

**This is the list of topics from which you will choose one to explore for your final argument paper. If you write on a topic that is not on this list, you will receive a zero for the final paper.**

Is censorship of the arts ever justified? How do we balance freedom of speech against protecting citizens who may be harmed in some way by that speech?

Is bottled water a reasonable convenience, or should its use be severely reduced to emergencies only? This issue is about more than ecology – it also involves freedom of choice.

What kind of penalties would be fair and appropriate for drunk driving repeat offenders?

What are the advantages and drawbacks of both open and closed adoptions?

Statues of Confederate figures are being removed, even destroyed, at various sites around the country. Is this justifiable, or are we attempting to suppress or ignore parts of our national history just because it is problematic? How do we deal with this issue in a way that balances both concerns?

## Argument Checklist

- ✓ ✓ ✓ Have you offered a title that is more than just a label, one that suggests to the reader that he or she will find something interesting in the paper?
  
- ✓ ✓ ✓ Have you written an introduction that arouses the reader's curiosity or interest?
  
- ✓ ✓ ✓ Is your topic sentence clear and concise? Is it constructed with key words and controlling ideas that will guide the organization of the paper?
  
- ✓ ✓ ✓ Have you used transitional expressions to connect your rhetorical units logically as well as grammatically?
  
- ✓ ✓ ✓ Have you offered a fair and balanced analysis of your topic, suggesting to your reader that you have examined all sides of the issue before coming to an informed stand, one that is based, not on emotion or opinion, but on logic and evidence?
  
- ✓ ✓ ✓ Have you explored every aspect of your topic, offering persuasive evidence that will answer your readers' potential questions?
  
- ✓ ✓ ✓ Have you edited your paper, checking for spelling mistakes, grammatical errors, sentence fragments, and other distractions?

**Final Paper - Argument Essay**

**ENGL 1180**

**200 Points**

Write an argument paper on the topic you have chosen from the list. **If you write on a topic that is not on the list, you will receive a zero for the paper grade.** Consider the various strategies we have studied in class and make some decisions about which ones will work best in offering the type of evidence you have.

Construct a title and an introduction that will interest the reader. Do not begin with “the announcement” of your thesis - “I am going to persuade you that Confederate statues should be destroyed” or “This paper is about censorship of the arts.” Create a title and an introduction that will attract the reader’s attention, one that will make him or her want to read your paper.

Your topic sentence, your thesis, should appear in the first paragraph after the introduction, clearly stating the focus of your paper. Consider which key words will clarify your general topic into a thesis that contains controlling ideas that will guide the organization of the essay. It cannot be something vague and general, like “No one should ever get involved in a closed adoption,” but a sentence with specific terms regarding your subject. “Closed adoptions can often make it psychologically difficult for a person to form his or her own identity, especially during adolescence.” This sentence contains key words that require definition and explanation. You would have to define why identity is particularly important during the teen years, and discuss both the advantages and problems with the adoption process as a whole.

Define your terms for the reader. If your general topic is censorship of the arts, you must break down and define in your thesis sentence just what aspect you will be examining. For the purposes of your argument, what do you mean by censorship? Do you mean CDs with warning labels? Do you mean the closing of art galleries for controversial displays? Do you mean artists being arrested and charged with violating decency laws? Also, what aspect of artistic expression are you addressing? Is it visual arts, music, painting, books? Looking at every type of censorship of every type of artistic expression would require you to write a book, and could not be covered in any sort of detail in a 5 to 7 page paper. A more manageable and limited thesis such as “The laws that require certain musicians to label their CDs as ‘explicit’ or ‘adult only’ are dangerous to our right to free speech” would be far more effective. This gives you a specific art form as well as some terms to define and explore.

Think about persuasive strategies we have practiced in class. In writing about adoption policies, you might persuade your reader that open adoption is problematic by examining the cause and effect relationship between belonging to two families and the difficulty of constructing one’s identity. In writing about the laws that require music with explicit language and subject matter to be labeled, you might talk about the process by which this became law, or a narrative example of one musician’s reaction to this level of censorship. You could compare and contrast lyrics from other time periods, in which music was not so legally and specifically censored, with lyrics from current songs that do require labeling today.

Make sure you have some type of concession paragraph to assure your reader that your position is fair and balanced, that you have examined both sides of the issue. “Parents, of course, have the right to be concerned about the kind of language and behavior their young children may be exposed to. Children *do* have a tendency to model what they see in adults’ behavior.” This concedes that you realize that the opposition has what they feel are good reasons for supporting this kind of censorship. But this does not destroy your argument, and in fact, gives you the opportunity to educate them about weaknesses in their own views. “But this government interference in child-raising amounts to an invasion of privacy; it limits the parents’ right to make decisions about how to raise their own children. Surely not every parent in America shares the same ideas about child-raising, so how can the government justify making unilateral decisions about what is suitable for children and what is not? Isn’t that the parents’ responsibility?”

If you quote someone in your paper, make sure you identify the person and enclose the words in double quotation marks.

According to James Fell, Associate Director of the National Department of Transportation, “About one-third of all drivers arrested or convicted of drunk driving are repeat offenders.”

You must, of course, offer some kind of conclusion, but it cannot be merely a repetition of your thesis sentence. It should remind the reader of your thesis, but should also expand on the reader’s new understanding of your thesis.

“Clearly, this brand of censorship is about more than vulgar language and violent images; its true intent is not to protect children, but to allow a vocal minority to limit and

qualify the concept of free speech guaranteed in the Constitution. No American who believes in a democracy can allow this attempt to go unchallenged.”

This paper must be typed, and in MLA format; that is, a running header, an information paragraph, a title that is centered, and everything double spaced, and in Times New Roman 12, printed on only one side of the paper. The paper must be a minimum of **five full pages**, written in clear, grammatical English. I will deduct 20 points for every page that is missing from the 5-page minimum. For example, if you have only 3 ½ pages, I will deduct 20 points for page 5, and 10 points for ½ of page 4. In addition to the portion of your grade based on content, I will deduct **two points** for each MLA violation, **two points** for every use of the second person, **two points** for every sentence fragment, **two points** for every comma splice or run-on sentence, **two points** for every verb tense error, **two points** for every error of subject-verb agreement, and **two points** for every spelling error, so it is essential that you spend some time on the editing process after the paper is written.

**The paper is due on or before Wednesday, April 29, 2020. Any paper submitted after that date and time will receive a zero; no exceptions whatsoever.**

