

Writing Persuasively



Mechanical Engineering 200

Prof. Roger Graves

Director, Writing Across the Curriculum

Acting Director, Centre for Writers

The assignment

- Part 1: Outline an ethical theory
“discuss a current event” = **describe?**
“explore the ethical dimensions” = **evaluate?**
“propose a solution” = **propose**
“convince the reader” = **persuade**
- Part 2: **Outline [= describe?]** your position on a current ethical dilemma

The Reader

Describe the reader:

- Knowledge level (generally & on ethics):
- Familiarity with topic:
- Reading preferences (direct/indirect structure, headings)
- Values re. evidence (data, beliefs):

Invention

Topics in the news:

- ❑ Bernie Madoff (as in “made off with your retirement)
- ❑ New stem cell treatment
- ❑ Mounties use of tasers
- ❑ Payday loan businesses
- ❑ Gangfighting/druglords?
- ❑ Publicizing names of sex offenders
- ❑ Do not call list

Possible thesis statements

- ❑ Do not call list
- ❑ If they don't publish a list...protecting them is exposing them, yet not doing so also exposes them i.e. to nuisance telephone calls.
- ❑ Cdn gov should make a better effort to regulate
- ❑ While the Cdn government was motivated with good intentions to protect people from unwanted telephone calls, the way it went about it caused another set of problems.
- ❑ Violation of privacy!
- ❑ It's just a phone call for goodness sakes!
- ❑ I should have paid for call waiting – who's problem IS this?!

Argument 1

Thesis: While the Cdn government was motivated with good intentions to protect people from unwanted telephone calls, the way it went about it caused another set of problems that undermined their goal.

Test of a thesis:

Specific? Yes: focuses on one issue

Manageable? 500 words: should work

Interesting? Yes, in that it explains why I'm getting these calls all of a sudden

Argument structure

Claim:

- ❑ The do not call list failed to achieve its goal

Stated reason:

- ❑ the way it went about it caused another set of problems that undermined their goal.

Grounds/evidence

- ❑ Unwanted calls from telemarketers have skyrocketed since the legislation was passed.

Argument structure (cont'd)

Unstated assumptions

- The general public does not want to receive these calls

Evidence supporting unstated assumption:

- these calls incur expenses for mobile phone users

Argument structure (cont'd)

Rebuttal

- Beats me—I hate these callers! I guess you might say that in a free society, this kind of nuisance is part of what we must endure in order to have good privacy legislation.

Qualifiers

- While the do not call list succeeded in preventing Canadian-based marketing companies from making nuisance calls, international ones continue to do so.

Organizing your paper

- Part 1: Describe one of the four ethical positions
- Part 2: show how this principle can be used to advocate a solution to the do not call list problem

Part 1: Utilitarianism

- “the greatest good for the greatest number”
- This principle advocates that our actions as a society be based on determining what actions lead to happiness for most people.

Part 2: Utilitarianism and calling

- Marketers are a small group within society but cause much hassle and grief for many members of society, including those who are susceptible to social pressures exerted by telephone marketers. We should do everything in our power, including curbing our rights to freedom of speech, in order to limit the ability of these people to incur harm and waste the time of millions of people.