come to office hours and/or email me as soon as possible.
- You can fail a class for non-attendance regardless of the quality of written work done.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts.

Academic integrity includes a commitment by all members of the University community not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

ACCESSIBILITY: DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. The Student Disability Resources Web site provides contact information for every Penn State campus (equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/disability-coordinator). For further information, please visit the Student Disability Resources website at equity.psu.edu/sdr.

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation (equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/applying-for-services). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your [campus's disability services office](#) will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

EDUCATION EQUITY: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color,

disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity via the [Report Bias webpage](http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/) (equity.psu.edu/reportbias/).

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients' cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 814-863-0395, studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/
Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): 877-229-6400
Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741

STANDARDS OF CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Classroom behavior should always reflect the essential Penn State values of civility, integrity, and respect for the dignity and rights of others. As such, the classroom space should be safe, orderly, and positive—free from disruptions, disorderly conduct, and harassment as defined in the University Code of Conduct (studentaffairs.psu.edu/conduct/Procedures.shtml). The University Code of Conduct defines disruption “as an action or combination of actions by one or more individuals that unreasonably interferes with, hinders, obstructs, or prevents the operation of the University or infringes on the rights of others to freely participate in its programs and services;” disorderly conduct includes but is not limited to “creating unreasonable noise; pushing and shoving; creating a physically hazardous or physically offensive condition;” and harassment may include “directing physical or verbal conduct at an individual...; subjecting a person or group of persons to unwanted physical contact or threat of such; or engaging in a course of conduct, including following the person without proper authority (e.g., stalking), under circumstances which would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of others or to suffer emotional distress” (Section IV, B). The course instructor has the authority to request that any disruptive students leave the class for the class period. If disruptive behavior continues in subsequent class periods, a complaint may be filed with the Office of Student Conduct, which may result in the student being dismissed from class until University procedures have been completed. Any student with concerns or questions as to this policy should contact the Director of the Program in Writing and Rhetoric.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change by me. I will notify you ahead of time by email and/or Canvas announcement of any changes.

WEEK 1

❖ Tu. 10 Jan.: Welcome; Getting to know one another; Hand out syllabus; Canvas overview

○ Homework for Next Class:

- Buy textbooks
 - Read Syllabus
 - In *Penn Statements*, read “Program Outcomes” (pp. 12-13)
 - On Canvas, read “WPA Outcomes Statement for First Year Composition”
 - On Canvas, watch “How to Succeed in University”
 - Download Microsoft Word (if you don’t already have it)
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❖ Th. 12 Jan.: Go over syllabus; Setting course goals for English 15; What is epistemology?

○ Homework for Next Class:

- In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - “The Defining Features of Argument” (pp. 8-12)
 - “Table 5.1: Questions for Analyzing Your Audience” (p. 79)
 - “Audience” (p. 107)
 - “The Conservative Case for a Carbon Tax and Dividends” (pp. 409-411)
 - “Would You Buy a Self-Driving Future from These Guys” (pp. 528-530)
- In *Penn Statements*, read “Analysis Essays: Introduction, Common Issues, and Questions” (pp. 14-17)
- On Canvas, watch “Audience Awareness”

WEEK 2

❖ Tu. 17 Jan.: Introduce Audience Profile; What we talk about when we talk about “audiences”; Practice profiling an audience

○ Homework for Next Class:

- Proposal—Audience Profile
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - “Argument and the Problem of Truth in the 21st Century” (pp. 12-14)
 - “Post-Fact, Post-Truth Society” (pp. 431-432)
 - “How to Spot Fake News” (pp. 437-441)
 - “Teaching Writing in a Post-Truth Era” (pp. 449-450)
 - On Canvas, watch “Methodological Skepticism”
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❖ Th. 19 Jan.: Introduce Two Values Exploratory Writing; Crash course on the history of knowledge

○ *Due by 11:59PM: Proposal—Audience Profile*

○ Homework for Next Class:

- In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - “Classical Appeals and the Rhetorical Triangle” (pp. 19-21)
 - “An Overview of *Logos*” (pp. 32-35)

