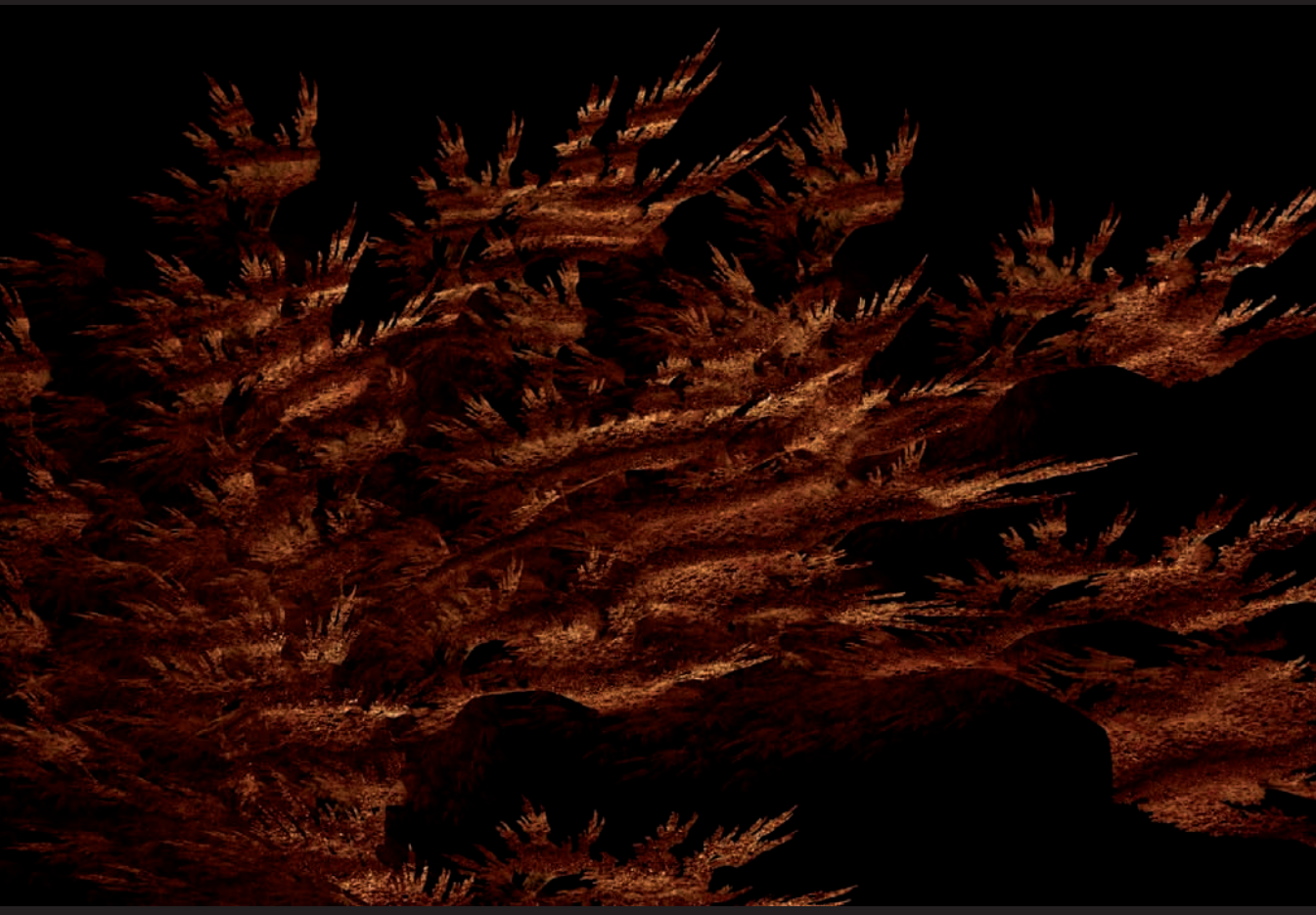
# REASON TO WRITE



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# CHAPTER 7
## ARRANGEMENT


1 **BEYOND *EXORDIUM*** ..... 142

2 **FANCY NAMES AND FUNCTIONS** ..... 143

3 **FORMATTING IS FUN! –NOT** ..... 151

4 **PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES: RAW OR COOKED** ..... 155

5 **REVIEW** ..... 157

6 **THE DRAFT** ..... 160

STEP 6 **THE DRAFT GUIDE** ..... 162

## 1 BEYOND *EXORDIUM*

Once you have an opening, you are ready to begin drafting your paper. As you do so, you will most likely find yourself revising some of your previous conclusions. Writing is a process, and no matter what kind of preparations you make, things will change as you come to understand the answer that you are offering in relationship to the question you have posed.

