What *is* an argument and how do I develop one?

Dr Jeannette Stirling,  
Senior lecturer,  
Learning Development
This seminar will....

- Consider the ‘academic argument’ in Humanities & Social Sciences
- Provide tips for in-class presentations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Assessment 1</th>
<th>Assessment 2</th>
<th>Assessment 3</th>
<th>Assessment 4</th>
<th>Assessment 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| AUST101   | Week 5  
Review essay  
1000wds.  
20%             | Week 12  
Research essay  
2000wds.  
40%                          | Ongoing  
Tut. Participation  
10%                                                 |                                                   | Exam Period  
Final exam  
2 hrs.  
30%                                                   |
| ELL182    | Week 4  
In-class quiz  
10%                          | Week 6  
Report  
500+400wds.  
20%                   | Week 10*  
Report  
600+400wds.  
25%                   | Week 13  
Persuasive text  
800+600wds.  
30%                   | Week 15  
Portfolio / Participation  
15%                                                   |
| ENGL120   | Week 5  
In-class test  
15%                               | Week 9  
Close-reading Essay  
1200wds.  
35%                   | Ongoing  
Tut. Participation  
10%                                                 |                                                   | Exam Period  
Final exam  
1500-2000wds.  
40%                                                   |
| INDS150   | Week 4  
Reflective essay  
1000wds.  
30%               | Comm. Week 4  
Group research presentation  
30%                                                   |                                                   |                                                   | Exam Period  
Final exam  
1 hr.  
40%                                                   |
| SOC103    | Due Week 6  
A) Reading summaries X  
3 (250wds. each)  
30%                              | Due Week 6  
B) 1 x tutorial summary/personal reflection (400-500wds.)  
30%                                               | Week 12  
Questions & summarized answers  
30%                                                   | Ongoing  
Tut. participation  
10%                                                 | Exam Period  
Final exam  
1 hr.  
30%                                                   |
| GEOG121   | Week 4  
Tut. Report 1  
1000wds.  
20%                     | Week 9  
Tut. Report 2  
1000wds.  
20%                     | Week 13  
Tut. Report 3  
1000wds.  
20%                     | Weeks 5, 9, 13  
Online quizzes  
5% each  
15%                                               | Exam Period  
Final exam  
2 hrs.  
25%                                                   |
| HAS130    | Weeks 3, 5, 12  
3 x written exercises  
10% each  
30%                                      | Ongoing  
5 x in-class quizzes.  
2% each  
10%                                                  | Week 5  
Online blog  
5%                                                   | Weeks 9 & 10  
Group presentations  
30%                                                  | Week 13  
Media project  
25%                                                   |
So. What is an ‘argument’????

- an academic discussion that expresses a point of view;
- a position;
- a stance;
- an informed opinion;
- an angle;
✓ well-researched
  +
✓ logically structured
  +
✓ answer
  +
✓ to a particular question/s

Which involves a ...
How do I lay the groundwork for an academic discussion???

Critically assess the information/ideas relevant to the topic/question/s

Identify the range of points of view in the relevant readings.

What are their strengths & weaknesses?

Which point of view seems the most credible? Why?

What is your point of view on the topic?
And how do I present this discussion?

- As a series of main points or claims:
  - These points support your considered & logically sequenced response to the topic.

- Each point to be developed in a separate paragraph:
  - Every sentence in the paragraph will somehow relate to this point.

- Each point to be supported by evidence:
  - Examples;
  - explanations / critical evaluation;
  - reference to ideas of recognised authorities in the field.

