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## Humanities: The Underestimated Major

Makayla Gwinn

Cedarville University, makaylargwinn@cedarville.edu

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## Makayla Gwinn

I grew up on the coast of Maine, so I naturally have a love for the ocean and the outdoors. Whether it's boating with my family, hiking in western Maine, or cliff jumping with my brothers and friends, I am always up for exploring the beauty of my home state. Currently, I get to further my love for and understanding of God's creation by pursuing a degree in biology at Cedarville University.

## Humanities: The Underestimated Major

In his article “Shocker: Humanities Grads Gainfully Employed and Happy,” author Scott Jaschik answers a question that is relevant to humanities students all across America: Is this field of study profitable and enjoyable in the workforce? Throughout the article, he addresses this question from a variety of different angles, conveying the idea that humanities is indeed a path to success and satisfaction in the realm of employment.

Jaschik begins his article by confronting the popular opinion that students with humanities majors end up in failure after they graduate. He cites both “Forbes” and “Kiplinger's” as he notes that majors such as anthropology, archaeology, and art history are some of the least lucrative career choices. With this established, he goes on to say that despite the popular belief that the liberal arts are futile pursuits, humanities graduates are, in fact, comparable to those who earn degrees in engineering, science, and other common fields of study.

Throughout this article, Jaschik mentions the study that he is relying upon— “The State of the Humanities 2018: Graduates in

the Workforce & Beyond”— as his source of information regarding the status of humanities graduates. He summarizes and analyses the study’s data as he illustrates and supports his claim that “Humanities Grads [are] Gainfully Employed and Happy.”

First, he mentions the study’s research results concerning income and status. These results uphold the common view that STEM majors earn more money than humanities graduates. He relates that in 2015, humanities graduates were earning a median income of \$52,000, compared to the average of \$60,000 for all graduates. In addition, he makes note of the fact that as a person’s experience within their job increases, humanities graduates begin to earn amounts of money closer to that of their counterparts.

Second, Jaschik focuses on elements of comparison in which the results are favorable for humanities grads: job satisfaction, unemployment rates, and supervisory positions. The job satisfaction rate is about 87%, the unemployment rate is 4.3%, and about 60% of humanities graduates report that they occupy a managerial position in their workplace. These results are comparable to other fields of study. In congruence with job satisfaction, Jaschik also mentions that, contrary to popular belief, humanities graduates are typically not worried about financial matters.

Accompanying these research results is a colorful bar graph illustrating the percent of satisfaction experienced among workers in different fields with regard to various aspects of their jobs. It shows that in areas like opportunities for advancement, benefits, and job security, humanities graduates are closely ranked with fields such as business and education with regard to satisfaction in

these areas. In fact, humanities graduates were even more satisfied than the overall average when it came to job location. The graph supports the data Jaschik previously presented in his article.

Another bar graph depicting the percentage of those who are “deeply interested” in the work they do and the opportunities they have at their jobs accompanies Jaschik’s statement that “humanities graduates were more likely than engineering graduates” to say that they “have the opportunity to do what [they] do best every day.” It also illustrates the study’s findings that humanities students were fifth out of eight with regard to interest in their occupation, coming in just behind the engineers.

In conclusion, Jaschik quotes William D. Adams extensively in support of his stance that humanities graduates are employed and satisfied. Adams wrote an essay that was published alongside the report Jaschik frequently cites. In the last two paragraphs of his article, Jaschik takes quotes from this essay that basically agree with what he tries to convey throughout his entire article. However, at the end of this quote, the article ends abruptly without explanation or closure from Jaschik.

Overall, Jaschik effectively uses the Toulmin model to convey and support his general claim that a majority of humanities graduates are not only employed but also possess managerial positions and are satisfied with their occupation; however, elements such as ineffective structure of the article, poor use of quotes, and even a grammar error reduce the credibility of his argument.

Starting with the first element of the Toulmin model, Jaschik presents and narrows his claim. To begin with, he states

his *claim* in the title of the article: “Shocker: Humanities Grads Gainfully Employed and Happy”. This title successfully captures the reader’s attention and presents the idea of the entire article in a succinct manner. Later on in the article, Jaschik fleshes out his claim which is, in essence, that humanities graduates are employed, satisfied with their occupation and paycheck, and frequently hold titles as supervisors and managers. This statement narrows the claim of the article in such a way that the field of humanities becomes comparable to disciplines like engineering or the natural sciences. By limiting his claim to areas such as job satisfaction and rate of employment, Jaschik is able to uphold his argument when it otherwise would have crumbled had he sought to compare salaries alone.

