DIALECTIC: PROMOTING THE MARRIAGE OF CRITICAL THINKING AND COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY

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Every great art must be supplemented by leisurely discussion, by stargazing, if you will, about the nature of things.

Plato, *Phaedrus*

"I think I have to change my topic," said my student, his pained expression reflecting the stress he obviously felt. I explained to him that changing the argumentative topic he had chosen would jeopardize his grade; after all, the semester was nearing completion. I added that if writer's block was his problem, I could probably assist him.

"No," he said, shaking his head. "I have plenty to write about. It's just that the more I learn about the topic, the more I'm beginning to change my mind."

I had to smile. One more student had recovered from what Jasper Neel calls "the 'disease' of internal certainty" (83). And dialectic had helped.

My student's concern was understandable. According to Harvey Weiner, the predominant metaphor for learning since the Age of Reason presupposed a world of clear answers in which teachers needed only to provide enough information to students to insure that "their mental mirrors reflected reality as completely as possible"(132). I remember that world. In my high school and undergraduate English classes, coursework focused primarily on

extensive reading of prescribed texts, faithful note-taking on the teacher's explanations of the meanings of those texts, and the required regurgitation of those explanations on multiple choice tests. School was all about learning the "right" answers.

In graduate school I read theorists such as Thomas Kuhn, Noam Chomsky, Jean Piaget and many others, who advanced Richard Rorty's concept of knowledge as "socially justified belief," thus creating a worldview in which the reality of "reality" itself was called into question. Studying post-modernism, post-structuralism and deconstruction convinced me that, faced with the impossibility of actually determining authorial intent, *any* conceivable explanation of meaning or authorial position was acceptable, as long as it was reinforced with almost any conceivable pattern of proof within the text. My teaching generally eschewed the didacticism of my early training for the relativism of my later education. But too often my students struggled to find meaning in their reading and thinking, often concluding that all issues can be discussed only on the basis of opinion, and that any opinion is as valid as any other. This approach often left me feeling that I was serving neither my subject nor my students well.

Currently, universities face pressures that mirror those which have already begun to reshape elementary and secondary education: a push toward standardization; a desire for quantifiable measurements of achievement in meeting clearly stated outcomes; a call for the kind of accountability previously seen more commonly in business than in education. But a standardized, No-Child-Left-Behind educational system demands a standardized world view, a concept that mirrors eighteenth through early twentieth century thinking but is clearly not acceptable to educators who do not believe such a world view prepares students for life in the twenty-first century.

This dichotomy of expectations between the competing desires for standardization and for diversity is a natural result of the competing conceptions of reality that have dominated educational theory in the United States. Our highly technological society, in

which globalization and diversity play prominent roles in shaping our world view, has not found a way to reconcile the viewpoints of those who embrace standardization of content (and therefore, of thought?) and those who resist it in every form.

It would be unfair to suggest that any one faction is alone in wishing their perspective on reality to predominate. Richard Paul points to a viewpoint common to most schools of thought, stating that many people

> . . . take themselves to have the Truth in their pockets. They take their perspective to be exemplary of all morality rightly conceived. On the other hand, what these same people fear most is someone else's moral perspective taught as the truth: conservatives afraid of liberals being in charge, liberals of conservatives, theists of non-theists, non-theists of theists. (Paul 1-2)

It is far too easy to fall into the trap of seeing *my way* as *the best way*. Even those who try mightily to achieve a non-judgmental stance toward differing positions on the issues that shape our society can be guilty of seeing their own beliefs as *the norm* and all others as at least slightly aberrant. The dilemma seems insurmountable: we know students need to learn how to make the difficult decisions that lie ahead, but we have advanced beyond the point at which any particular set of beliefs would be an acceptable norm.

But is this truly an insurmountable dilemma? Or is there an available option—one that has existed for centuries, but that has not been well utilized in our educational system?

