512 Memorandum: Persuasive & Advocacy Writing

A UW SSW Writing Center Workshop
Winter 2022
Land & Labor Acknowledgment

We are gathering in virtual space, and in the context of a university built on stolen lands of the Coast Salish peoples. We recognize the Indigenous peoples who have been stewards of this land for millenia, and pledge to do our part to care for the land and waterways.

We recognize the unpaid and underpaid labor of enslaved Africans, the incarcerated, migrant farmers, and many others upon whose work our country was founded, and pledge to support the fight for reparations and fair labor practices around the world.

Morgan Wells
Workshop Guidelines

- Interact through the chat box or unmute yourself
- We will be recording the first part of this workshop for those who could not attend
- The presentation will be followed by a Q & A session
- Please share your full name, program (Day, EDP Weekend, EDP Evening, etc.), and year (1, 2, 3, etc.) in the chat box for us to complete or cross-reference with your registration information
  - You can also rename yourself to include your pronouns
- For closed captioning: Click “Live transcript” → “Show subtitle”
Disclaimer

- Always refer to your instructor for final say in structure, expectations, and due dates!
Workshop Agenda

1. Assignment Overview and Paper Structure
2. Position Paper Format
3. Persuasive Writing Style
Overview
Purpose: Explore the framing of advocacy for a social issue to a specific audience.

- Introduction
- Systemic/Structural Causes
- Harmful Effects
- Strategy/Response/Policy
- Why should your audience support it?
Memo Format
Memo Format

- This assignment is a different format than other papers you may have written
- Your position paper will be 2-pages single-spaced and include the following elements:
  - **Title**: MEMORANDUM (bolded, centered, all caps)
  - **Heading**: (left-justified)
    - **TO**: Audience (be specific & use names where possible)
    - **FROM**: Your name, affiliation
    - **DATE**: Month (spelled out), day, full year
    - **SUBJECT**: Clear, succinct, attention-grabbing
  - **Footnotes**
MEMORANDUM

TO: House Education Committee &
Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
FROM: Hunter Paulson-Smith, UW MSW Student
DATE: February 17th, 2020
SUBJECT: Requesting Support to Amend Washington State McKinney-Vento Policy

Student homelessness is a chronic problem in Washington State and the systems in place do not provide adequate support for these students. In Washington, there were 40,365 students experiencing homelessness in 2018, which is 3.4% of total school enrollment. In Seattle Public School District alone, there were 4,169 students experiencing homelessness. In Renton School District, where I work, there were 629 students experiencing homelessness.¹
Footnotes

● Your memo should include footnotes to cite your sources (minimum of 3)
● Footnotes are generally placed at the end of the sentence directly after closing punctuation, followed by 2 spaces
  ○ Exceptions are made for multi-source attribution in one sentence
● Check with your instructor regarding their specific preferences for what information to include in your footnotes
  ○ Options include:
    ■ APA formatted references in the footnotes section
    ■ Author, title of work (italicized), and date of publication
Formatting Footnotes

- Click your cursor where you want your superscript number to appear
  - **Google Docs**: Click “Insert” → “Footnote”
  - **MS Word**: Click “References” → “Insert Footnote”
- The footnote will be automatically inserted in the text. You can now type your reference next to the corresponding number in your footer
Sample Footnotes


Choosing Your Audience

- **Examples:**
  - WA Senators
  - Families of King County
  - Superintendent for a school district
  - Seattle Indian Board
  - Hospital management

- Your audience has assumptions about your social issue
  - What gaps will you need to fill in?
  - Look at the “figurative ground”/”start where the client is”

- Speak to your audience’s values

*Rybacki & Rybacki, 1996, as cited in Lens, 2012, p. 177*
Choosing Your Evidence

- Numbers are not neutral
- Try to state your empirical claims clearly and without jargon
- Empirical claims can also be qualitative, including personal narratives or human-interest stories
- Effective approach: Combine qualitative and quantitative information
  - Stories bring up emotions, increase interest, and mobilize readers...
  - ...but they are insufficient. Quantitative data provides context and allows the reader to locate your story within larger institutional/structural dynamics

Lens, 2012
Values & Data

- Evidence
  - Statistics define the scope and urgency of your social issue

- Values
  - What story can you tell about your social issue that your audience will care about?
    - e.g., Parents & Safe Consumption Sites → The effects of the opioid crisis (stats) → Children confusing needles with thermometers at the park

- Urgency
  - Use both evidence and values-based stories to build a sense of urgency:
    - What will happen if we don’t do anything?

*Lens, 2012*
Matching Tone

- Matching the tone to the audience
  - Is a contentious tone necessary? *You may catch more flies with honey than vinegar.*
- If you are speaking to legislators that are already working in your chosen area, invite them to support the specific policy you are writing about
- Watch out for:
  - Exaggeration/Hyperbole
  - Audience ↔ Issue Scope: e.g., Improperly situating a micro-level issue to a macro-level audience or vice versa
- Counterarguments
  - Alleviating concerns vs. winning an argument
- Match the language/writing style
  - Are you speaking to a senator? To community members?
    - Keep the language accessible
How Do I Come Up With a Policy?