Developing and refining a critical question, defining the terms of the question, analysis and organization, as well as drafting the opening of the essay, are all steps to writing. These steps can be put into order, which makes them easier to put into practice.

Each step roughly corresponds to a function of argumentation, if we remember that argumentation is about discovering the truth of the matter. These functions have names that describe different elements one would likely find in an essay.

Step 1: The Critical Question is an exercise that helps to reorient the role of inquiry in academic writing, and its relationship to the *thesis*: the answer that is offered, in writing, from the initial question that is posed, implicitly, or explicitly, by a writer.

Step 2: The Question Map, is an exercise that can be called:

- **narratio:** putting a question into a specific context in order to refine it and prepare for analysis.

Step 3: Ways to Define, is an exercise that can be called:

- **definitio:** the act in which the writer stipulates the definition of any term that, if undefined, would convey a connotation over which the writer does not have control.

Step 4: Performing Analysis, is an exercise that can be called:

- **amplificatio:** the analytical exploration of a question based upon the breakdown of an issue into manageable parts, and drawing conclusions.

  Although the step in this text involved performing a separate analysis, before one sits down to write, it will become, essentially, the "body" of the paper.

  Once an opening is established, one explains the first conclusion drawn from analysis, based upon the organizing principle. As one moves through the breakdown of the question, each conclusion is returned to that question, until one builds a reasoned response.

Step 5: The Organizing Principle, is an exercise that can be called:

- **partitio:** the logical organization of the body of your paper based upon the analysis that you perform.

Step 6: The Essay Opening can be called:

- **exordium:** the point at which one prepares one's audience (the reader), in the opening, for the writing that will follow.

It is often easier if one is introduced to such terms after one has a basic understanding of the functions that they serve. This chapter will cover the final three elements that rhetoric defines as a of part reasoned argumentation: *refutatio*; *stasis*; and *epilogus*.

## 2 FANCY NAMES AND FUNCTIONS

These terms have nothing to do with a writing formula; they are functions. In other words, they serve a purpose, and are descriptions of strategies with which writers routinely engage in composing a quality piece of academic writing. There are three more strategies to cover, before one begins to draft the essay.

### REFUTATIO

Disagreement between people is often the result of one party feeling like his or her point of view is not being understood or acknowledged by the other party.

This is relatively easy to fix within a conversation in which disagreement arises. If one finds oneself in such a situation, there is a way to increase the chances of coming to sort of agreement (or some sort of "agreement to disagree"), and doing so in an amicable manner.

People want to feel heard. The best way to accomplish this is to tell the other person that you are going to reflect back what you hear, and then request that the other person tell you if, and in what way, you may have mistaken her or his meaning.

This strategy will not only diffuse some of the emotional charge of "my" point of view versus "your" point of view, but will also: 1) Force your conversational partner to evaluate and potentially clarify what he or she really means; 2) Help each of you to find points of agreement, as well as disagreement; 3) Discover if there is confusion in the communication exchange; 4) Prompt each of you discover the specific points upon which you diverge, and why.

In doing so, you may not resolve these specific points of contention, but at least you will both have a better idea of exactly what they are, and also why each of you holds that point of view.

In writing, there is a similar strategy that you can use. However, in this case you are obviously not able to directly solicit your reader's participation. Instead, you must play both roles. This means anticipating what a given reader might object to, or areas about which he or she might need clarification, while you are in the process of writing, and answering to that hypothetical reader.

One of the most damaging element to the credibility of a given writer is for the writer to ignore specific points in his or writing that would most likely bring up potentially opposing points of view in a typical reader. It is not only dishonest on the part of the writer; it *feels* dishonest to the reader.

