Argument Essay
Introduction

Description	Introduction to writing an essay based on argument
Task Type	Assessment Task, scaffolded in three parts: ✳ Individual (at home) ✳ Group (in class) ✳ Individual (at home)
Time	✳ Individual (at home) ✳ Group activity, in tutorial class (60 minutes) ✳ Individual essay (at home)
Level	Introductory
Class Size	Any size class, group activity best in class size less than 30
Learning Outcomes	At the end of this series of tasks students should be able to: ✳ Evaluate internet sources for reliability and bias ✳ Analyse written arguments and counterarguments ✳ Write a short essay presenting and justifying an argument ✳ Reflect on the writing process and evaluate their own learning
Method	1. Evaluating Sources (Individual assessment) Provide the students with a variety of sources (4-5) about a controversial topic in your discipline. Try to use newspaper articles, websites, Wikipedia and one or two peer-reviewed journal articles if possible. Give the students a framework for evaluating sources (Walton & Archer, 2004). Who? Why? For Whom? What? When? Have the students evaluate each of those sources by answering the following questions:

- **Who** has written this source? Who has checked it to see ensure it is correct?
- **Why** should I believe them? (Do they have any authority? Could they be biased in any way by belonging to a particular commercial enterprise or political party, for example?)
- **Who** is the intended audience of this source?
- **What** is the main point that the author is trying to make in the source?
- **When** was the source written and have things changed that would affect its validity?

Have the students attempt to write a reference for each of the sources (a template that the students can use is given with the materials later.)

Ask students to mark in the margin the main argument and any main points that the author makes to justify that argument. They should use a different colour pen to mark any counter arguments to the position.

The purpose of the above is threefold. Firstly, it helps the students learn to evaluate articles for the quality of the source, secondly, you can use their draft references as a starting point to have a short discussion in class on your referencing technique and thirdly, it ensures that they have all read the articles before undertaking the group tutorial that follows.

2. Analysing an article (Group activity in tutorial class)

Put the students into small groups (2-4 people per group). Ensure that they learn each other's names. Ask them to create a poster that depicts the arguments for and against the issue. Provide them with large pieces of paper and coloured pens. The poster should match arguments and counterarguments from the sources in some way. They can use a mind-map, columns or any creative method of doing this. They can cut out quotes and stick them onto the paper or paraphrase them. They should identify where each quote or paraphrased idea comes from by referencing it (according to referencing method chosen). The back of the poster should include the references written out in the format required at your university. They should also put * and ** next to arguments that they think are particularly well-justified or important.

The purpose of this activity or assessment is to help them learn to analyse arguments and how to combine different people's ideas into one piece of work. They also learn how to reference properly.

3. Write an short argumentative essay (individual assessment)

Find additional sources on the issue. Ask students to present both points of view and to articulate their own view and justify that view. Use appropriate referencing (approximately 500 words). Have the students self-evaluate (or

	use peer review) using the rubric provided below. (Use the same rubric to evaluate the written piece.) Ask students to reflect on what they have learnt from the three stages of the project (200 words).
Concluding Activity	This is an assessment so students should be given appropriate feedback at each stage of the activity. Their reflection and self-evaluation are important stages in their learning.

Assessment	Three assessment tasks:
	
	   ✱ Assessment of evaluating sources (template for students to use is attached).
	   ✱ Second part can be used as assessment or as an activity.
	   ✱ Third part is an essay – rubric for marking is attached.

Tips	Start this exercise near the beginning of a first semester, first year unit, using each task to scaffold the next task.
Student Instructions	Depends on topic
Additional Material	Template for students to use in evaluating the sources. Rubric for self-evaluation (or peer evaluation) and for lecturer evaluation of the essay.

Evaluating Sources

Fill in the following table for each of the sources that you have been given.

Reference for the article in APA format	
✱ Who has written this source? Who has checked it to see ensure it is correct?	
✱ Why should I believe them? (Do they have any authority? Could they be biased in any way by belonging to a particular commercial enterprise or political party, for example?)	
✱ Who is the intended audience of this source?	
✱ What is the main point that the author is trying to make in the source?	
✱ When was the source written and have things changed that might affect its validity?	

Rubric for First Year Argumentative Essay

The following rubric (next page) provides a way of evaluating the generic skills that are involved in writing an argumentative essay.   Specific discipline knowledge might need to be added as a criterion.

Criterion	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
Analysis of Argument	• provides little evidence of their ability to understand and analyze the argument	• does not identify or analyze most of the important features of the argument, although some analysis is present	• identifies and analyzes important features of the argument and counterarguments	• clearly identifies important features of the arguments and counter-arguments and analyzes them in a thoughtful way	• clearly identifies and insightfully analyzes important features of the argument
Organisation of Essay	• provides little evidence of the ability to develop an organized response	• is limited in the logical development and organization of ideas	• develops and organizes ideas satisfactorily	• develops ideas clearly, organizes them logically, and connects them with appropriate transitions	• develops ideas cogently, organizes them logically, and connects them with clear transitions
Justification of point of view	• fails to present and justify own opinion	• offers little support to justify their own position	• presents and justifies own position without addressing other views	• clearly presents and justifies own view while qualifying or integrating contrary views	• effectively supports their point of view with well-reasoned, integrated arguments
Language	• contains many errors in grammar usage and language that result in incoherence	• language and grammar errors are distracting and show little evidence of proofreading	• demonstrates sufficient language ability to convey ideas with reasonable clarity	• language clearly and effectively communicates ideas	• language style enhances the communication of ideas
References	• Has not referenced appropriately • No additional references have been used • Plagiarism will mean an automatic Fail	• Attempted referencing but has not referenced according to the APA referencing system • Quality of additional references is poor	• Referencing is adequate although it may contain some flaws • Additional sources are evident and adequate	• Referencing is almost perfect and according to APA referencing technique • Additional sources are of good quality	• Referencing is perfect • Additional sources are of good quality