

# Developing academic arguments

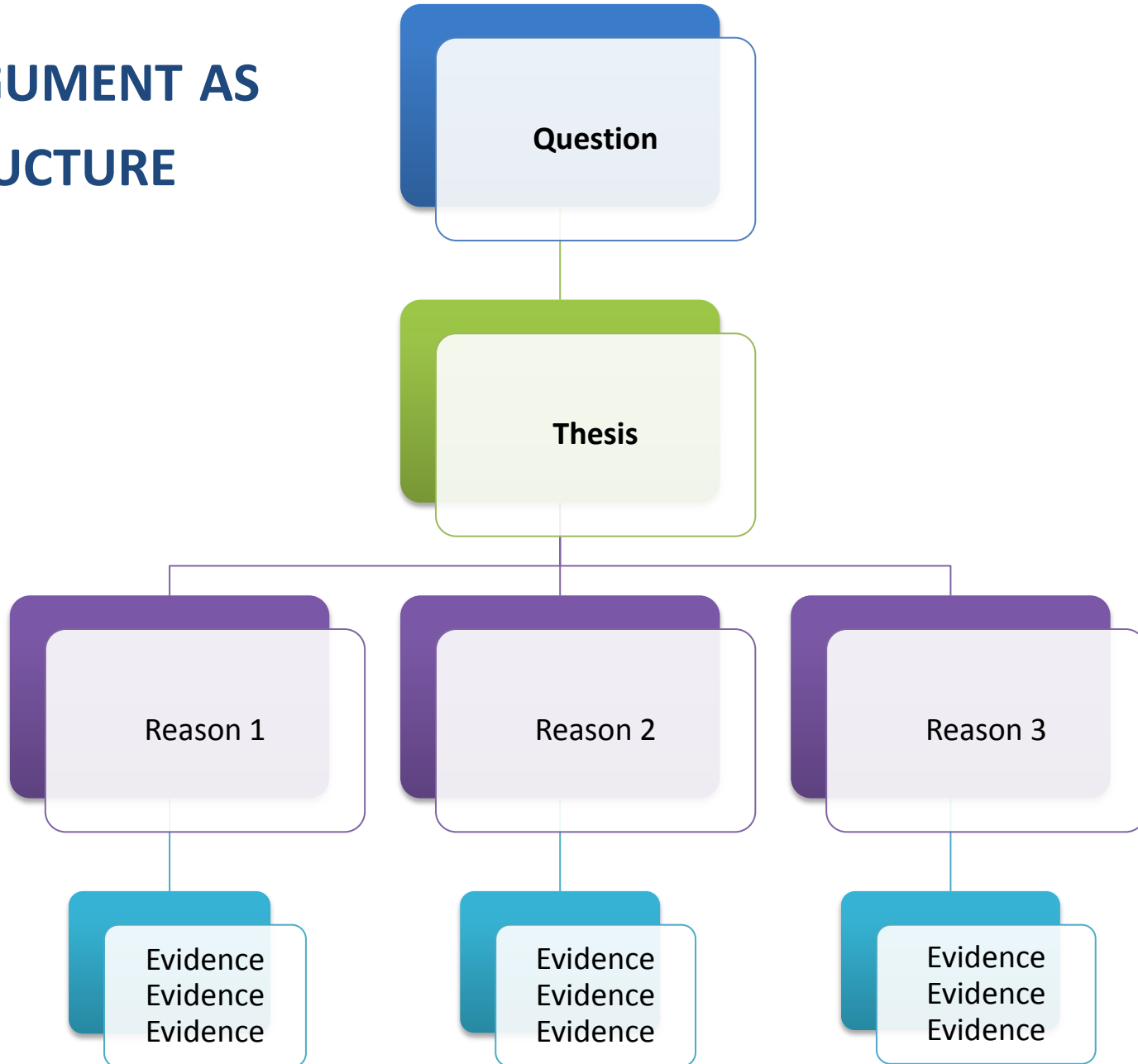
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# Why argue?

- Exploring complexity
- Knowing the field
- Playing by the rules of the game
- Caring about the topic
- Applying intensity
- Backing your judgement
- Tolerating uncertainty

# ARGUMENT AS STRUCTURE



# Argument at uni

- [The Argument Clinic](#)
- More than just your Opinion
- More than just somebody else's Assertion
- More than just emotional Ranting
- More than just Verbal diarrhoea
- Based on your own critical approach: thinking  
researching writing speaking

# 7 different ways that readers/markers can 'hear' your 'voice' in your writing

- *Thesis*: this essay argues that; the main purpose of this article is to...
- *Ideas chosen*: research + notetaking = thinking critically/creatively
- *Order of points*: narrow to broad? chronological? start with most convincing?
- *Evidence chosen*: which parts of somebody else's work do you draw on eg sources of law
- *Use of evidence*: Quote/Paraphrase/Summarise + reporting verbs
- *Connections*: transition signals, familiar + unfamiliar,
- *Dialogue*: modes of writing, to what extent + synthesis

# Academic writing: features

- Describes
- Categorises
- Synthesises
- Evaluates

# Describes: examples

- Durkheim stated that education was “part of a socialising process which begins when the child is born and prepares him or her for adulthood in society” (Pickering 2001, p165).
- According to Venkat (1982), the type of education that students receive depends on the willingness of teachers to challenge the norms of society.