The remainder of the article presents a considerable amount of *data*, the second aspect of the Toulmin model. Jaschik relates specific facts and figures drawn from the study he frequently mentions. By summarizing chosen aspects of the report, such as job satisfaction, he is able to convey evidence that supports his claim. The manner in which he presents that chosen data also supports his claim. For example, when relating statistics regarding unemployment rates, he mentions that the unemployment rate for humanities is 4.3%, but he purposefully leaves out the fact that this number is second only to arts majors, who have the highest rate of unemployment (“The State of the Humanities 2018”). Therefore, Jaschik’s management of data presents sufficient evidence to successfully support his claim.

Continuing to follow the Toulmin model, Jaschik’s article includes a *warrant* and a *backing* for that warrant which, together,

implicitly explain the purpose behind his claim. The warrant is expressed in the first paragraph of Jaschik's work as he talks about the popular belief that students should stay away from liberal arts degrees. Backing the implied warrant, he includes both "Forbes" and "Kiplinger's" reports that support his warrant, and he briefly says that "many colleges with liberal arts roots are rushing to add preprofessional programs" that will offer students the opportunity to study fields such as biology and business. Clearly, Jaschik wants his readers to know that this common belief is misplaced.

Another aspect of the Toulmin model that Jaschik utilizes in an exemplary manner is the *qualifier*. At the onset of his argument, he clearly establishes the fact that humanities graduates do not make as much money as do graduates employed in other fields. This effectively narrows the scope of his claim and makes it clear that while humanities grads are "gainfully employed," they are theoretically not as financially well-off as students who choose other majors. By stating these facts, Jaschik clarifies that he is not claiming that humanities graduates have better salaries than doctors or engineers, but that they are simply employed and happy.

Displaying the last piece of the Toulmin model, Jaschik defends his claim against skeptics using the technique of *rebuttal*. He confronts claims that depict the humanities as a one-way road to a job at a fast food restaurant. For instance, Jaschik quotes Robert B. Townsend saying, "I think the top-line numbers about earnings still tend to drive much of the conversation" in response to opponents' tendency to "fixate on stereotypical images of unemployed humanities graduates." This quote is meant to illuminate the fact that Jaschik is focusing on employment and

satisfaction rather than the common debate topic of salaries. The well-placed rebuttals show that Jaschik anticipates the arguments that will come his way and is willing and able to defend his claim against them.

Despite Jaschik's good use of the Toulmin model to fashion his argument, there are two aspects of his article that are a detriment to his claim. First, the structure of his article is not favorable to his claim. After his four-paragraph introduction, he throws a quote from Robert B. Townsend into the mix that would have been more effective had it been tactfully incorporated into the introduction. Then, Jaschik begins to report on the study that supports his claim, but he starts by relating data that hurts rather than helps his case; he issues a disclaimer that humanities grads don't make as much money as engineers. This is a necessary point to convey, but Jaschik should have strengthened his argument before issuing this qualifier in order to gain the trust of his readers. In addition, he ends his article rather abruptly with a long quote from an essay written by William D. Adams without recapping his claim or data. These structural components hurt the effectiveness of his argument.

Second, Jaschik failed to correct a grammar error in the fourth paragraph: "than do humanities graduates do." This unfortunate mistake takes away from his ethos, or his perceived credibility and authority to address the topic, thus detracting from the potency of his article.

In the final analysis, Jaschik's article "Shocker: Humanities Grads Gainfully Employed and Happy" successfully employs the Toulmin model of constructing an argument through the use of a

claim, data, warrant, backing, qualifier, and rebuttal; however, it fails to incorporate quotes in a meaningful manner, structure the article logically, and establish unquestionable ethos for the author. Jaschik could have presented his claim and the ensuing argument in a more effective and impactful manner. In the end, he successfully presents his claim and supports it with solid data, but he fails to sculpt his argument in an authoritative, definitive, and memorable fashion.

## References

Jaschik, S. (2018). The state of the humanities 2018: Graduates in the workforce & beyond.