If you are being honest in your writing, there is no need to ignore such moments. One should confront them immediately, and resolve them. In doing so, one goes through the same process as one does within a conversation: one restates the potential opposing point of view, and responds to it in a way that is reasonable and fair. If one cannot do so, one should revise one's position, and work it out.

This is *refutatio*. It can be called for at any point in which you anticipate an objection on the part of the reader. If one is correct in one's reasoning, one can reiterate that objection, and counter, or *refute*, that opposing point of view, in a way that neither offends, nor ignores, the concerns of one's reader.

### *refutatio* in action

In telling her reader that she is going to devote a whole book to analysis of the slasher film genre, Carol Clover immediately anticipates that a good portion of her readership will find such a topic of academic inquiry trivial, or inappropriate, or even offensive.

The slasher film is, after all, a part of popular culture that is considered lower than lowbrow, and therefore probably unworthy of the attention of serious academic scholars.

The most damning element of the slasher film cycle, which is often said to have started, roughly, with Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho (1960), and to have ended in the mid-1980's with a series of monotonous serial remakes, was that it involved unself-conscious, graphic, and unapologetic representations of gratuitous violence, directly primarily (although not exclusively) against young women.

If that was not enough, the slasher film adhered to a rigid plot formula of mind-numbing repetition and predictability. For these reasons, few academics considered it worthy of their attention. As such, at the time that Carol Clover wrote her study, the slasher film genre was viewed, in general, as a rather distasteful underside to American popular culture that was best left alone, in the hopes that it would eventually go away.

Rather than ignore the likely reaction to her choice of subject matter, Carol Clover raises the issue right away, opening her text with a single sentence that neatly sums up the entire genre:

> At the bottom of the horror heap lies the 'slasher' (or spatter or shocker or stalker) film: the immensely generative story of a psycho killer who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims, one by one, until he is subdued or killed, usually by the one girl who has survived. (21)

In the style of *refutatio*, Clover reiterates these objections. She neither avoids, nor minimizes, the underlying reason for those objections, nor does she make any attempt to deny that these objections are valid.

Rather, Clover suggests that it is exactly those qualities that make the slasher film genre worthy of critical scrutiny: "The qualities that locate the slasher film outside of the usual aesthetic system…are the very qualities that make it such a transparent source for (sub)cultural attitudes towards sex, and gender in particular" (22).

Without her anticipatory response to these objections, Clover's study might not have been given the reception that it was within the academic field, where it made a considerable impact upon views of popular culture, gender, film, and narrative structure.

## STASIS

This is the most difficult rhetorical concept in critical thinking to explain, mostly because it has to do with the: "A-ha! That's what this is all about!" moment that occurs when one is writing. There is no mistaking when one has found *stasis*; all the lights go on and every detail settles into place. It is related to the realization of the answer—in some ways, one could say it is what leads to the thesis of the essay.

In performing analysis, if one goes deep enough, one will find the source of the primary conflict that first motivated the initial question. One will discover what is really at stake within that conflict. The easiest way to define *stasis*, without going into formal logic, is to say that it is, between a writer's question, and a writer's answer, that moment when one sees directly into the heart of the matter.

### *stasis* is action

Since *stasis* is easier to demonstrate than to describe, let's say that one were to ask the following question:

> In regard to categories offered in the United States census, what would be the relationship among such concepts as race, ethnicity, nationality, and culture?

Since *definitio*—defining the terms of one's question—would be a large part of answering this question, one might imagine that exploration of the terms would yield the following stipulative definitions, for the purpose of analysis of the question:

**Race:**

> As it is understood within scientific discourse, *race* does not, in fact, exist. Race is not an innate quality of a given individual human being, but rather a means by which people identify, and are identified, within a context that is entirely socially constructed.

**Ethnicity:**

> Unlike race, *ethnicity* is the recognition of a particular politico-geographical point of origin for an individual, often involving a shared history and/or culture. The exact location of this point of origin appears to be relatively arbitrary. That is, it may be a point of origin initiated within the present lifetime of an individual, or it may represent a generational regression to a past politico-geographical point of ancestry. In anthropological terms, push it back far enough, and we'd all be Pangeans.