Think back to your own elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. If your experience mirrors mine, you probably spent a great deal of time learning *what* to think, but very little (if any) time learning *how* to think. This statement may sound preposterous: of course we learn how to think in school. Isn't that what school is all about? Isn't that why we read, listen to lectures, do homework, take tests in school? If thinking is critical to

everything we do and every decision we make, from what to wear in the morning, to what profession we choose to follow, to whose name we mark on a ballot, isn't one of the major purposes of education to teach students *how* to think?

It should be, but it's not. The educational system, as much of it is structured today, not only does little to teach students how to think: in many ways, it stymies their thinking. Of course, students are thinkers even before they come to school; it is impossible for human beings to *not* think for any sustained period of time. But what our students lack is the ability to clearly examine their own thinking, or anyone else's, *while* they think. This ability, to step outside one's own thinking process in order to evaluate it in a "self-conscious, self-critical, and introspective manner" (Stolarek 168), has been called metacognition, or critical thinking. Richard Paul's definition of critical thinking—"Thinking . . . While you're thinking . . . In an effort to improve your thinking" (Foundation)—sounds simple, but it is deceptively so. It is this type of evaluative thinking that we must teach our students (for it definitely does not come naturally to any of us) if we wish to prepare them for the kind of decision-making and problem-solving they will need to do.

Many teachers and professors would object. "Of course I teach students critical thinking," they might say. "I teach physics . . . or philosophy . . . or rhetoric . . . or geometry . . . or a foreign language." But nothing in the *content* of any subject *inherently* teaches students *how* to think. Rather, it is the *method* of content delivery that makes students either good critical thinkers or mere regurgitators of facts and opinions.

Presenting any content in a straight lecture format, no matter how talented or engaging the lecturer, often does little to promote critical thinking. While the lecturer's material may be the result of his or her own good critical thinking, a lecture does not necessarily cause *students* to think critically. This is not to say that it would be impossible for a student to question or challenge the statements made in a professor's lecture, or to make connections between the lecture material and other information.

But the sad truth is that, for the most part, students are content to passively copy the notes on any information that they fear may appear on an upcoming test, thus limiting their thinking to only the lowest levels available to them.

Neither does much of the questioning used by professors, both in the classroom and in examinations, promote critical thinking. Questions such as "What is the chemical formula of hydrochloric acid?" or "What year was the Magna Carta signed?" at best can test only students' familiarity with content. Even questions such as "What were the sociological effects of the Magna Carta?" do not promote critical thinking if the "correct" answer can be found in lecture notes or textbook assignments. This is not to say that learning content information is useless to students, but the development of *critical thinking* skills cannot be achieved through a pedagogy that focuses on producing the one correct answer to questions that are assumed to have only one correct answer.

Many professors, particularly in composition classes, have discovered in rhetoric a tool for promoting critical thinking. Certainly, teaching students the value of ascertaining underlying assumptions, using appropriate source material to verify information, and being open-minded about the merits in arguments that oppose their own beliefs, is important. Teresa Enos reminds us that "for hundreds of years rhetoric, the oldest of the humanities, was the center and ultimate goal of all education" (3). But learning *about* the elements of rhetoric does not necessarily ensure the internalization of a rhetorical stance that will carry over into other courses or other aspects of life. Besides, rhetoric is audience-based, and culminates in finding arguments which will persuade. In classical times, another art preceded rhetoric: the art of dialectic, which may be most familiar through the dialogues of Plato.

