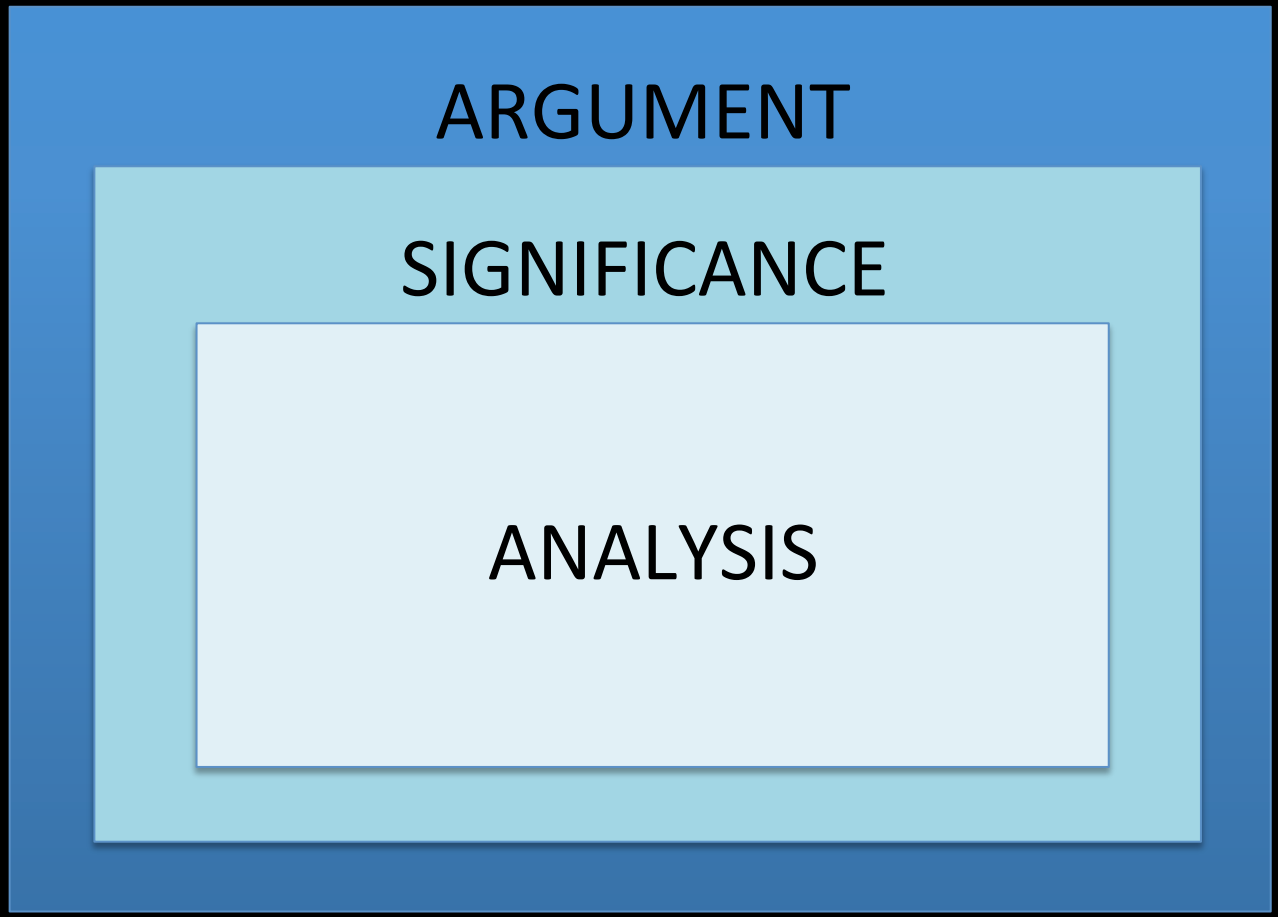
Writing the History Research Paper

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Structure of the Research Paper



Analysis

- What is the historical change that the source reflects, or the historical phenomena that it offers insight into?
- What do you consider to be important or significant about the information or the point of view represented in the source?
- Who is the author? Who is the audience? What is the purpose of the text? What is the author's tone?

Significance

- How have other historians characterized the period, event, or actor that you are studying?
- What are the different arguments put forth in the literature on your subject?
- If you were to characterize the literature as a conversation, how many speakers would there be and what would they be saying?
- How does your source analysis fit into this existing conversation? Does it agree? Disagree? Agree but revise?

Characterizing the Literature 1

"With the modern interest in 'putting women back into medieval history,' the role of women in crusading has received some attention. Yet historians disagree profoundly over the extent and nature of women's involvement."

Characterizing the Literature 2

"…Although these scholars do not agree with one another in all particulars, the great majority of them have abandoned the victimization model in favor of an emphasis on the slaves' resiliency and autonomy. As I suggest below, I believe that some of these arguments for slave autonomy have been overstated and eventually will be modified on the basis of future evidence."

