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## Rubric for the Assessment of the Argumentative Essay

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# Rubric for the Assessment of the Argumentative Essay

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## DOCUMENT

### Document

Rubric for the Assessment of the Argumentative Essay

The Argumentative Essay is graded based on five sections: Introduction/Conclusion, Main Points, Organization, Works Cited, and Mechanics. The point range is 0 - 3. For the sake of space, only the highest and lowest scores are used, and the focus is on three sections: Main Points, Organization, and Mechanics.

#### Main Points:

3 = Three or more main points are well developed with supporting details. Refutation paragraph(s) acknowledges the opposing view and summarizes their main points.

0 = Less than three main points, with poor development of ideas. Refutation missing or vague.

#### Organization:

3 = Logical, compelling progression of ideas in essay; clear structure which Enhances and showcases the central idea or theme and moves the reader through the text. Organization flows so smoothly the reader hardly thinks about it. Effective, mature, graceful transitions exist throughout the essay.

0 = Arrangement of essay is unclear and illogical. The writing lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details or events seem strung together in a loose or random fashion; there is no identifiable internal structure and readers have trouble following the writer's line of thought. Few, forced transitions in the essay or no transitions are present.

#### Mechanics:

3 = Sentence structure is correct. Punctuation and capitalization are correct.

0 = Work contains multiple incorrect sentence structures. There are four or more errors in punctuation and/or capitalization.

*\*This Rubric is from Yale University English Department.*

### TERMS

- \* Well Developed
- \* Logical, Compelling Progression
- \* Smooth Flowing Organization
- \* Correct Sentence Structure
- Correct Punctuation and Capitalization

## GOALS

### Goals v. Theory

Goals of the Assignment:

- Well developed argument with supporting points
- Written logically and progressing, smooth organization
- A Central idea or thesis which moves the reader forward
- Correct punctuation and capitalization

### Bain quotes

"Each paragraph has a plan dictated by the nature of composition. According to such plan, **every pertinent statement has a suitable place**, in that place, it contributes to the general effect; and out of that place, it makes confusion" (1148).

### Keith Fort (1971) -

"The teacher who would limit his students exclusively to the question form is obviously insisting on almost total conformity in the classroom - an uncommon rigidity in an age where most are conscious of the importance of form in teaching" (631).

### Hill quotes

"It does not undertake to furnish a person with something to say; but it does undertake to tell him how best to say that with which he has provided himself," (1149)

## THEORY

Theory utilized:

Sharon Crowley, from "The Methodical Memory on Display: The Five Paragraph Theme"

"Bain's application of methodical principles to the development of paragraphs exacerbated the emerging tendency of nineteenth-century composition theory to concentrate on the shape of discourse, rather than on its contents or on the persons who compose and read it" (272).

Analysis:

If Bain's theory is used, students will focus more on form and will limit how well developed their argument is based on formal constraints. Also, being forced to write using a central idea or thesis limits student's creativity and discourages them from using their own voice.

Recommendations:

**Valerie Balester's "How Writing Rubrics Fail: Toward a Multicultural Model"**

**Valerie Balester (2012) –** Rubrics "oversimplify and standardize writing, thus fail a significant segment of our student population, namely students of color or students whose first language is not always edited American English" (63).

## RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

ADVANTAGES

If the teacher were to embrace the ideas of Valerie Balester, then the rubric would allow room students whose first language is not English, and the "encouragement of multiculturalism, and tolerance of all varieties and types of World englishes," the student is then free of formal constraints and able to use their authentic voice.

Grid Category Analysis

Valerie Balester "values efficiency over dialogue; oversimplified and over standardized" writing. "The problem with uncritical use of rubrics, as I suggest in this chapter, is that they oversimplify and standardize writing, thus failing a significant segment of our student population" (63).

Questions for further study:

If English departments were to embrace the ideas of Valerie Balester and Gloria Anzaldua, focusing more on multiculturalism in the classroom, how much of the "Rubric for the Assessment of the Argumentative Essay" change, and what kind of changes would they be?