

# Introduction to Philosophy

---

## What is an Argument?

As you do the reading for this class throughout the semester, you will need to look for two basic kinds of information:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Of course, before you can do this, you need to understand some general points about arguments and their structure. The reading below will get us started on this and the questions will help you understand what I expect you to get out of it. Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently to these issues in the next class meeting.

### Reading

- Irving Copi and Carl Cohen, “Propositions and Arguments”, Sections 1.1–1.3, 2.1B, and 2.2A–B (the other sections are there for reference).

### Questions

1. What do people commonly mean by the word “argument”? How is this similar to and different from how Copi and Cohen define an “argument”? What role do premises and conclusions play in an argument? What does an inference within an argument, and how is an inference related to premises and conclusions?
2. For the following arguments: (1) circle the main conclusion; (2) underline each premise supporting that conclusion; (3) underline any conclusion indicators; (4) circle any premise indicators. Once this is done, assemble an argument map for each argument, putting the propositions in boxes and use arrows to indicate the inferences.
  - A. In spite of the fact that electrons are physical entities, they cannot be seen. For electrons are too small to deflect photons.
  - B. The defendant is guilty. For he confessed to stealing the jewels and he was undoubtedly present at the scene of the crime since his fingerprints are on the safe.
  - C. If Qatar beats Iraq in the football match, then the Iraq fans will shout obscenities. So you should cover your child’s ears because Qatar is going to win!