- Overall cohesiveness:
  - Paragraphs (main points) should be logically ordered.
  - Clear links / connections between paragraphs (main points).
A Government web site (2009) that provides information to migrants about becoming an Australian citizen outlines those values that define national identity. These values include “equality of men and women”, “equality of opportunity”, “tolerance and mutual respect”. Future citizens are also told that these values are central to the security and ongoing prosperity of the nation. This essay examines these values in relation to the experiences of migrant women from non-English speaking backgrounds. Many of these women are subjected to exploitation in the workplace. They often remain invisible to unions and other organisations interested in workplace equity. Often they will also experience social isolation. Their difficulties in finding a way to live in ‘this place’ are reinforced by gender and the language barrier. It will be argued that the experiences of many migrant women from non-English speaking backgrounds fall short of the ideals of equality, tolerance and mutual respect.
The social research and analyses of the health of Indigenous Australians over the past two decades have provided the government, the health care system, and the community in general with an understanding of the poor health of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. Social research has highlighted the main health issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, the causes of these health issues and suggested possible solutions to improving health outcomes. It has also revealed the significant discrepancies between the health of Australian Aboriginal peoples and the general population. As a result, the country’s main Indigenous and non-Indigenous health bodies, non-government agencies and human rights organizations have come together in 2007 to promote a campaign called ‘Close the Gap’ in an effort to improve the health and life expectancy of Australia’s Indigenous peoples. The following discussion examines a selection of the key policies which have arisen from the social research and analyses that have contributed to the ‘Close the Gap’ initiative.
You then use paragraph structure & sequencing to develop your discussion…

Your idea/point (topic sentence) → Some evidence to support your point → Synthesis: connecting this point to your wider discussion / the topic / analysis.
Migrant women are frequently unaware of their rights in the workplace. They are commonly put in negative situations involving illegal pay rates; excessive working hours; sub-standard workplace conditions; racism and harassment (Singerman 1992). Gender, language and cultural factors can all play a part in keeping them from knowledge about their rights. For example, migrant women make up the majority of outworkers in the fashion industry and are often subjected to sub-standard working and pay conditions (Keane 1996). As Dyson has argued, these workers are “deprived of the most basic rights enjoyed by Australian factory workers” (2003, p137). These women can be expected to work twelve and eighteen hour days, seven days a week and be paid as little as a third of the award rate (Fares 1994; Keane 1996; Pender 2005).
So what???? I hear you snort!

Weeeell............
P2. Migrant women are frequently unaware of their rights in the workplace. They are commonly put in negative situations involving racism and harassment; excessive working hours; sub-standard workplace conditions and illegal pay rates (Singerman 1992). Gender, language and cultural factors can all play a part in keeping them from knowledge about their rights. For example, migrant women make up the majority of outworkers in the fashion industry and are often subjected to sub-standard working and pay conditions (Keane 1996). As Dyson has argued, these workers are “deprived of the most basic rights enjoyed by Australian factory workers” (2003, p137). These women can be expected to work twelve and eighteen hour days, seven days a week and be paid as little as a third of the award rate (Fares 1994; Keane 1996; Pender 2005).

P3. There have been numerous reports of racism and harassment in the workplace, particularly from authority figures and English speaking colleagues (Keane 1996; Dyson 2003; Pender 2005).

P4. In a study of the experiences of Italian migrants (Vasta 1991), migrant women talked about workplace situations where they were subject to excessive hours, sub-standard working conditions, and treatments from supervisors which they described as ‘unjust and degrading’…

P5. The minimal participation of non-English speaking women in unions is one of the primary reasons why so many of these women have been and are kept in the dark about legal rates of pay (Davis 2000).
Alperovitz asserts that Byrnes, Truman, and Stimpson believed that the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan would advance America’s political position in the Far East and their ability to partake in negotiations concerning the fate of Europe, and in particular, Eastern Europe.\textsuperscript{1} In a direct response to Alperovitz, Bernstein emphasizes the atomic bomb itself as being its own imperative in the decimation of Japan.\textsuperscript{2} Bernstein challenges the theory that the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan as an anti-Soviet strategy, seeing this as a relevant but not essential element in explaining the event.\textsuperscript{3} President Roosevelt allowed the secret production of the atomic bomb with the intention of using it to end war quickly when the time came.\textsuperscript{4} Operating under this premise, Bernstein asserts that Germany was the initial target for the attack but surrendered before the bomb was able to be tested, shifting the attention directly onto Japan; this would explain America’s lack of interest in finding alternatives to the use of the atomic bomb.\textsuperscript{5} Miles also comments on this theory, asserting that for America it was not a case of whether to use the bomb, it was a case of when.\textsuperscript{6} This argument has merit, however, Bernstein does not place enough emphasis on the strong anti-Soviet sentiment that was rife within the American government at this time. While this facet of the argument should not be considered the primary reason for the bombing of Japan its relevance, in combination with America’s relationship to Russia, is of great significance to this debate.
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Can you see how the student acknowledges the relevant sources here?
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Evaluating resources / moving the discussion along...