Definition of Dialectic

What is dialectic? Any modern student of dialectic will discover that, like the word "rhetoric," "dialectic" has meant

different things to philosophers and rhetoricians throughout its long history. James L. Kinneavy sums up this difficulty:

The term [dialectic] has obviously had its vagaries . . . [I]n Plato, dialectic arrives at certainty. In Aristotle, in addition to being the principle of all inquiries, it is also "indifferent to truth, and aims only at proving its point, and thereby refuting an adversary". . . . In Kant, it must ever remain illusion. In Hegel, it alone can attain to certainty. And in Hegel and Marx it becomes the active agent of historical progress by war and class struggle, not just a mode of the thinking mind. . . . If one were to add to it the various meanings in Cicero, Peter of Spain, Ramus, Emerson, Kierkegaard and some moderns, it is no wonder the very word frightens a prospective user in search of some univocity. (98-99)

Dialectic was first used by the earliest Greek philosophers to explain contradictions in physical phenomena. The idea of opposition seen in such pairs as eternity and temporality, night and day, and unity and disharmony both confused and enchanted the ancients, and became the basis of much of their philosophical thought. Anaximandros, one of the earliest Greek philosophers, "discovered the *Absolute to be the infinite unity of all opposites*" [emphasis in original] (Mueller 4). Nature was seen as being fundamentally dialectic, "as a concrete totality of opposites" (Mueller 26).

By the 5th B.C.E., the Sophists had developed the philosophical concept of dialectic into a formal, rule-governed discussion method, called *dialegesthai,* which was "the practice of one or more individuals discussing various aspects and characteristics of a topic or issue for the purpose of coming to a mutual agreement or answer" (Timmerman 120). Socrates, the greatest teacher of classical times, taught dialectically, by questioning, not by lecturing. Plato, in preserving Socrates' dialogues, recognized their primary purpose—the search for truth—which was a necessary step taken prior to designing rhetorical arguments. Dialectic grasped the truth, and rhetoric

offered it up for the public. Learning rhetoric without learning dialectic was much like attempting to run before learning to walk.

Plato held the practice of dialectic above all others. He tells us that the dialectician is like a god (*Phaedrus* 55-6) and that "dialectic . . . is the copingstone of the sciences, and is set over them; no other science can be placed higher—the nature of knowledge can no further go" (*The Republic* 282). Dialectic, according to Plato, is accomplished when a dialectician "finds a congenial soul and then proceeds with true knowledge to plant and sow in it words which are able to help themselves *and him who planted them*" [emphasis mine] (*Phaedrus* 71). Dialectic, therefore, should not be a pedagogic exercise in which a superior mind educates an inferior one; on the contrary, in true dialectic, both parties learn, both parties reach new insights, and both parties attempt to come to a mutual understanding of truth.

Dialectic continued to play a predominant role in education beyond classical times. Although the study of rhetoric predominated in the first thousand years after Plato, dialectic ruled for the following thousand years. The main course of university study during the Middle Ages was the liberal arts, and the trivium of language study—grammar, rhetoric and logic (dialectic)—was central to medieval scholarship. During the Middle Ages dialectic replaced rhetoric as the major determinant of academic achievement: while in classical times students were judged primarily on their presentations of set speeches, in medieval times they were required to prove themselves through a series of dialectical *disputationes* with their peers and instructors, finally culminating in a disputation with four masters of dialectic (Kinneavy 9).

Emphasis on dialectic continued until the nineteenth century, when interest in the sixteenth-century theories of Ramus and the emergence of Scholasticism, with its emphasis on quantification over speculation, culminated in the attitude that, when opposing viewpoints existed, one must be true and the other false (Ong 210). Once the "truth" of any disputed topic has been established, however, the need for dialectic disappears.

By the early nineteenth century, the *belles lettres* tradition established by Hugh Blair had diminished the importance of rhetoric in composition studies, replacing it with the study of elegance, style, and in particular, taste in writing; dialectic had disappeared from composition studies altogether.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, interest in composition studies as separate from literature, with the corresponding re-emergence of rhetoric as a basis for composition pedagogy, was so dramatic that Hairston's description of the phenomenon as a "paradigm shift" has been generally accepted. Rhetoric's re-emergence as a dominant educational method in composition, however, did not bring with it a corresponding interest in dialectic. For example, Edward P.J. Corbett's watershed neo-rhetorical text, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student,* mentions "dialectics" only once as a synonym for logic. Most composition texts of the past seventy years have followed Corbett's lead.

