A List of Tasks and Resources for Argument Papers

Decide what position you want to take on the topic.
- Remember, you don’t have to have all the answers, but carve out the territory where you do have an opinion that you can make the thesis of your paper. Don’t simply report on what others have said and leave it up to your reader. What do you think?
  ➢ Resources: Re-reading the sources for the topic you want to write about could be useful. An “Issue Map” for the topic (a summary of our work to synthesize the readings) is posted for each topic.

Plan the content of the argument, keeping your audience in mind.
- What points can you make to support your thesis? What evidence is available to support the points?
- What might readers already think or believe about your topic? Are there misconceptions you need to correct, or background information that will be helpful?
- What potential objections or challenges to your thesis or supporting points are you aware of from the readings, or can imagine readers having?
- Which of your underlying values are likely shared? (These can be simply stated, or even just assumed.) Which may not be? (These could use some support.)
- How might you establish credibility with your audience?
- Are there ways you might appeal to audience values or emotions?
- **Make the sources work for you**: What ideas and information in the readings provide support for the points you want to make?
  ➢ Resources:
    - Argument planning worksheet and template posted in D2L
    - Pages 252-54 of *Practical Argument*, as well as the sections on specific types of arguments (especially likely to be useful: Evaluation, 484-86, and Proposal, 518-23).

Plan the organization of the paper, keeping your audience in mind.
- Draw on your existing skill. Organizing a paper using sources is essentially the same task as organizing any other paper. What order can your put your points in to best take readers from where they may be at the beginning to where you want them to be at the end?
- Include an effective title, introduction, and conclusion.
  ➢ Resources: I have a powerpoint of some general tips posted, or see your writing handbook (for example, *Rules for Writers* 8th edition pages 19-28)

Incorporate material from the sources into your organization and into your sentences.
  ➢ Resources: Pages 323-24 and 326-27 of *Practical Argument*, handouts
Handle source material appropriately.
- When quoting a source, use the exact wording and indicate the quotation with quotation marks.
- You can make minor changes for clarification, or omit part of a quotation. Indicate these changes.
- When not quoting, remember to paraphrase thoroughly.
- Pages 316-18 of *Practical Argument* for paraphrasing, p. 325 for making changes to quotations. Pages 358-61 are useful for both citing and quoting/paraphrasing.

Cite your sources.
- Wherever you use information, ideas, or words you found in a source, include a citation.
- List all sources used on a Works Cited page.
- Use in-text citations keyed to the Works Cited page
- Resources: See pages 355-56 of *Practical Argument* on when you need to cite a source.
- Remember that I have posted the information for all the readings, put into MLA Works Cited page format. Copy what you need.
- You can use the example Works Cited page on p. 349 of *Practical Argument* as a model. Note that sources are listed in alphabetical order, according to whatever is at the beginning of the entry, and laid out with the “hanging indent” format.
- See pages 39-51 of *Research and Documentation in the Electronic Age* for examples of in-text citations. Especially note example 23, indirect source (p. 49).
- I have posted screen captures (for Word users) showing how to get your text in hanging indent format.

Check your grammar, punctuation, etc.
- Don’t try to do this at the same time you are worrying about the other aspects of the paper.
- Check especially for the kinds of mistakes you know you are likely to make.
- Resources: “Sentence-level issues” section in D2L includes strategies for proofreading effectively and handouts on a number of common problem areas.

Check the small details.
- When referring to titles of sources in your paper, treat them as they appear in the Works Cited entry (article titles in quotation marks, books and periodicals in italics).
- Refer to authors of sources (and anyone else) by full name the first time, and last name subsequently.
- Watch placement of punctuation: close quotation marks before a citation, final punctuation after.
- Review the guidelines for document format. Especially, remember to number pages and staple/clip pages.