**Nationality:**

> Entirely political, *nationality* refers to the boundary in which one holds legal status (citizenship).

**Culture:**

> Overall, *culture* refers to the sum total of traditions practiced by any persons who are of a given *nationality* (legal status within a political boundary).
>
> In this way, *culture* refers to specific traditions that tend to accumulate around ethnic identity—a political-geographical point of origin—often linked to nationality. However, *culture* also refers to a political boundary within which ethnicities may be diverse, since it is the political boundary

that binds that diversity. In this way, all cultural experiences within the United States, for example, are "American" experiences, and all traditions practiced within its borders are a part of "American" culture.

The enduring quality of those traditions is often, although not always, related to the degree of generational regression—cultural traditions that are passed down from one generation to another will tend to transfer ethnic identity, no matter from where they originate.

These traditions can include such things as: food; music; religious practices; the way one marries; the way one mourns the dead; the commonly held ideals concerning what it means to be a father, or a mother, etc.; rites of passage; clothing; language; etc.

Having established these definitions, one can return to the original question concerning the United States census: the categories that it provides in relationship to this question, and its relationship to these definitions, and begin to perform analysis.

In doing so, one find patterns within detail, and draw conclusions from those patterns.

**Patterns (Set 1):**

1. According to these definitions, at no point is it possible for the census to logically claim that the choices provided question anyone's *nationality*, since "American" or "non-American" are not categories that one is offered.

2. According to these definitions, at no point can the census claim to be providing categories that refer to *culture*, since culture always refers, in general, to *nationality*.

   There is a wide range of cultural practices originating outside of the United States (especially considering its history), directly linked to ethnicity as a point of origin.

   However, *culture*, in this sense, always refers to "American culture," which is composed of this range.

3. According to these definitions, and despite any wording on the form itself, race does not, in fact, qualify as a valid criterion for collection of census data, since there remains no reliable means of determining the validity of the category.

**Conclusions returned to question:**

In returning conclusions to a question, one looks at the question again, in light of what one has determined, and draws a series of conclusions. In this case, they might be:

1. In order to function as an accurate system of data collection, the census can only refer to a single criterion among these four definitions. Logically, in any collection of statistical data, variables corrupt the data; one must measure the same thing.
2. The criteria for the census cannot be nationality (American/non-American), or culture (American). Nor can it be race, since race is not an accurate determinant of anything except for social attitudes.
3. To serve its function, the questions within the census can only refer to one type of criterion: ethnicity. Ethnicity indicates a political-geographical point of origin with which an individual identifies, and by which an individual is often identified, and that is sometimes attended by cultural practices that are transmitted through generations.
4. In order to function as an accurate system of data collection, an accurate list of choices indicating a given ethnicity must be available to any given individual to whom the census might be administered.
5. In order to function as an accurate system of data collection, the persons who answer to the census must be aware of the principle of this criterion.

**Pattern:**

1. Even though ethnicity is the logical criterion for the question, such choices as the category "White," on the census, do not indicate a political-geographical point of origin, and therefore do not refer to ethnicity.
2. The category "White" is not an indicator of ethnicity, such as traditions preserved from participation in a previous political boundary (nationality) as an identifying point-of-origin (e.g.: "French").
3. The range of external physical characteristics that construct "White" as an identity is not based upon ethnicity, but is, instead, a racial category.
4. To indicate ethnicity, the external characteristics that are constructed as racially "white" would have to be reoriented to a political-geographical area, most likely originating from the Western side of the Caucuses, a mountain range dividing the continent of Eurasia (i.e.: Caucasian).

5. However, on the census, for those who check the *racial* category of "White," the closest approximation of *ethnicity* available as a choice would be "Asian."