Dialectic: The Disdained Step-sister

Our current practice of neglecting the dialectic process and treating it like some disdained step-sister of rhetoric contributes to the poor critical thinking abilities of our students. Often, critics of dialectic, and particularly of Plato's dialogues, have dismissed their validity in promoting independent thought. They see his dialogues as rhetoric in disguise—as clever examples of persuasion that use the more subtle method of questioning rather than straightforward argumentative assertion. Rudolph H. Weingartner, however, sees a different purpose in dialectic, stating that in Plato "more stress is likely to be placed on process than on outcome, on question than on answer, on arguing than on argument" (5). And Kenneth Burke asserts that "[A] Platonic dialogue is . . . a process of *transformation* [emphasis in original] whereby the position at the end transcends the position at the start, so that the position at the start can eventually be seen in terms of the new motivation encountered en route" (422). It is this process of delving into a topic in search of truth, rather than

attempting to promote any particular "truth," that is an invaluable tool in developing critical thinking skills.

This willingness to transform one's viewpoints must be accompanied in the dialectician by an ability to synthesize, or to see the whole nature of things. Darrell Dobbs calls this ability "comprehensive vision" (265), and suggests that dialectic defeats both partisanship and "the dogmatic slumber of conventionalism" (271-2). Seen in this light, dialectic becomes a politically dangerous activity. It is also an activity which, even to Plato, is not necessarily accompanied by ethical behavior. Plato, like Aristotle, recognizes the need for rhetoric in persuading others, but he mandates the use of dialectic because "when a man sets out to deceive someone else without being taken in himself, he must accurately grasp the similarity and dissimilarity of the facts" (*Phaedrus,* 49). This opens the door to the concept of the internal dialogue, the dialectic that exists only in a single questioning mind. Plato recognizes the danger of self-delusion as being pre-eminent, and finds in dialectic a remedy for this affliction.

Many may believe that dialectic, especially in the form described by Plato, is not really applicable to today's ethical arguments and problems. After all, Plato sought truth rather than consensus, and in the complex, global, heterogeneous world we today inhabit the very concept of truth can seem illusory, if not unreachable. But a world in which the solutions to most problems are multi-faceted surely requires reasonable, logical, ethical ways to look at issues, answer questions, and solve problems. Dialectic can bring our students closer to the kind of thinking they will need to face the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

Dialectic in the Contemporary Classroom

Dialectic, as a method of discussion that utilizes questioning, promotes a higher understanding of the topic by both participants. The interaction of dialectic is necessary because, according to Aristotle, "No man can become wise by himself" (Mueller 306). Seen in this way, dialectic becomes a dynamic educational tool.

My undergraduate writing students study dialectic, read dialogues, and participate in dialectic with me as a whole-class activity and in conference, as well as with peers in pairs or small groups. They also write dialogues on topics they have chosen as the first of a series of three arguments: dialectic, inductive and mediated.

I introduce students to dialectic by assigning an excerpt from Plato's *Crito* which is commonly anthologized, sometimes under a different title such as "The Duty of a Citizen." This is Socrates' last dialogue, in which he explains to Crito the reasons he will not attempt to escape his upcoming execution in Athens by becoming an exile. Plato is a logical first step in studying dialectic, and this particular dialogue is especially useful because my students will have read and discussed the Declaration of Independence as an earlier component of the class. Since both pieces discuss the duty a citizen owes the state while coming to entirely different conclusions, students begin to understand that dialectic focuses on questions that have been discussed in vastly different times and places, and for which there are no single answers.

Discussion of the dialogue format of *Crito* leads to various classroom activities. Practice in oral dialectic is central to instruction. I use dialectic questioning both in informal class discussions and in formal sessions, during which I call on students by using a shuffled deck of index cards on which their names have been written, a technique developed by Richard Paul (Foundation).