*** argues that...
*** asserts that...
*** points out that...
*** takes the view that...
*** concludes that...

*** claims that...
*** suggests that...
*** observes that...
*** proposes ...

However, *** insists that...

The evidence suggests that...
Three aspects of referencing ....

- **The ‘courtesy’:** the ‘thanks mate’ component where you respectfully acknowledge the intellectual contributions of others to your own thinking & writing.

- **The ‘mechanics’:** ensuring your citation information conforms to recommended style conventions.

- **The ‘art’:** strategically weaving research evidence into your discussion for maximum effect.
Migrant women are frequently unaware of their rights in the workplace. They are commonly put in negative situations involving illegal pay rates; excessive working hours; sub-standard workplace conditions; racism and harassment (Singerman 1992). Gender, language and cultural factors can all play a part in keeping them from knowledge about their rights. For example, migrant women make up the majority of outworkers in the fashion industry and are often subjected to sub-standard working and pay conditions (Keane 1996). As Dyson has argued, these workers are “deprived of the most basic rights enjoyed by Australian factory workers” (2003, p137). These women can be expected to work twelve and eighteen hour days, seven days a week and be paid as little as a third of the award rate (Fares 1994; Keane 1996; Pender 2005).
In *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (2001) Richard Flanagan examines parallels and distinctions between humans and nature and nature and civilization. For example, in the section chosen for close reading analysis, this theme is exemplified by Bojan’s comparison of their human existence in the wilderness of Tasmania to that of an animal’s: “We lived worse than dogs and I would not want it for a dog and did not want it for her and for me ... it cuts me every night into less than a fucken dog” (302). Tasmania is represented here as ‘wild’ and those who inhabited it in those times, before it was at all ‘tamed’ so to speak, lived in a way like animals and fought hard for survival and sustenance. At one point in this section of the narrative, Sonja describes her father as “that maddened animal wielding a sledge hammer” (245). In various ways the characters represent the desperate human plight to resist nature and ‘tame’ it, and in doing so ‘tame’ and control the ‘natural’ course of their own lives. Throughout *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, it is as if the wilderness is forever attempting to join rhythm with the lives of its inhabitants, yet because of human resistance time becomes ‘out of joint’ (Shakespeare 1.3.123).
This refers to the placement & formatting conventions of different referencing styles.
The ‘mechanics’ of a Harvard style reference list …

Broome, R 2010, *Aboriginal Australians*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney,


**NB:** *Note that the list is organised in alphabetical order by author.*


**NB:** Again, note that the list is organised in alphabetical order by author.


In-class presentations are usually graded on the following:

- Research
- Content
- Visual & oral communication
- Discussion
- Time management
Tip: don’t let anxiety overtake you before you begin

You mean I have to stand up and say something in front of the class?

Prepare, prepare, prepare

Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse.
If using Powerpoint: select an appropriate slide style ...

- **Click on ‘Design’** at top of screen to see available slide selection

- **What** is your presentation about?

- **Which** design provides the most effective aesthetic backdrop for your research?
Is a picture or graph worth a 1000 words?

- **Click on ‘Insert’** at top of screen
- **Select the item** you want to insert into your presentation
The effects of urban development on Koala habitat

Presenter 1 & Presenter 2
Are your slides…

✓ Easy to read with not too much writing?

✓ Visually interesting with pertinent images?

✓ Using effective colour (no pale yellow/green)?

✓ Presenting clear, concise, relevant points?
perhaps handouts….?

✓ Presentation title
✓ Names of presenters
✓ Key points central to discussion
✓ Critical questions arising from discussion (audience might be invited to discuss these with the presenting team at the conclusion of the presentation)
Presentation in action….

INTRODUCE your co-presenters at the outset of the presentation & practice handover between sections.

DEVELOP a delivery that has style.

SPEAK clearly to your audience NOT at them.

DISCUSS how each group member will stick to the recommended time limit.

PRACTISE working with the technology.
Checklist:

- **Have** you clearly introduced your topic & identified your position or thesis?
- **Have** you defined key terms & / or concepts for your audience?
- **Does** your discussion logically proceed from this position / thesis statement?
- **Have** you provided an in-depth view of the arguments/issues relating to their topic?
- **Does** your conclusion clearly follow on from your discussion points?
Have a beaut break!

What would you like to focus on the first week back after the break?