**Conclusions returned to question:**

1. The census refers to a range of criteria, and therefore does not measure the same thing.
2. Those criteria are broken into categories that measure ethnicity, race, nationality, and culture, depending entirely upon the choices offered within the census, the person to whom it is directed, and without making any overt distinctions among them.
3. Because the census contains more than one type of criteria in its question, a choice indicating ethnicity may be either unclear or unavailable to a given individual to whom the census might be administered.
4. The persons who answer to the census have no access to a reliable way to determine to which criteria he or she is answering.
5. Therefore, if one checks the category "Hispanic," one is not able to determine if this category refers to: 1) How one is identified by one's appearance (race); 2) A political-geographical origin, which may go back one or ten generations (ethnicity), 3) One's traditional practices (subset of American culture), or 4) One's nationality (citizenship).
6. Since the categories do not follow a single type, any given individual may find himself or herself in a situation in which he or she is:
   - Without a category into which he or she fits
   - Forced into a category with which he or she does not identify
   - Unable to determine which category is accurate
   - In a position where conflict is present among the categories, because the answer depends on to which of the criteria the person is answering

In continuing your analysis, you may finally conclude that:

> The failure of the U.S. census to offer the same criteria, equally, to each of its citizens, in answering this question, undermines the validity of the statistical data that are collected.

*Stasis*, however, might be something closer to the following:

> The census may not produce reliable data in the spirit in which it was created, but it does offer an important piece of information about American national identity. What the census does suggest is that to be of American nationality is to be someone who has difficulty knowing how to ask, or how to answer, this question.

## EPILOGUS

The end of the paper is not always the same as one's thesis—the answer to the question that one has posed. The *epilogus*, or closing, can be either simultaneous to, or even be presented after, the presentation of one's answer.

The *epilogus* is the way that one exits one's paper, just as the *exordium* is the way that one enters. Although it not necessary to do any of the following, certain forms of the epilogus serve to stylistically "wrap-up" a paper, and may do so in a variety of ways, past the point where one has answered the question at hand.

The following includes a few of those ways:

- One could return, stylistically, to one's opening (e.g.: tell the second part of a narrative opening)
- One could show why it is important to look at the question in this light
- One could show the implication of this answer in light of other questions, or other contexts, or in relationship to real people or situations
- One could show how a new question could be proposed, in light of this answer, that would call for further academic inquiry (by someone else)

If the thesis, or answer, is placed somewhere else in the essay, in a rewrite (i.e.: in the *exordium*, or opening, where answer and question can, in some conventions, be given in quick succession), then the *epilogus* will always be different from the thesis.

What one does not do is merely to repeat one's thesis, if it has already been offered. Repetition in an essay is a sign of poor organization.

### *epilogus* in action

An *epilogus* that extends beyond the answer that one gives is not a requirement; some questions simply end with their answers, and that is sufficient. The following is an example, from a student paper, of such an *epilogus*. The original question that it answers is: What roles does the outcast play in society?

"Outcasts" play an important role in our society. First, they serve as an example that those who are inside of a social system can observe. The result can be positive or negative. Outcasts are visible, and tend to draw attention. One can look at a person and think, "I never want to be like that." One can also look at a person and say to oneself, "This is a person who has taken risks, and whom I admire."

The figure of the outcast does the unusual, whether right or wrong. Some become leaders because they act outside of the boundaries of mainstream society, and some become examples of what happens when one steps outside of those boundaries.

Being an outcast is what gives these people their ability to play this role, in the first place. To gain that viewpoint, an outcast has to be on the outside, looking in. An outcast must view the society as a whole, and in relationship to which he or she is slightly apart.

An outcast is a person who has the ability to see what someone on the "inside" cannot. From this unique perspective, they sometimes develop a means for change. And in this light, an outcast can be both one of the most powerless people in society, and at the same time can also be one the most powerful agents of change in society: the Activist, the Artist, the Critic, or the Revolutionary.[1]

## 3 FORMATTING IS FUN! –NOT

If it were possible to simply establish, once and for all, the rules for formatting the academic essay, this would be an easy section-one would simply follow a template and get on with one's life. What prevents this is that the rules of formatting change. They are updated every year. As such, any attempt to provide the details of such rules would quickly become obsolete. That is the reason college handbooks exist, and why one must find the newest edition of that handbook, if one is to format correctly.

Nevertheless, there are certain important pieces of general information to understand about formatting. First of all, formatting is both a function of convention—like wearing a black suit to a funeral—and also serves a purpose. The practical function of formatting is to standardize a series of elements in the academic essay for the purpose of publication. Those elements include the appearance of the article (size of

[1] Writing 1. Winter 2008. UCSB.