I base my questions on the elements of thought (purpose, question at issue, information, interpretation and inference, concepts, assumptions, implications and consequences, points of view) and intellectual standards (clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, fairness) found in *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts & Tools* (Paul & Elder). Sometimes I begin a session with an introductory open-ended question, such as "How do we know what we know?" to begin a discussion on various forms of research or "What do we

owe our government and society?" to prepare students for a discussion of *Crito* or the Declaration of Independence.

Other times I ask a question designed to help them understand the complexities involved in discussing contemporary issues. Examples might include "With current DNA forensics finding many prisoners innocent, should the death penalty be abolished?" or "Is the opening of a casino good or bad for a community?"

The *Miniature Guide's* elements of thought and intellectual standards provide a framework for both evaluating students' responses and producing additional probing questions. If I feel a student's answer is not clear, I might ask "Could you elaborate further?" or "Could you give me an example?" In looking at the depth of a particular issue I might ask "What factors make this a difficult problem?" or "What are some of the complexities of this question?" In examining fairness, I might ask "Can you see this issue from another point of view?" (Paul & Elder 7-9).

Tone is crucial here. A dialectic session that feels more like an interrogation intimidates students and diminishes, rather than enhances, their critical thinking. A tone that reflects curiosity and interest, on the other hand, encourages students to examine their thinking. It also helps when students realize that every student, including those whose viewpoints oppose their own, will be questioned in the same manner. Students begin to understand that a dialectic session is not the same thing as a dialogue in which each participant responds equally. Rather, it is a pedagogical exercise designed to help them delve more deeply into understanding a subject or issue.

In moving on to the name on the next index card, I may ask the next student the same question or a question that elaborates on the previous student's answers. In order to organize the questioning session and to keep students on task, I occasionally ask a respondent to summarize the major points that have already been made or to compare or contrast two or three students' responses. Formal dialectic sessions in class start them thinking about their thinking in new ways, and serve as models for the kind of questioning they will need to do to generate information for

their dialogue assignment. As they prepare to write their papers and during their writing process, students use dialectic in pairs or in small groups to thoroughly examine the topics they have chosen to research. In addition, all students are required to see me individually for conferences devoted to intensive dialectic questioning on their topics.

Students are initially fearful of a classroom structure that requires them to examine their thinking so closely, particularly since, in many cases, nothing in their previous experience of education has required them to do so. But because dialectic is central to the regular functioning of the class, they soon become comfortable with it and start to see it as a tool they can use in their approach to all class activities. Before long, they begin questioning me dialectically, and when questions like "Can you give me an example of that?" begin to replace the "Will this be on the test?" variety, my classroom has started to become a place where students are developing their critical thinking abilities through both answering and asking questions.

Dialectic is the best way I have found to initiate in students an understanding of the antifoundationalist stance they will need to begin to doubt the universal doctrines they have been taught to accept. As Peter Elbow has explained, "The surest way to get hold of what your present frame blinds you to is to try to adopt the opposite frame, that is to reverse your model. A person who can live with contradiction and exploit it—who can use conflicting models—can simply see and think *more* [emphasis in original]" (*Embracing Contraries* 241).

Writing the Dialogue

Once students have had experience in using dialectic orally as a way to promote critical thinking, it is time to transfer this skill to their writing. Students create argumentative propositions (statements with which reasonable persons can and do agree and disagree) for the topics they have chosen (i.e., The opening of a casino is generally detrimental to a community: Agree/Disagree). The next step, creating a Pro/Con list, helps them determine

whether or not the argumentative proposition offers sufficient depth for detailed analysis. After students have had the opportunity to examine their topics through various dialectic opportunities, I discuss the three papers—dialogue, inductive argument, and mediated argument—which they will be writing.

