

## **Fox Engl 131: How to Create a Claim**

Journal in Prep for King Analysis

### **But First: What is an Academic Argument?**

In high school, you may have learned about persuasive essays whose primary purpose is to convince your readers that your opinion is valid. Academic argumentation in the university is different because it begins with the evidence that you accumulate through reading sources or collecting data. **From this evidence, you create a *claim* that is then stated and supported as you bring your sources and evidence into your text.**

The process is therefore reversed: You can't make a claim until you have the evidence to support it. Often this claim may, in fact, be your opinion—but it is much more, since you can back it up with specific citations from your sources or with evidence from the data you have collected.

### **How To Create Your Claim**

Here's the process for designing an academic argument.

1. Pose a question such as: "What is the most powerful argument that King makes in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," and why? What makes this argument effective, significant, compelling?" (Short Paper 1.2 in this sequence)
2. Then, using your source (in this case, his "Letter"), explore this question with an open mind.
3. Take notes from your source as you explore the question – nail your statement to the text, always.
4. When you understand your source and have identified where, in the text, your question is being answered, then you can formulate your claim (i.e., "The most powerful argument that King makes in his "Letter" is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_."

Of course we all have biases. But you should try to be as open-minded as possible and respond to the prompt or academic task. Focus more on the text than on your personal views – and look at the context (time, place, situation) of the text's composition as well. (Ref: Johns, AVID)