- “*Logos, Ethos, and Pathos* as Persuasive Appeals,” “How to Create an Effective *Ethos*,” and “How to Create *Pathos*” (pp. 68-74)
- On Canvas, watch “Rhetorical Appeals”

WEEK 3

❖ Tu. 24 Jan.: Rhetorical appeals

- Homework for Next Class:
 - Exploratory Writing—Two Values
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - “Frame of an Argument: A Claim Supported by Reasons” (pp. 25-27)
 - “Kinds of Evidence” (pp. 52-55)
 - On Canvas, read “Thesis Statements”
 - On Canvas, watch “Thesis Statements”

❖ Th. 26 Jan.: Thesis statements; Types of evidence

- *Due by 11:59PM: Exploratory Writing—Two Values*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - Peer Review Draft—Audience Profile
 - In *Penn Statements*, read
 - “PWR Grading Standards” (pp. 9-11)
 - “Feminism: Not Just a Thing of the Past” (pp. 169-171)
 - On Canvas, read
 - “The Writing Instructor’s Approach to Grading”
 - “Essay Formatting”
 - On Canvas, watch
 - “Peer Reviewing”
 - “Giving Peer Feedback Using Microsoft Word”
 - “Claim, Evidence, Interpretation”

WEEK 4

❖ Tu. 31 Jan.: Essay formatting; Practice peer review; Paragraph structure

- *Due by 11:59PM: Peer Review Draft—Audience Profile*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - Peer Feedback—Audience Profile
 - Bring to class: Audience Profile draft
 - On Canvas, read “Revision Strategies”
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read “Informal Fallacies” (pp. 397-403)

❖ Th. 2 Feb.: Revision techniques for the Audience Profile

- *Due by 11:59PM: Peer Feedback—Profile*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - **Final Draft—Audience Profile**
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - “Issue Questions as the Origins of Argument” (pp. 21-22)
 - “Adopting a Language for Describing Arguments: The Toulmin System” (pp. 36-41)

- “Fed or Fed Up?: Why We Support Easing School Lunch Rules” (p. 462)
- In *Penn Statements*, read “Argument Essays: Introduction, Common Issues, and Questions” (pp. 42-45)
- On Canvas, watch “Toulmin Model”

WEEK 5

❖ Tu. 7 Feb.: Introduce Education Manifesto; Introduce Manifesto Stakes Exploratory Writing; Toulmin Model Arguments

- *Due by 11:59PM: Final Draft—Audience Profile*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - Proposal—Education Manifesto
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - “Thinking Rhetorically About Kinds of Sources” (pp. 343-348)
 - “Finding Books and Reference Sources,” “Using Licensed Databases to Find Articles in Scholarly Journals, Magazines, and News Sources,” and “Finding Cyberspace Sources: Searching the World Wide Web” (pp. 349-351)
 - “Selecting and Evaluating Your Sources and Taking Purposeful Notes” (pp. 351-358)
 - On Canvas, watch
 - “Database Searching”
 - “Assessing Researched Sources”

❖ Th. 9 Feb.: Meet in Pattee Library W013; University level research

- *Due by 11:59PM: Proposal—Education Manifesto*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - “The Special Features and Concerns of Proposal Arguments” and “Developing a Proposal Argument” (pp. 308-313)
 - “Rethinking School Discipline” (pp. 478-487)
 - “Restorative Justice: The Zero-Tolerance-Policy Overcorrection” (pp. 487-489)

WEEK 6

❖ Tu. 14 Feb.: Demonstrating why a topic matters; Essay introductions

- Homework for Next Class:
 - Exploratory Writing—Manifesto Stakes
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - “Using Heuristic Strategies to Develop Supporting Reasons for Your Proposal” (pp. 313-317)
 - “Exploring Ideas,” “Identifying Your Audience and Determining What’s at Stake,” and “Organizing a Proposal Argument” (pp. 320-321)
 - “How Canceling Controversial Speakers Hurts Students” (pp. 503-505)