- ...You don’t have to!
  - You can find an already proposed policy
    - Check out [apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/) to find WA bills
- The objective of this assignment is to practice persuading stakeholders to support the policy
  - e.g., Convincing a conservative audience to support universal healthcare → Universal healthcare provides the freedom to choose your employer
  - e.g., Convincing hospital management to increase PTO for their staff → Rested staff will increase the productivity scores for meeting patient and community needs
## Literary Devices

- **Build a narrative**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary Device</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allusion</td>
<td>Using literary, classic, or popular references.</td>
<td>The Achilles heel of welfare reform is the lack of well-paying jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithesis</td>
<td>Contrasting two opposite ideas.</td>
<td>Our poorest citizens should draw from our greatest generosity. Helping those living in poverty can enrich us all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition/Climax</td>
<td>Repeating words or phrases while building to a high point.</td>
<td>The child without food, the family without a home, a nation without a heart.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Lens, 2005, as cited in Lens, 2012, p. 183*
## Literary Devices

**Personification**
- **Definition**: Giving human characteristics to nonhuman things.
- **Example**: Let us try and heal the wounds in our healthcare system by providing a basic level of medical care for all.

**Rhetorical Questions**
- **Definition**: Asking a question for effect, not for answers.
- **Example**: Doesn’t everyone deserve a home? Would you want your family to be left without health coverage?

**Dilemmas**
- **Definition**: Presenting two equally bad options to make the less bad one more palatable.
- **Example**: We can abolish an admittedly poor system, or we can continue it so needy women and children are clothed, fed, and sheltered.

**Analogies, Metaphors, and Similes**
- **Definition**: Finding similarities between normally unlike things. Metaphors usually substitute one thing for another, while analogies emphasize shared characteristics.
- **Example**: Our welfare system is our safety net.

*Lens, 2005, as cited in Lens, 2012, p. 183*
Remember the Prompt

- **Systemic/Structural Mechanisms**
  - What does your audience need to know about the root causes?

- **Harmful Effects**
  - What harmful effects will your audience care about?

- **Strategy/Response/Policy**
  - Clear & concise outline: What does it intend to accomplish? How?
  - anticipate counterarguments—frame the issue strategically

- **Why should the audience support this policy?**
  - Build that urgency: What are the larger/long-term impacts that they care about? What will happen if we do nothing?
Remember the Format

● Introduction
  ○ State the problem and purpose of memorandum
    ■ “A memo is not a mystery novel, nor is it a joke—do not wait until the end to deliver the punchline” (NYU, 2010)
  ○ What is the scope of the problem?

● Body
  ○ Have a thesis statement for each paragraph
  ○ Support that statement in the body of the paragraph
  ○ If the reader were to skim your memo in a few moments, would they get the point?
    ■ Use headers and topic sentences to convey the important points

● Conclusion
  ○ Finish with a concluding paragraph
  ○ Summarize main points, significance, and implications
  ○ Add sentence with invitation to follow up/answer questions/meet to discuss etc. (this does not make sense to do in all contexts)
Helpful Tips

- Speak to your audience
  - Anticipate their questions, use their language, focus on results, minimize subjective reasoning, speak to their values
- Use shorter sentences where possible
  - Ask yourself, “Can I say this with fewer words?”
- Back up claims with data and citations—even the stories!
- Assume your reader will skim the memo (they’re busy!)
  - Use visual cues strategically
    - Italics (use sparingly)
    - Bold (use sparingly)
    - White space! It’s hard to read a memo that is chock-full of words

USC Libraries, 2021
Writing Support at UW

School of Social Work Writing Center

- Check out the Writing Center website to make an appointment, get Zoom links, and find helpful resources like workshop slides/recordings: socialwork.uw.edu/students/services/writing-support
- Email sswwrite@uw.edu for any questions!
- Upcoming Events:
  - 501 Part 1: Demographic Briefing Workshop – Sunday, 2/6 from 12-1:30 pm
  - Business Casual Weekend Writing Circle: Resume & Cover Letter Edition – Sunday, 2/13 from 12-1:30 pm
  - Check Canvas announcements for weekly updates
The Writing Team

Kylie Brief (she/they)
Booking Calendar:
go.oncehub.com/KylieBrief
Services:
- Virtual 1:1 sessions
- Virtual drop-in advising (Thursdays from 5-6 pm)

Erin Bernardy (she/her)
Booking Calendar:
go.oncehub.com/ErinBernardy
Services:
- Virtual 1:1 sessions
- Virtual drop-in advising (Saturdays from 2-3 pm)

Marissa Rodriguez (they/she)
Booking Calendar:
go.oncehub.com/MarissaRodriguez
Services:
- Virtual 1:1 sessions
- Virtual drop-in advising (Fridays from 11 am-12 pm)
SSW Subject Librarian

Lynly Beard (she/her) can help with:

- Course-specific guides
- Focusing a research topic
- Identifying and evaluating sources
- Searching library databases effectively
- Using citation management tools
- Creating data visualizations

guides.lib.uw.edu/hsl/lynly
lynly@uw.edu
Other Resources

- Odegaard Writing & Research Center: Book Appointments at depts.washington.edu/owrc/signup.php

- Purdue OWL: owl.purdue.edu

- APA Style: apastyle.apa.org

- “Policy Memo” Guide from University of Southern California: libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/policymemo
References


Q & A

Anonymous feedback link: https://forms.gle/ga7ajbCqqfkm8cuUA