Argument

- The thesis statement you present in your introduction should reflect both portions of the paper
- The thesis statement presents both your analysis and its significance, synthetically
- As in a shorter paper, the structure of the paper flows from the way you present the argument in the introduction

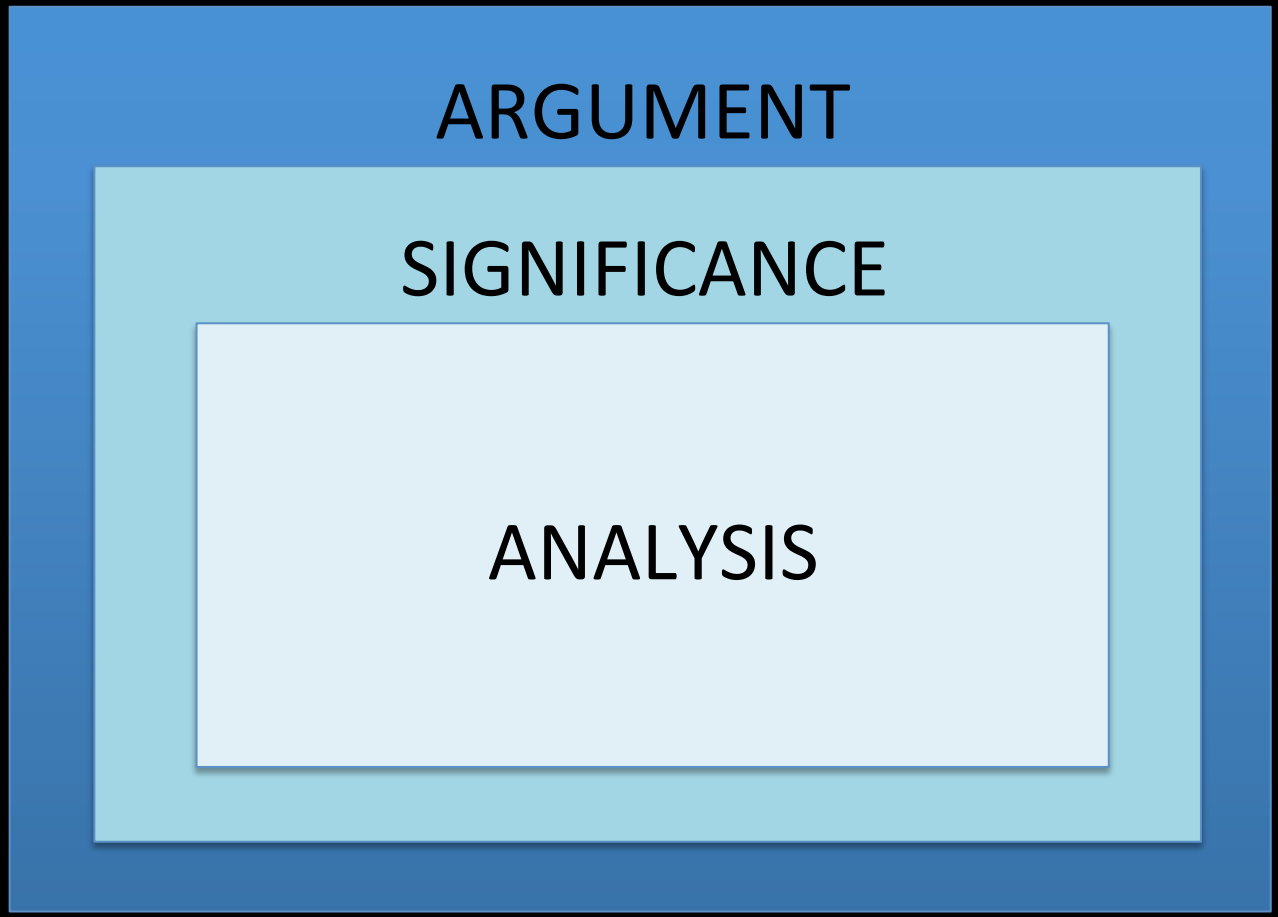
Argument Example

"Historians have used this odd relationship with Bodin as an excuse to dismiss Wheare's intellectual contribution to the genre. . . This paper offers an alternative explanation. . . We will see that Wheare departed from his reliance on previous authors by introducing a new method for deriving moral precepts from historical particulars."

Organizing the Sections

- Every section of the paper has an explicit purpose that serves the argument you present in the introduction
- You have an interpretation or point of view on both the primary and secondary sources, which you make explicit
- Topic sentences remind your reader what the purpose of each section or paragraph is and how it ties back to the paper's overall argument

Structure of the Research Paper



How to Conclude

- Take a step back to consider the implications of your arguments
- Does your paper imply larger questions about how a period has been characterized, or about we create historical knowledge more generally?
- What kinds of future research might deepen or further develop the argument you have presented?

Find more resources on the History Writing Fellow website!