❖ Th. 16 Feb.: Writing the body of a Manifesto

- *Due by 11:59PM: Exploratory Writing—Manifesto Stakes*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - Chapter 17: Incorporating Sources into Your Own Argument (pp. 360-374)
 - “Take It From a New Orleans Charter School Teacher: Parents Don’t Always Get School Choice Right,” “Educators Try to Keep Public Education away from School Vouchers and Charter Schools,” “Why Managed Competition Is Better Than a Free Market for Education,” and “Separate but Unequal” (pp. 489-503)
 - On Canvas, watch “Quotation, Paraphrase, and Summary”

WEEK 7

❖ Tu. 21 Feb.: Incorporating evidence from sources into your Manifesto

- Homework for Next Class:
 - Peer Review Draft—Education Manifesto
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - Chapter 18.1 and 18.2: Citing Documentary Sources (pp. 375-380; skim 381-390)
 - “I’m Not Giving Students ‘Trigger Warnings’” and “I Use Trigger Warnings—But I’m Not Mollycoddling My Students” (pp. 505-509)
 - On Canvas, watch
 - “8th Edition MLA Works Cited Pages”
 - “Citing and Attributing Quotes in MLA Format”

❖ Th. 23 Feb.: Crash course on MLA citations; MLA citations practice

- *Due by 11:59PM: Peer Review Draft—Education Manifesto*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - Peer Feedback—Education Manifesto
 - Bring to class Education Manifesto draft

WEEK 8

❖ Tu. 28 Feb.: Education Manifesto revision strategies

- *Due by 11:59PM: Peer Feedback—Education Manifesto*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - **Final Draft due by 11:59PM Friday—Education Manifesto**
 - On Canvas, watch “Varying Sentence Length and Complexity”

❖ Th. 2 Mar.: Sentence variation workshop

- Homework for Next Class:
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read “I’ve Heard All the Arguments against a Sugar Tax. I’m Still Calling for One in Australia,” “Soda Tax is Nany-State Overreach,” “More Jobs Lost to Soda Taxes” and “Are We Subsidizing a Public Health Crisis by Allowing the Poor to Buy Soda with Food Stamps” (pp. 471-476)
 - On Canvas, watch

- “Propaganda and Bad Faith Arguments”
- “Is the Internet Bringing Out the Best in Us?”

❖ Fri. 3 Mar.: Education Manifesto due

- *Due by 11:59PM Friday: Final Draft—Education Manifesto*

WEEK 9

❖ Tu. 7 Mar.: *Spring Break; No Classes*

❖ Th. 9 Mar.: *Spring Break; No Classes*

WEEK 10

❖ Tu. 14 Mar.: Introduce Philosophical Debate Video; Introduce Debate Style Exploratory Writing; Weighing competing arguments

- Homework for Next Class:
 - Proposal—Philosophical Debate Video
 - On Canvas, watch “Should Schools Ban Slang from the Classroom?”

❖ Th. 16 Mar.: *Meet in Media Commons, Pattee Library W140*; Video editing

- *Due by 11:59PM: Proposal—Philosophical Debate Video*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - “The Classical Structure of Argument” (pp. 17-19)
 - Chapter 6: Responding to Objections and Alternative Views (pp. 83-92, 94, and 97)
 - On Canvas, watch
 - “Collaborative Writing”
 - “Can Scientists and Religious Leaders See Eye to Eye?”
 - “Is Nuclear Power the Solution to Our Energy Needs?”

