COUNTERARGUMENT

What is a counterargument?
- A counterargument is a viewpoint that opposes your main argument.
- To prove this, a good counterargument should:
  ✓ Examine alternative points of view and opposing arguments
  ✓ Note the advantages and disadvantages of these views
  ✓ Explain why your view is better than others using evidence to support your points

Why use a counterargument? Doesn’t it weaken your point? No! Actually, including a counterargument in your persuasive essay:
- Increases your credibility because it shows fairness
- Makes your argument stronger because it responds to by anticipating reader objections

EXAMPLE COUNTERARGUMENT PARAGRAPH

Present opposing view: Opponents to doctor-assisted suicide argue that the terminally ill patient needs psychotherapy because they believe that these patients are too depressed to make a logical decision.

Explain opposing view: Some psychologists have claimed that these requests are a result of depression caused by certain problems related to their illness and that some patients will change their minds if they participate in psychotherapy. For example, they may be experiencing problems such as hopelessness because there is no effective treatment, anxiety over doctors’ very expensive fees, and regret for their family’s burden of taking care of them (Maskin, 1999).

Transition to and explain your position using evidence: However, all of those terminally ill patients who after psychotherapy finally choose to hasten their deaths are very determined and decide carefully to take advantage of the doctor-assisted suicide law. For example, Girsh states that patients who consider assisted suicide are aware of their exact medical condition through a mutual exchange of information with their doctors; these patients understand their medical treatment along with risk, benefits and other options, and they must talk with a psychologist to determine if they are psychologically able to make such a decision (1999). These are not patients who want to end their lives simply because they are depressed. In short, terminally ill patients who finally choose to ask doctors to help them commit suicide are mentally competent and very determined about what they want to choose.

(Adapted from student handout, Sourcework, Heinle & Heinle, 2006.)