

## *a structure for academic argument*

**Launch your thesis.**

Medical professionals embrace a rather vigorous practice of classification and categorization. Diseases and disorders manifest themselves not only in physical symptoms, but also in the various terms used to identify and to name those maladies. We might say that as medicine advances, the classification of disorders becomes more and more precise, with better differentiations and distinctions constantly evolving. We should also notice, however, that changes in classification often catalyze (or are catalyzed by) changes in social meanings. Patients with HIV disease once were simply known as “AIDS patients.” Before that term was invented, they were known as persons who suffered with “gay cancer.” Similarly, the cluster of terms that have been associated with excessive use of alcohol imply various kinds of social ethics, medical politics, and behavioral norms, suggesting that the very act of medical naming, aside from values associated with scientific accuracy, deserves to be thought of as an act of rhetorical invention, and the costs and consequences of medical classification more robustly figured into the study of disorders and disease.

**Grapple with counterpositions.**

Miller argues that such concerns about the social consequences of medical terminology speak to an excessively literary interest in what he disparagingly calls “medical poetics.” (204)....

**Show authoritative support.**

In contrast, Susan Sontag identifies the value-laden operations of the term across a range of social contexts. Drawing upon her own experience with breast cancer and the complex of troubling associations a simple utterance of the term evokes, she argues that the term now carries with it not only a set of medical meanings, but a set of metaphoric meanings as well...

**Support your position with reasons.**

Consider the cluster of terms that have been used to identify excessive drinking...

When alcoholism acquired the status of *disease*, it liberated the disorder from its merely behavioral definition to that of...

But, are there also perhaps limits to alcoholism’s status as a clinical disorder? Or, might we anticipate yet another classification revolution, whereby alcoholism may become newly understood as X...

**Gesture toward yet new concerns that your argument anticipates.**

The American philosopher Susanne Langer once remarked that “naming is the vastest generative idea ever conceived” (135), a gesture to the power of categories and the necessity of linguistic distinctions. If we truly embrace such a power, then we should also remind ourselves that what appear at the moment to be quite stable terms may give way to alternate conceptions which will require new names at their birth.

contextualizing background

statement of the problem

your position as a response to the problem

counterargument from an authority  
[acknowledge, concede, refute]

authoritative confirmation of your position

reasons in support of your position

reasons in support of your position

reasons in support of your position

conclusion  
speculation about the future of the problem