WEEK 11

❖ Tu. 21 Mar.: Collaborative writing techniques

- Homework for Next Class:
 - Exploratory Writing—Debate Style
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - “Putting a Price on Carbon is a Fine Idea. It’s Not the End-All Be-All” (pp. 411-416)
 - “Banning Plastic Bags is Great for the World, Right? Not So Fast” and “Plastic Bag Ban: Let’s Not Get Carried Away” (pp. 424-429)
 - On Canvas, watch
 - “Obama, Romney Debate ‘Role of Government’”

❖ Th. 23 Mar.: Responding to opposing arguments

- *Due by 11:59PM: Exploratory Writing—Debate Style*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - “Thinking Dialectically” (pp. 142-146)
 - “Constructing an Ethical Evaluation Argument” (pp. 288-291)

- “Our Human Right Not to Be Poisoned” (pp. 416-419)
- “The Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions” (pp. 555-559)
- “The Morality of Birth Control” (pp. 559-562)
- On Canvas, watch
 - “Dialectic Argument”
 - “Inductive and Deductive Reasoning”
 - “Where Does Morality Come From?”
 - “Is Superstition Irrational?”

WEEK 12

❖ Tu. 28 Mar.: Philosophical argument

- Homework for Next Class:
 - Peer Review Script—Philosophical Debate Video
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read
 - “Common Problems in Making Evaluation Arguments” and “Writing Assignment: An Evaluation or Ethical Argument” (pp. 291-295)
 - “Self-Driving Cars Will Improve Our Cities, If They Don’t Ruin Them,” “Self-Driving Trucks Are Going to Hit Us Like a Human-Driven Truck,” and “Five Reasons You Should Embrace Self-Driving Cars” (pp. 512-528)
 - On Canvas, watch “Free Range vs. Strict Parents: Is Spanking Your Kids Ever Okay?”

❖ Th. 30 Mar.: *No Class; Phillip out of town*

WEEK 13

❖ Tu. 4 Apr.: Problems and challenges with philosophical arguments

- *Due by 11:59PM: Peer Review Script—Philosophical Debate Video*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - Peer Feedback—Philosophical Debate Video
 - In *Writing Arguments*, read “Finding Issues to Explore” (pp. 128-134)
 - On Canvas, watch “Brainstorming”

❖ Th. 6 Apr.: Brainstorming strategies

- *Due by 11:59PM: Peer Feedback—Philosophical Debate Video*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - **Final Draft—Philosophical Debate Video**

WEEK 14

❖ Tu. 11 Apr.: Introduce Letter to My Younger Self; Brainstorming formative experiences

- *Due by 11:59PM: Final Draft—Philosophical Debate Video*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - Proposal—Letter to My Younger Self
 - In *Penn Statements*, read
 - “Narrative Essays: Introduction, Common Issues, and Questions” (pp. 127-131)
 - “My Time” and “House to Home” (pp. 132-136)

❖ Th.13 Apr.: Introduce Myself as Audience Exploratory Writing; Types of personal narrative

- *Due by 11:59PM: Proposal—Letter to My Younger Self*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - In *Penn Statements*, read
 - “Life: Stresses, Battles, and Triumphs, A Memoir” (137-140)
 - “Taylor Swift: A Fearless Defender of Artists’ Rights” (pp. 153-155)

WEEK 15

❖ Tu. 18 Apr.: Imagery and conflict

- Homework for Next Class:
 - Exploratory Writing—Myself as Audience
 - In *Penn Statements*, read “A Work in Progress, a Personal Narrative” and “I’m Fine” (pp. 141-145)

❖ Th. 20 Apr.: Character development

- *Due by 11:59PM: Exploratory Writing—Myself as Audience*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - Peer Review Draft—Letter to My Younger Self
 - Bring to class Letter to My Younger Self draft

WEEK 16

❖ Tu. 25 Apr.: Letter to My Younger Self Revision Strategies

- *Due by 11:59PM: Peer Review Draft—Letter to My Younger Self*
- Homework for Next Class:
 - Peer Feedback—Letter to My Younger Self
 - SRTEs

❖ Th. 27 Apr.: Final class period wrap up

- *Due by 11:59PM:*
 - *Peer Feedback—Letter to My Younger Self*
 - *SRTEs*
- Homework for Monday:
 - **Final Draft—Letter to My Younger Self**

WEEK 17

❖ Mon. 1 May: Letter to My Younger Self Due

- *Due by 11:59PM: Final Draft—Letter to My Younger Self*

Audience Profile Assignment Sheet

Final Draft Due: Tu. 7 Feb. by 11:59PM

In this first project you will grapple with one of the most important elements of rhetoric: the audience. We always write (or speak) for particular readers (or listeners/viewers), and whether or not we persuade them depends on how well our rhetoric is shaped for that particular audience. Each audience has distinct characteristics, values, rhetorical preferences, etc., and for this project you are going to dive deep into the nature of one particular audience from the list near the bottom of this assignment sheet.

