EVALUATING AN ARGUMENT
Instructor: Norman Vorano

1. Brief Description of in-class writing exercise:
Developing essay ideas: put up two slides; have students pair-up; write down one claim of fact, one claim of value, and one claim of policy. Stemming from the two paintings or slides as well, for one claim, give possible reasons. Then, going around the rooms, we each give a claim, followed by the reasons. Others respond to the claim first. Is it a claim of fact, value or policy? Why? Then, they give possible warrant(s) about their reason(s).

2. Context for the exercise:
- Following Rotterberg's essay: Elements of Argument, "Understanding Argument"
- Following a broader discussion of art-historical comparisons

3. Goal(s) of the exercise:
- Develop an ability to generate theses, or essay topics.
- Understand argument(s)
- Pick out assumptions in others' arguments
- To encourage inter-group discussion and intra-group discussion

4. Common results of the exercise:
Largely depends upon slides chosen, which seem to steer their topics or claims. Several people (pairs) come up with very similar claims. This worked out well because although the claims were the same, their reasons and warrants were different.

5. Student responses to the exercise:
Regarding the nature of "value" - is it subjective or objective? This stemmed from the different ways they used evidence, or they debated the specifics of their warrants, which I found interesting because a secondary goal of this exercise was to really analyze reasons (and evidence), which is to make them aware that the ways in which evidences are used are always open for debate, and a part of their larger argumentative strategy.

6. Other Comments:
The exercise needs to be conducted in conjunction with "Understanding Argument" from Rotterberg's Elements of Argument.