

# How to Develop an Argument

# The Goal: An Argument Summary

- Your argument summary will be 2-3 page statement of the argument in your paper
  - Your main points with citations
  - The summary is NOT :
    - a description of the topic
    - an outline
    - a proposal
    - an overview of the issues

# Developing an Argument

- The literature you read will address a **specific research question**
  - By what mechanism does something occur?
  - Why does something occur?
  - Who is something most likely to occur to?
  - What is an effective intervention for X?
- Your argument will be **your response to this question** given your knowledge of the relevant literature(s)

# Examples

- **Research question**
  - Language abilities of the great apes
- **Possible topics for arguments**
  - Spontaneity in apes use of language
  - Methodology in language studies with apes
  - Implications of ape language studies
- **Possible approaches to making an argument**
  - Definitions for language use in apes have been too lenient
  - Researcher have made inappropriate assumptions in choosing their methods
  - Other species have displayed similar, but overlooked, language abilities

# Exercise: Developing Arguments

- Research question 1
  - Effectiveness of Treatment X?
  - Possible arguments?
- Research question 2:
  - The degree to which Theory A accounts for a particular phenomenon?
  - Possible arguments?

# Developing Arguments (cont'd)

- Research question 3:
  - Unanswered questions about Phenomenon A?
  - Possible arguments?
- Research question 4:
  - Risk factors for Syndrome X?
  - Possible arguments?

# Organizing Evidence

- Give yourself time to know and think about the literature
- Outline
  - As you write your paper, outline headings become the **headings and subheadings** of your paper
- Follow the **“open bow-tie” strategy**
  - Evidence should start broad and get more focused as you systematically support your thesis
  - Implications should start focused and get as broad as your evidence allows (but do not go beyond your data!)

# Use of the Literature

- Use the literature to support your argument
  - **Be a critical consumer** (evaluate what you read)
    - What do you need to evaluate?
    - What makes evidence strong or weak?
  - Integrate what you read in a way that supports your argument, but also addresses counterarguments
- Ultimately, your argument should be a reflection of **your view** of what the literature says
- **Your voice** should be heard, not the voices of the authors you have read
  - Don't confuse this with using the pronoun "I"