This paper will move through four sections:

1. A one-paragraph introduction identifying the audience, previewing their key characteristics, and giving a thesis making an argument about how to use rhetoric to appeal to this audience.
2. A two-paragraph section identifying two major characteristics, beliefs, or values of the audience, and explaining how you know this about the audience.
3. A two-paragraph section arguing for the top two types of evidence this audience would find convincing, and why. Tie the arguments here back to the characteristics, beliefs, or values identified in the previous section. See “Kinds of Evidence” in *Writing Arguments* (pp. 52-55). You may choose to discuss which of the three classical appeals would be most effective for this audience.
4. A one-paragraph conclusion giving a final, comprehensive picture of this audience and explaining what it would take to most effectively persuade this audience.

For each section, be as detailed as possible. Remember our focus on epistemology—each paragraph should address not only what we know about this audience, but how we know it and how reliable our knowledge is. Support your claims as solidly as you can.

The audiences you may choose to Profile are:

- Penn State professors
- Penn State students
- Physicists
- Flat earthers
- Devout Christians/Jews/Muslims/Hindus/Buddhists/other
- Republicans
- Democrats
- Football fans
- Philosophers
- Teenage boys
- Teenage girls
- Corporate CEOs
- You can pitch me a different audience

Page length requirement: A *thorough* argument with *no* bullshit.

Grading Criteria: Your essay should:

1. describe in detail the characteristics of your chosen audience,
2. argue for the two types of evidence that would be most persuasive for this audience, and support that argument with reasoning,
3. include a thesis making an argument about the best rhetoric for this audience,
4. follow the required essay structure.

Education Manifesto Assignment Sheet

Final Draft Due: Fri. 3 Mar. by 11:59PM

For our second project, you will turn to a subject that you have a lot of experience with but may never have been asked to think carefully and critically about: education. You will be taking a stance on one of the important education issues from the list below, and you will need to justify your position as the best way to achieve a specific goal. Propose a solution to a problem or challenge. What should the US education system be trying to achieve in this area? And why? We need to know *what* you think and *why* you think that.

A manifesto by definition takes a strong position about the issue, so you will need to develop a solid case. This paper must present the core argument in a thesis statement, and then develop reasons throughout the body paragraphs. In order to support your argument, you will do outside research about this issue and pull evidence, ideas, and models from sources.

This paper will move through five-six sections:

1. A one-paragraph introduction identifying the topic and providing background. Include a thesis presenting your position and key reasoning.
2. One paragraph explaining the goal your solution proposes to achieve. What benefit will come from adopting your proposal, or what negative outcome could be avoided? And what are the stakes for achieving this goal? How do we know it matters?
3. A two-paragraph section developing your position in detail and providing evidence that your solution will actually achieve the goal you've set.
4. An optional one paragraph counterargument. Consider objections that opponents might make or concerns a reader might have. Show why your proposed solution would still be the best option.
5. One paragraph explaining the stakes for the US education system adopting your position. This may focus on benefits that would come from taking your stance, negative consequences of not taking your stance, or a combination of both. Remember to provide compelling evidence that these consequences will actually happen.
6. A one-paragraph conclusion giving a comprehensive picture of your proposed solution and how it would achieve the intended goal.

For each section, be as detailed as possible. Remember our focus on epistemology—each paragraph should address not only what we know, but how we know it and how reliable our knowledge is. Support your claims as solidly as you can. This will probably involve outside research. Be sure that your research is as reliable and authoritative as possible.