# Categorises: examples

- Brown (1998) belongs to the law and literature tradition which focuses on the text of law as a narrative.
- Ng (2001) and Barassi (1999) alike use their sociological framework to focus on the 'big picture' of law.



# Synthesises: examples

- Similarly, Dewey condemned the traditional view of culture as blatantly aristocratic in its inequity and chose instead to ground culture and aesthetics in common experience (Apple & Teitelbaum 2001, p.180)
- Although Gore (1993) argues clearly for a feminist education in theory, Kenway's (1997) approach reveals the hurdles in practice.

# Evaluates: examples

- The importance of bell hooks' work is that it makes teaching seem like a dynamic process, rather than a staid transmission model.
- Both Freire and Giroux provide a clear focus for why the liberatory approach to learning can be effective and engaging at all levels of education.

# Essay: purpose and function

- to show knowledge and to explore complexity
  - Argument = Points + Evidence
  - Voice: yours + others
  - Structure – overall + paragraph + sentence

# Paragraph structure

- Topic sentence: what is the main point you want to make in this paragraph?
- Evidence: Q/P/S [other sources] x2
- Evaluation: your evaluation of the evidence
- Concluding sentence: in general terms what is the connection between the point made in this paragraph and your overall argument?

## Paragraph – early Australian legal system

1. Convict women adapted to the demand for wives by participating in a sort of 'marriage mart' in the convict factories.
2. Unwilling women were judged unnatural and a threat to social order.
3. An 1837 report into the convict system explained that the women lined up like cattle in a fair.
4. The potential husband, an emancipated convict or a free settler, inspected them and motioned to the one of his choice, who then stepped to the side.
5. If the woman refused, the man tried another, whom he interviewed.
6. But generally the girls were interested, adopting flirtatious poses, shy smiles and blushes (Damousi 1995, p.41; Summers 1975, p282).
7. After all, marriage was a passport to freedom.

**Q: 'Censorship changes according to time and culture.'**

**Discuss.**

**The 'Before' Paragraph:**

- Definitions are also often compromises between what the definer thinks and what they think they should think. They may often feel obliged to conform to a mythical community standard. They also reflect the times in which they are written. Many Victorian works of art, for example, were once considered pornographic.

# Structure: topic & Concluding sentences

- **Definitions of pornography are subject to negotiation and change.** Definitions are also often compromises between what the definer thinks and what they think they should think. They may often feel obliged to conform to a mythical community standard. They also reflect the times in which they are written. Many Victorian works of art, for example, were once considered pornographic. **Therefore any discussion of pornography should account for such modifications.**

# Re-write in academic style

- Definitions are often compromises between individual and social standards. Individuals may often feel obliged to conform to a mythical community standard. Definitions also reflect the historical and social context in which they are formulated. Many Victorian works of art, for example, were once considered pornographic.



# Offering support: evidence & citation

- Definitions are also often compromises between what the definer thinks and what they think they should think. They may often feel obliged to conform to ‘a mythical community standard’ (**Garcia 1999, p.8**). They reflect the times in which they are written. For example, **as Thomas argues**, many Victorian works of art were once considered pornographic (**1979, p.376**).

# Opposing voices: having a discussion

- Definitions are also often compromises between what the definer thinks and what they think they should think. They may often feel obliged to conform to a mythical community standard. **Some critics have argued that they are static and universal. However, perhaps** they reflect the times in which they are written. Many Victorian works of art, for example, were once considered pornographic.

# The 'After' Paragraph

- Definitions of pornography are subject to negotiation and change. Definitions are often compromises between individual and social standards. Individuals may often feel obliged to conform to a mythical community standard (Garcia 1999, p.8). Some critics have argued that they are static and universal (Boya 1999; Friedmann 2001). However, to some extent definitions reflect the historical and social context in which they are formulated. For example, as Thomas argues, many Victorian works of art, were once considered pornographic (1979, p.376). Therefore, any discussion of pornography should account for such modifications.

# Transition Signals

It was raining,



she went to the beach.

International law does not work,



powerful countries refuse to participate.

# Questions to ask when reading

- Narrative – and then ...
- Descriptive - What? When? Who? Where?
- Explanatory – Why? How?
- Critical – make a judgment between competing interpretations

# Knowing the field

- Pathfinder
- Contextualiser
- Translator
- Pedagogue
- Student

# Levels of analysis

- [Rick & Morty – eyeholes](#)
- Witness: observing the story
  - Love story
  - Marginalised others
  - Hidden identities unveiled
- Historian: explaining the story in context
  - Characters warning about being ripped off
  - Commodification of everything
  - Emotion used to sell/advertise
- Mythologiser: making the story fit our own needs
  - Watch the show for laughter
  - Share with others
  - Critique of social/traditional media