Although the three papers are based on the same topic, their formats differ. The dialogue (see Appendix A) is presented in script format, and is as inclusive as possible; that is, all arguments relevant to students' individual topics need to be addressed. The inductive argument (see Appendix B), which is based on the Ciceronian model we will have discussed in class, concentrates only on the major arguments within their topics and includes such standard elements of induction as anticipation of opposition and rebuttal. The mediated argument (see Appendix C) includes the major arguments, along with a statement about common ground in both positions and a proposed resolution (Stolarek and Juchartz).

Because the dialogue is written in a format unfamiliar to many of them, we discuss the format itself, using both Socratic dialogues and previous students' dialogues as models. Students are instructed to create credible characters for their dialogues: that is, characters who would conceivably debate the topic. Further instructions include beginning with a short paragraph outlining the setting, much as they would begin a script, and avoiding extended conversation not directly related to their topics.

Students are required in the dialogue, and later in the mediated argument, to present good arguments from positions that oppose their own. This is, perhaps, the most difficult part of the assignment sequence for them, since frequently their social, familial, political, and educational lives have directed them toward a more polarized way of thinking. Writing the dialogue, however, can bring them closer to addressing their topics through the perspective of what Peter Elbow calls "the believing game," "the disciplined practice of trying to be as welcoming or accepting as possible to every idea we encounter." Elbow advocates much more than just listening to opposing arguments or trying to restate

them in an unbiased manner; he promotes actually trying to believe them ("The Believing Game"). It is only through such effort that students can really begin to understand the value and benefits of looking at controversial topics dialectically.

In evaluating the dialogues, I look particularly for a comprehensive inclusion of reasonable arguments on the topic. A dialogue on the institution of charter schools, for example, would not be acceptable if such factors as the economic effects of opening charter schools, assumptions about public education held by proponents of both public and charter schools, and evaluation standards for charter and other public schools were not discussed. The dialogue serves as an extended prewriting exercise that requires students to examine their topics to an extent that they had never imagined possible before.

Inductive and Mediated Essays

Students base their inductive arguments on the material they have produced in their dialogues. The mediated argument is the first in which outside research is required, or, in fact, even permitted. This is absolutely essential to this approach. Too often students are required to find research material *before* they begin examining a topic; thus, the research *becomes* their thinking about the topic. But students must understand and evaluate their own thinking about any topic before they begin interpreting and evaluating the opinions and beliefs of others. In this way, their research is synthesized into their thinking, rather than replacing their thinking. Students who use this approach are far less likely to plagiarize: they begin their research with so much written information on their topics that they realize research must support or refute, not replace, their own thinking.

Students make very free use of conference time during their writing of the whole sequence of papers; many are surprised to find that answers and solutions that once seemed simple are suddenly no longer unequivocal. Dialectic challenges students' assumptions that their own positions on controversial topics represent some sort of universal truth. What is most important, of

course, is helping them achieve a commitment to the process of evaluating their own thinking by seeing such evaluation as central to learning and growing.

Although some students initially complain about the requirement of producing three papers on the same topic, they generally agree that the assignment sequence gives them a greater understanding not only of their topics, but also of the nature of argument and the different approaches one can take in addressing an argument. Students produce much better inductive and mediated arguments after having written dialogues. Actually discussing and writing about issues within a dialectical framework, with the usual give-and-take, comment-response format of conversation, allows students the opportunity to begin to appreciate the validity of arguments which they oppose and to understand why positions that once seemed so clear to them are so heartily opposed by others. Truly adept and committed students often take this process one step further, by beginning to see the nature of most controversial topics as not binary, but as encompassing multiple positions and perspectives.

Conclusion

We need to prepare our students for a world in which all the answers cannot be found in a book or in the words of a teacher, a world in which they will be faced with difficult decisions virtually every day of their lives. To do this, they must be good critical thinkers, and dialectic will help them to become just that. Helping our students to develop their ability to think critically is the key to enhancing all the other skills and content they learn in the course of their educations and their lives.

