Writing and Revising Techniques for an Argument Essay

*Review introductory strategies. Remember your introduction is responsible for grabbing your reader’s attention, but it is also responsible for grounding the reader in the discussion. Some effective strategies for the analysis essay include discussing the context of the article (when and where it was written), the context of the author (who is the author, what is his/her political or cultural stance, what authority does s/he speak from), and an introduction to the topic the article explores (a brief history of advertising, a personal story, defining terms, etc.). Do not use all of these in your introduction. Be sure to include what you believe the main claim of the article is either in your introduction or as part of your thesis.

*Your thesis statement is your main claim about the article. This is an argumentative claim, but it should not revolve around the article’s argument. Rather, it should be a claim about how the article (as a whole) functions. You do not need to break your claim down into the parts that will be discussed in your paragraphs, but you may choose to do so. A claim is basically a strong opinion that is supported by explanation and evidence during the course of the essay.

*In your body paragraphs, you will be exploring your main claim more thoroughly by breaking it down into detailed elements. You should begin by identifying the article’s audience and proving how you know this by examining specific details in the article.

*After you identify audience, you should begin exploring strategies specifically. Some strategies you may want to look into are the author’s language (how is that contributing to the argument?), the examples (what patterns do you notice? How do they work to further the author’s argument?), the author’s reputation (how does the author work to convince his/her audience that s/he has the authority to speak on this issue? is s/he using personal experience? theory? history?) Any of the above could be the main claim of your essay which you then break into specific examples for each paragraph. Each paragraph could be one example of how language is being employed or one specific pattern the author creates with his/her examples. Do not try to incorporate all of these in one essay. Choose one and then explore it fully with several examples. Use specific quotes from the text that support your claim and then explain exactly how these examples support your claim. This is where the real analysis takes place.

*In your conclusion, you should recap your argument. This is more than just a summary because you can now discuss your ideas with the knowledge that your audience has an extensive understanding of your claim. Although this recap is necessity to refocus your readers on your main claim (if you don’t recap, your audience will leave your essay thinking about your last chuck of evidence instead of your claim as a whole), you should also create a conclusion that ties up any loose ends but leaves your reader thinking about what you have said. This does not mean that you should end your essay with a question or a quote—these are usually less effective concluding strategies. Instead, you could encourage your readers to think about the article and the issues it addresses in a larger context. Discuss possible implications for the argument or for this discussion in general.