Deconstructing an Argument

**Forms of Argument:**

1. **The construction of a thesis.**
2. **The deployment of evidence.**
3. **The (often unstated) deployment of authority.**
4. **The demonstration of knowledge.**
5. **The use of unsupported assertions.**
6. **The use of quotations/citations from authority figures**
7. **The identification of trends**
8. **The employment of denigration**

**Introduction**

* Briefly give details of author and publication.
* State where published and when - mention any relevant context.
* Say how you are going to structure your essay (signpost).

**Re-cap argument**

* Briefly state the argument of the author in your own words.

**Structure**

* How does the author go about making their case?
* What *format* is utilised? (E.g. carefully-structured essay, series of short
* points, list of tables, etc.?)
* Is it appropriate for the *intended audience*?

**Style**

* How are elements of style employed by the author to enhance their argument?
* What is the *tone* of the piece?
* What kind of *language* is being used?
* Are there any *rhetorical devices/writing techniques* being employed?
* How do these affect the overall case? Does the style employed *contradict* or *reinforce* the content?
* To what extent has the *intended audience* determined the style selected by the author?

**Use of evidence**

* What evidence is being presented to back up the argument?
* How *appropriately chosen/effective* is that evidence?
* How *reliable* is it?
* Is there any evidence *not* being discussed? Is that significant?
* How does the author deal with evidence that does not support their argument?
* How does the author deal with the arguments of those who *disagree* with him? Does he represent them *fairly* and *accurately*?

**Ideology**

* What *assumptions* are made by the author?
* What *value judgements* are being displayed?
* Do these suggest a particular *ideological position*?
* Are there other clues to the author’s ideological position?
* Does the ideology held affect the author’s *selection of facts* and *use/interpretation of evidence*?

**Omissions**

* What does the author *not say/leave out*?
* Are the omissions *significant*?

**Conclusion**

* Give an *overall assessment* of the argument. Is it convincing?
* What elements determine its success or failure?