The danger in using dialectic, however, is to envision it as a new heuristic technique to bring students closer to our own beliefs or positions. In our classroom use of dialectic, we do not need to become spokespersons for any particular philosophical system; rather, we need to see dialectic as a process of transformation for ourselves as well. Without bringing the same open-mindedness and good critical thinking skills to our classroom

practice as we want our students to develop, dialectic becomes a very hollow pedagogical tool indeed.

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APPENDIX A: WRITING A DIALOGUE

Write a dialogue on your approved topic. Refer to the Pro/Con list you developed in class and your notes from your Socratic dialectic sessions to be sure you have examined your topic in terms of social, moral/ethical, legal, economic, comparative, historical, and psychological dimensions.

Establish the personalities of the two characters you will create for your dialogue—their names, ages, motivations, backgrounds. You might not actually use this information in your essay itself, but doing this will help you to form language for these characters that rings true. Create characters who would be likely to discuss the topic you have chosen.

Establish the setting (characters, time, place) in short paragraphs; then switch to script format. One of your characters should introduce the topic quite early in your paper, and if you have spent enough time developing your ideas, your paper will really take off from this point. Don't make the dialogue one-sided; not all of the good arguments should represent one side of the issue. Your dialogue will be more convincing if you *try* to believe arguments that oppose your own beliefs. After all, if there were no good points supporting other positions, reasonable people would not hold them.

Remember, a good dialogue carefully examines an argumentative topic; don't be surprised if your own beliefs are called into question as you write it. If this happens, then you are beginning to truly understand the complex nature of argument.

Appendices A, B and C are taken from: Stolarek and Juchartz, *Classical Techniques and Contemporary Arguments*.

APPENDIX B: THE INDUCTIVE ESSAY

Write a 3-5 page essay in which you support an argument. Use the material from your invention techniques and/or dialogue as prewriting for your inductive essay.

Carefully select three to five of your major arguments, making sure to select points that you can support with fully developed paragraphs, and use those in your inductive essay.

Arrange your essay following Cicero's model. Be sure it includes the following:

* introduction
* detailed description of the issue
* division of the issue into its discrete parts (if applicable)
* statement of the author's specific arguments
* naming and refuting of counter-arguments
* conclusion

In your detailed description of the issue, you need to define any key terms included in your argumentative proposition. For example, if you are writing in favor of gun control, you need to define what, precisely, you mean by gun control: owner registration, limitations on types of weapons allowed, prohibition of handguns? All can be considered "gun control." What, specifically, are you advocating in your essay?

Remember your refutation. An inductive essay without refutation is incomplete. Keep in mind that the purpose of an inductive essay is to persuade. You will be more likely to sway your audience if you present yourself as a reasonable person who is very knowledgeable on your topic.

APPENDIX C: THE MEDIATED ARGUMENT

Write an 8-10 page mediated argument, using both the material from your dialogue and inductive essays and your

collected research. Your argument will need to include the following:

   * an introduction that explains and defines the issue being discussed
   * a complete and impartial analysis of the major arguments comprising **opposing positions** on the issue
   * a statement that establishes the values and interests of opposing sides—their common ground
   * a proposal or solution that recognizes the interests of opposing parties.

Be sure that **conflicting arguments** on the subject are equally represented in your paper. Reference your dialectic paper for points that disagree with your position, accepting everything in that opposing position that you can. While it is often difficult to effectively present a position which you do not hold, a mediated argument requires fair representation.

Think about your common ground in broad terms (i.e., do opposing sides desire fairness, security, opportunity?) And remember, your proposal must recognize opposing sides' interests. An otherwise well-written mediated argument can be destroyed by a one-sided solution.

Think of your audience as readers who are concerned about your topic, are open to new ideas, and would like to see some resolution; try to be equally concerned, open to new ideas, and resolution-seeking yourself.

Use MLA documentation format for your paper.