The education issues you may choose from are:

- University general education requirements
- Standardized tests
- Graded assessment
- Pass/fail courses
- Charter schools
- Public school funding
- Student loan debt
- Tuition rates
- Single-gender schools
- Title IX
- Trans students in sports
- Student privacy rights
- Special education
- School lunches
- You can pitch me a different topic

Researched sources must be correctly documented in MLA format, both for the in-text citations and on the Works Cited list. See *Writing Arguments* chapter 18 for more info about MLA format.

Page length requirement: A *thorough* argument with *no* bullshit.

Grading Criteria: Your essay should:

1. include a thesis clearly presenting your stance and rationale,
2. support your stance with evidence from research and with reasoning,
3. clearly explain why your goal would benefit the US education system,
4. follow the required essay structure,
5. use correct MLA in-text and bibliographic citations for all outside sources.

Philosophical Debate Video Assignment Sheet

Final Draft Due: Tu. 11 Apr. by 11:59PM

This project will require you and a partner to delve into a major philosophical issue and present *both sides*. One of you will present each side in a debate style video, choosing from one of two debate styles. However, unlike traditional debates, the goal here is not to “win” but for you and your partner to work together to present both positions as strongly as possible. You must write the script/position statements collaboratively, identifying the most persuasive arguments for each side. Then in the video itself, one of you will argue for each of those sides.

The video must look as professional as you’re capable of making it. How you choose to film and edit is up to you (though I recommend using the Penn State resources we will learn about in class). You can be in the same room and film the debate live, record through Zoom, create animated avatars, or take a different approach. But the final video should show evidence that it has been edited to present both perspectives as professionally as possible.

Structure this debate in one of two ways:

Formal Debate	Open Debate
Each side presents a statement outlining their own argument. This should be thorough, using supporting evidence and logical reasoning to present your case. Include a thesis that clearly states your position.	Each side presents a brief statement outlining their own argument. Include a thesis that clearly states your case.
After each side has presented their statement, each presents a shorter rebuttal, responding to and critiquing the other side’s statement.	A conversational back-and-forth in which each participant presents arguments and responds to the other side. While the approach will be informal, the arguments should still be well-supported with evidence and reasoning.

Regardless of which structure you and your partner select, each side should get roughly the same amount of speaking time.

For each side of this debate, be as detailed as possible. Remember our focus on epistemology—each argument should address not only what your position is, but why you hold that position, how you know it’s the correct position, and how reliable your knowledge is. Support your claims as solidly as you can.

The topics you may choose to debate are:

- Is art or science more important to humanity?
- Should religion be abolished?
- Is the value of AI greater than the danger?
- Should social media be regulated by the government?
- Are our senses a trustworthy way to evaluate the world?
- Is rationalism or emotion a better way to assess human actions?
- Is it ethical to eat animals?
- Is it ever justified to invade another country?
- Should humans colonize space?
- Should society prioritize sustainability or full employment?

Video length requirement: *Thorough* arguments with *no* bullshit.

Grading Criteria: Your video should:

1. show that you have thought and written collaboratively to present both sides of the debate with the strongest evidence possible,
2. include a thesis presenting the position for each side,
3. use one of the required debate structures to present each side,
4. edit and polish the video so that it looks as professional as possible.

Letter to My Younger Self Assignment Sheet

Final Draft Due: Mon. 1 May by 11:59PM

For this final project you will think back over all the many lessons you've learned since you started university, and you will write a letter telling your younger self (i.e., just before you began college) the most important lesson you've learned. This can be a life lesson, a lesson about yourself as a person, something from your courses, etc. Reflect on what this lesson means for you—why is it important or how has it changed you?

In keeping with our course focus on epistemology, the core information you should pass on to your younger self is 1) what you now know that you didn't before, 2) how you know it, 3) how you know your knowledge is reliable. Draw on whatever evidence you think will build the strongest case that you've developed this knowledge, though personal experience should probably be part of this letter.

Page length requirement: A *thorough* argument with *no* bullshit.

Grading Criteria: Your essay should:

1. clearly state one major lesson you've learned this year,
2. provide evidence showing how you learned this lesson,
3. reflect on the meaning of the lesson for you.