**Writing/Argument Advice**

Goals

1. **Persuade the reader:** pretend like I am 2 years old, requiring explanation of *everything* [see Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, 4th Edition (Hackett, 2008); Rules C4, A2]
2. **Be charitable (faithful) to other thinkers:** articulate their positions carefully, and do not criticize something until you can see where the person is coming from (why her argument would seem reasonable) [Rules 5, C5]
3. **Then, bring the noise:** attack the argument (not just the conclusions) as if it matters who is right (it does)
4. **Say something interesting and important to you:** do not bore yourself! If this means coming up with another prompt and pitching it to me, that’s fine

Strategies (a non-exhaustive list)

1. Overall Strategies
   1. First persuade the reader of Socrates’ view, then come in with your own argument as a wrecking ball, leaving me nowhere else to turn
   2. Show that Socrates is right by presenting a series of representative examples or possible objections, explaining how his account is either exhaustive or *necessarily* the right explanation
   3. Signal doubts as you explain Socrates’ argument, then tie those hints together into a more fully worked-out counterargument (like planting dynamite at the weak points of a building, then setting it off toward the end)
   4. Play 2 authors against each other and give independent reasons for thinking either that one author is more right than the others, or that some third option that neither of them noticed is right
   5. Analyze an example from life that is integrally related to the question, then show how Socrates’ position cannot account for it or accounts for it wrongly (do not forget to explain why this failure makes his overall claim wrong)
2. Insufficient Move – criticizing only conclusions, without also addressing argument
3. Specific Strategies [cf. Weston, ch. 6]
   1. *Ad absurdum*: show that Socrates’ argument leads to a contradiction or to something *he* would find obviously absurd
   2. Disagree with one or more of his premises, explaining why you disagree
   3. Show a faulty logical connection [cf. Weston, ch. 10]

Assorted Tips

1. Nouns, pronouns, and verbs **must** agree in number (“If anyone agrees, they can…”)
2. ‘Thinking’/‘Claiming’ (better) vs. ‘Feeling’/‘Believing’ (worse)
3. Cite your sources, even for materials we read in or for class [Rule 13]. Incl. *translator*
4. Explain quotations!
5. Think through examples carefully [Cf. Weston, ch. 2]
6. Extend the writer’s position to cover things he does not explicitly consider
7. Give definitions of crucial terms (not from the dictionary!) [Cf. Weston, Appendix]
8. **Do not start your paper with a vague generalization!** [Rule C3]
   1. ‘Down through the ages,’ ‘Philosophers have always,’ etc. are right out
9. Have a friend proofread/critique your paper, or at least listen while you read it aloud