

Editorial Arguments

purpose of this unit

As we begin our work in this course and our consideration of the arguments that surround the 2008 presidential election, this unit gives you the opportunity to join in the discussion in several ways. In this unit, you will learn to consider form, genre, and audience in argument by producing and three different arguments on the same topic and supporting the same position.

required products and deadlines

[9/11] choice of topic
[9/16] letter to the editor
[9/23] choice of venue for op-ed
[9/25] op-ed
[10/2, 10/7] humorous editorial product
[10/14] portfolio for Editorial Arguments Unit

overall description of this unit

As we begin concentrating on the rhetoric around the presidential election, you'll likely begin to develop opinions about many of the issues raised. It's important, first of all, to choose an aspect of the election that interests you because you'll be producing three assignments based on the topic. The topic should be related to the 2008 presidential election in some way but be relatively narrow and focused. For example, rather than choosing to discuss portrayals of John McCain as a candidate, you could focus in on arguments about his place as a liberal conservative or his military background. Or if you wanted to write about healthcare, you could focus on Barack Obama's plan for changing our healthcare system.

Throughout the unit, you will also be reading and blogging about sample arguments that you read or view. Some of these we'll discuss in class, considering them as examples for your work in this unit; those not discussed in class will be useful for providing additional context for your topic and arguments.

letter to the editor

For the first part of this unit, you'll locate a recently published (between September 7th and 10th) article or editorial on your topic. You will read the article closely to understand the author's argument. Then, you will respond to the argument in a Letter to the Editor of the magazine, newspaper, or website where the article was published. Your response should avoid the "he's wrong, I'm right" style of many letters to the editor and should instead focus on the argument of the original article. What is the author saying? How/Why is (s)he ineffective? What do you have to add to the discussion?

logistics

[length] 500 – 700 words
[format] letter that is addressed to a real editor (which may be sent), use double spaced 12-point Times New Roman

op-ed

In the second part of this unit, you will have the opportunity to write your own editorial. This piece will include your own persuasive position statements. You'll have to make conscious decisions about how best to reach the audience and what kind of voice you need to use to contribute to this venue. This will also help you experience just how much persuasion depends on an audience's position before they read as well as how much argument ties into ethos and pathos.

logistics

[length] 750 – 1000 words
[format] try to layout your op-ed like others in this space (whether a web- or print-version)

humorous editorial product

For the final part of this unit, you'll use the same position as your Op-Ed piece but will be revising it for a different venue and audience. Essentially, then, the result will be making the same point as the Op-Ed but will use different methods to make that point and will look significantly different. For this portion, you could create an editorial cartoon like those in the opinion section of any newspaper, an article that could appear on a site like *The Onion*, or a script for a skit/monologue that could appear on television (*Colbert Report*, *SNL*, *Late Show*, etc.). Overall, your product needs to use humor to make a serious point.

logistics

[length] depends on product
[format] depends on venue