

# HISTORICAL ARGUMENTATION

## Formulating a Claim and Reasoning

In order to develop a historical argument, historians formulate a claim, or thesis, based on logical historical reasoning. A meaningful claim must be based in **EVIDENCE, HISTORICALLY DEFENSIBLE, and EVALUATIVE**. Meaning it must take a stance on an issue that could plausibly be argued differently, and go beyond simply listing causes or factors, qualifying assertions by looking at an issue from multiple perspectives. The reasoning used in the thesis often sets up the structure of the argument in the essay that follows. These might include:

- Weighing the relative significance of regional, national, or global contexts for understanding a historical event. (Contextualization)
- Identifying areas of similarity or difference between historical phenomena, in order to consider possible underlying reasons for similarity or difference. (Comparison)
- Considering both the immediate causes or effects of an event as well as long-term causes or effects, and assigning a relative significance to each. (Causation)
- Identifying ways that a historical development might be part of a long-term pattern (continuity) or mark a moment of departure from such patterns (change).

## Using Evidence to Support an Argument

Historians use historical reasoning in tandem with their analysis of historical evidence in order to develop and support a historical argument. As historians:

- Analyze primary and secondary sources and consider how they might be used to SUPPORT, QUALIFY, or MODIFY an argument about the past;
- Organize the evidence in meaningful ways and persuasive ways to support thesis;
- Acknowledge that not all sources necessarily support the argument, and there may be other plausible ways to understand historical development;
- Account for multiple perspectives within sources and contradictory and/or diverse evidence from a variety of sources when making an argument; and
- Explain why the argument is the most persuasive way to understand all the evidence presented or analyzed;

\*\*Consider how historical evidence affects the argument

\*\*You must develop arguments throughout the entire essay and not simply in your introduction or thesis.

## Possible ways to develop ability to use diverse historical evidence (multiple perspectives) to support, qualify, or modify argument:

- ✓ Think about differences in opinions as you read and analyze sources.
- ✓ Clearly state how one perspective or argument might undermine another or lead to different conclusions.
- ✓ Look for relationships between sources and be attentive to the ways in which different sources might approach the same topic from very different perspectives.
- ✓ Demonstrate (show) how one source functions as an explicit or implicit critique of another.

**THIS IS THE “HOWEVER PARAGRAPH” and/or “HOWEVER STATEMENT.”**