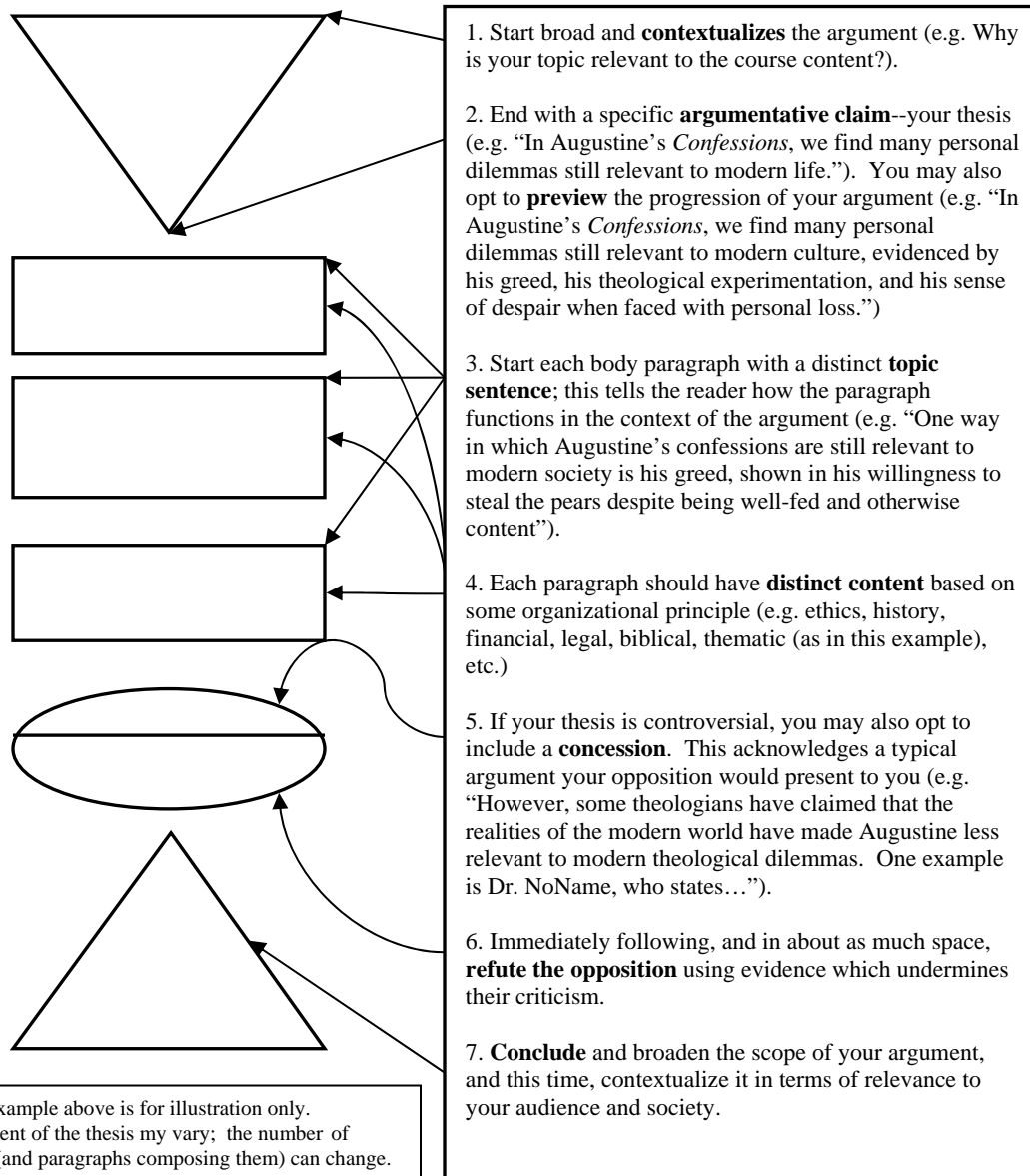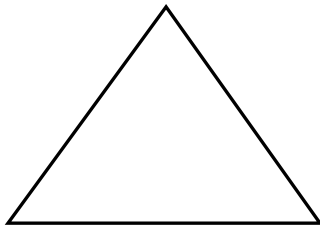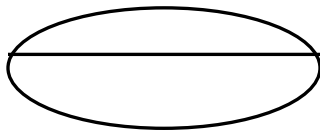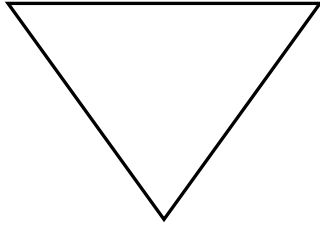# Argument structure: *The Aristotelian argument*

The Aristotelian argument is the framework upon which most academic, thesis-driven writing is based. You can use this template any time you need to take a position on a topic.* Before getting started, make sure that your thesis is *argumentative* and non-obvious. When determining how to support your thesis, try to group all of your supporting evidence into distinct piles which have thematic similarities. Finally, develop each claim in its own section of text, making sure that each point is proportionate to the others. The back of this handout contains a template you can use to get started.

1. Start broad and **contextualizes** the argument (e.g. Why is your topic relevant to the course content?).

2. End with a specific **argumentative claim**--your thesis (e.g. "In Augustine's *Confessions*, we find many personal dilemmas still relevant to modern life."). You may also opt to **preview** the progression of your argument (e.g. "In Augustine's *Confessions*, we find many personal dilemmas still relevant to modern culture, evidenced by his greed, his theological experimentation, and his sense of despair when faced with personal loss.")

3. Start each body paragraph with a distinct **topic sentence**; this tells the reader how the paragraph functions in the context of the argument (e.g. "One way in which Augustine's confessions are still relevant to modern society is his greed, shown in his willingness to steal the pears despite being well-fed and otherwise content").

4. Each paragraph should have **distinct content** based on some organizational principle (e.g. ethics, history, financial, legal, biblical, thematic (as in this example), etc.)

5. If your thesis is controversial, you may also opt to include a **concession**. This acknowledges a typical argument your opposition would present to you (e.g. "However, some theologians have claimed that the realities of the modern world have made Augustine less relevant to modern theological dilemmas. One example is Dr. NoName, who states…").

6. Immediately following, and in about as much space, **refute the opposition** using evidence which undermines their criticism.

7. **Conclude** and broaden the scope of your argument, and this time, contextualize it in terms of relevance to your audience and society.

*The example above is for illustration only. Placement of the thesis my vary; the number of points (and paragraphs composing them) can change.

Relevance & Context: Thesis:
Topic Sentence 1: Supporting claims:
Topic Sentence 2: Supporting claims:
Topic Sentence 3: Supporting claims:
Concession: Refutation:
Context & Relevance: