

Assignment Overview: Essay #3 Evaluative Essay (Argumentative)

What You'll be Doing for Our Third Essay Assignment

Abstraction.

How do you understand an idea? A concept? A way of looking at the world? And why? Why is it necessary to do this?

On one level, the how to is easy: first you have to read up on the subject and then, to truly understand it, write about it; second, you have to want to understand the idea or concept.

Why is that desire to understand so important? Because without it, you will not devote the necessary mental energy needed to feed your imagination. And it's your imagination and intellect – the left and right side of your brain – that fire off the neurons that will get you to understand abstractions. And that understanding lies at the core of the college endeavor. It's this ability to understand connections between seemingly disparate ideas or evidence that mean the difference between a job with a corner office ("I'm presenting at the London conference") – and a job in a grease trap ("Where does this used lard go?")

Purpose of Essay

This next assignment is designed to get you in that corner office. It will show you how to understand, form an opinion on, and then write about an abstract concept.

Topic of Essay

Your purpose will be to evaluate three different ways of viewing the world: conservative, liberal, or libertarian. While these ideologies or civic stances are most closely associated with government, you quickly find out that a) government affects every facet of your life; and b) government affects every facet of your life (repetition can be a very effective rhetorical tool). You'll also find that these terms represent, as noted above, an outlook or view that colors the way you understand and accept art and music, how you raise children, what kind of education is best, etc. In short, it's a way of looking at life.

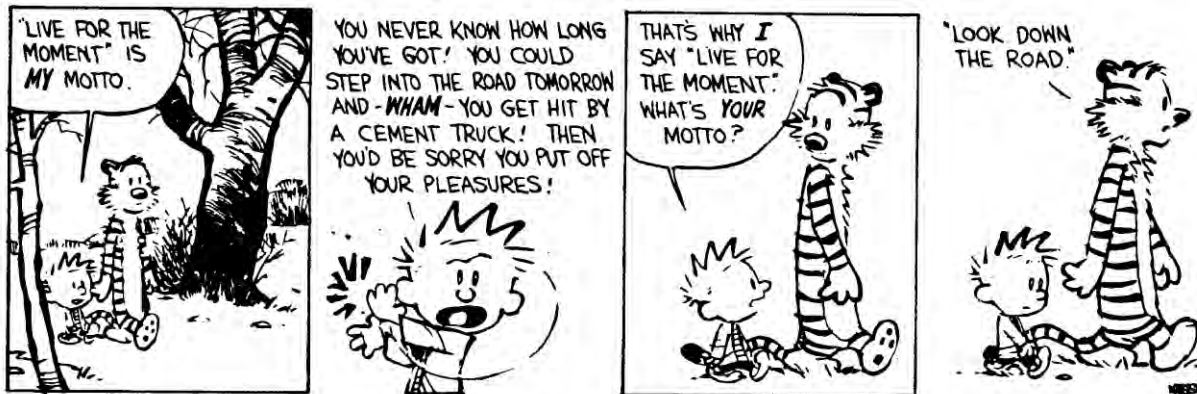
This will be the main essay for this semester and as "The Intellectual Free Lunch" made clear, it's essential to understand an issue before you develop an opinion about it. Thus we'll be reviewing issues that affect our daily lives, including the environment, social welfare, and worker and individual rights. The writing assignment ties these issues together under the broad umbrella of civic stances.

Of course, many (most?) people would much rather pay attention to their favorite music group, shop, work on their cars, watch the weather channel, etc. than pay attention to issues such as those above. But the coughing as you breath (or the closed beaches), the money you pay for tuition, the overtime pay you earn (or don't earn), and the right to choose (or not choose) your religion affect you every day.

This all means two different things: 1) there's quite a bit of reading to get you up to speed on issues like those above, 2) this assignment means you have to think about things that most Americans prefer to ignore.

Thus you'll be exposed to intriguing and often new and surprising views and ideas as we prepare to write this essay. Get ready to enjoy yourself as you learn about the real world around you - as opposed to the consumer driven I-want-immediate-gratification-and-I-want-it-now tripe of most mainstream media - and get ready to be amused, dismayed, and encouraged by the various responses you encounter.

Another way of looking at this is to consider the Cement Truck of Life

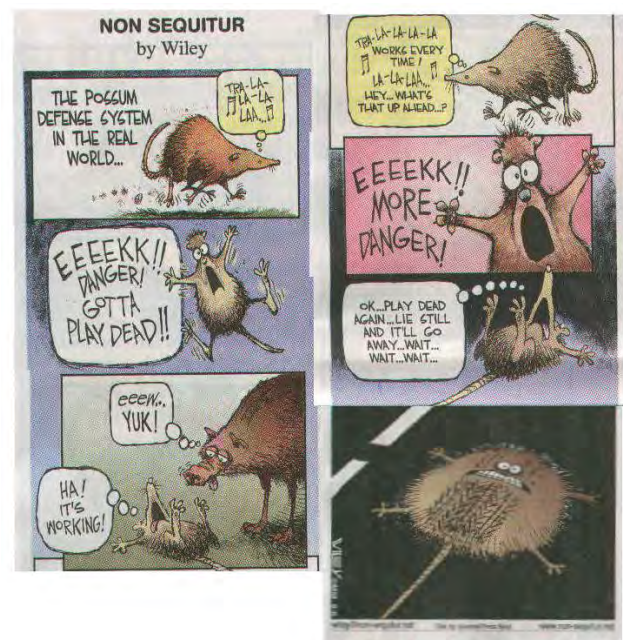


In life you have to make choices. You can live the unexamined life, like Calvin (the little boy in the cartoon) above. But why not do both? Why not live for the moment and watch the road (a cement truck is one of the best examples of kinetic energy – particularly when it hits a pedestrian). Hobbes' (that oh so intelligent tiger) motto "Look down the road" suggests that foresight and knowledge are necessary to truly enjoy life – and to avoid being buried in an envelope.

These choices often involve examining ideas that make your brain tingle. Just what should we do as citizens? Is there a way to arrange our thoughts on government programs, taxes, property rights, worker rights? There is: civic stances. Civic stances are broad systems of belief that give order to people's view of what government should and should not do. While there are many different kinds of civic stances, in America most people fall into three categories: conservative, liberal, and libertarian. These end up involving politics because civic stances are a good way to generalize citizens' and politicians' way of looking at the world.

Of course, mentioning the word "politics" causes many to bolt for the exits. And that's too bad. You could take the passive way out. "What's it matter" you might say with a jaded air, "I can't do anything" or "It doesn't really effect me." Too many people, like Calvin, play possum and try to avoid issues by ignoring them. But the problem is the Cement Truck of Life has a way of rumbling through and nailing you just when you think everything was going fine. Purchased a house in Toms River? Who's going to pay for the polluted water? Drive without a seatbelt? Who's going to pay when you get brain damaged and spend the next forty years dribbling in a cup and watching reruns of *Matlock*. If you said "taxpayers," you're right, and you're getting at one of the reasons to pay attention to the Cement Truck of Life: you don't want to get blindsided by issues like my friend to the right.

Why am I talking about cement trucks and showing you pictures of dead possums you ask? Well, it's to show how something as seemingly dry and uninspiring as civic stances or ideologies (the topic of the next essay) effects every decision you make in life. Notice that I used the verb "make" here. It's better to make decisions than to have them foisted upon you by the powers that be . . . whether these powers are the government, your boss, friends or family.



To help ease you into the topic, you'll first be reading brief introductions on the ideas surrounding civic stances, and then reading "issue" essays which illustrate how civic stances play out in real life.

Discourse

Global warming, pollution, paying for beach access, gas prices, alternative energy, sex education, job training. "Uh Dr. Bordelon . . . didn't you say this essay would focus on civic stances?"

Yes.

As I noted earlier, one of the things you'll discover in this essay is how issues have a tendency to connect with each other.

The Writing Assignment: Essay #3

Write an essay which argues that one of the civic stances we've studied – conservatism, liberalism, or libertarianism – is best for America. This is an academic essay, so the tone is formal, but remember that you need to keep the reader interested. Follow the suggestions for planning, revision, and proofreading in *I&C* (111+). As stated in the Assignment sheet for essay #1, for this and all essays, assume your audience is college educated (or getting there) – but in this case, isn't sure what you mean by conservative, liberal, or libertarian.

Requirements

Final draft, minimum of 1,500 words. You need to include a minimum of four different sources (which means a minimum of works cited entries and at least four in-text citations) -- but remember, the emphasis is on your reasoning: it's what you actually do with the sources that makes a good essay. Essay must include introduction (with thesis and division statement); body paragraphs; counter-argument and rebuttal; and conclusion.

Note on sources

Three of the sources must be from the assigned readings. You must also include at least one (1) fact/statistic/quote from a source that was not assigned. And yes, most "A" and "B" essays use more than one.

If taken from the internet, this outside research **MUST** be from EBSCOhost, SIRS, LEXIS databases (see "How Do I Find Sources" *I&C* 73+), accessible through our library's home page. **ANY other internet source MUST (that's MUST) be approved by me before (that's BEFORE) you include them in your essay.** The penalty? A substantially lowered grade (i.e. in the "D" range).

You've been using many of the college's databases throughout the semester. Try SIRS, Opposing Viewpoints, and New York Times databases (use **Library Link** on the Course Menu) and then move to EBSCOhost and other sources.

College textbooks and magazines and newspapers are excellent sources as well.

Learning Objectives

1. Articulating the differences and similarities between several different abstract concepts
2. Moving from abstraction (conservatism, liberalism, libertarianism) to the concrete (examples of each)
3. Information literacy: finding, selecting, and evaluating sources
4. Turn information into knowledge by using current events, statistics, and/or historical examples to prove an argument
5. Developing engaging introductions and conclusions
6. Developing a single idea (division) over the course of two or more paragraphs
7. See the advantages of revising your work in stages (paragraph by paragraph)
8. Using more sophisticated punctuation (dashes, colons, semi-colons)
9. Proofread your work so that it does not interfere with reader's comprehension of your argument
10. Manage your time and complete each draft by the assigned due date

Directions

Follow suggestions in the following pages of *I&C*.

Grading Criteria

Assignment Sheet: Essay #3 Evaluative Essay (Argumentative)

NOTE: References to page numbers in I&C will be incorrect (this is taken from an earlier edition of I&C)

Assignment

There have been a spate of recent essays dealing with economic mobility -- a ten dollar word for what is more commonly known as the American Dream: work hard, play by the rules, and you'll prosper. Apparently, there are now some questions about this mobility, and driving these questions is the growing income inequality in America.

For this essay, we'll dive into this debate, examining the argument from all sides and reaching a specific conclusion about this social phenomenon.

Specifically, you'll write an essay which argues that the current income gap is either good or bad for America. Your divisions should focus on specific reasons why this inequality helps or hurts various aspects of American life. Thus, if readers mentally adds up your reasons and agree that they are valid, you'll convince them that your position is informed and logical.

Requirements

Final draft, minimum of 1,250 words (most go beyond this). You need to include a minimum of five different sources (which means a minimum of five works cited entries and at least five in-text citations) -- but remember, the emphasis is on your reasoning: it's what you actually do with the sources that makes a good essay. At least three of the essays must be from the assigned readings. Essay must include introduction (with thesis and division statement); body paragraphs; counter-argument and rebuttal; and conclusion.

Note on sources

Any source taken from a general web site (i.e. from a search on Google, etc.) MUST (that's MUST) be approved by me *before* (that's BEFORE) you include them in your essay. The penalty? A substantially lowered grade (i.e. in the "D" range).

Learning Objectives

1. Articulating the differences and similarities between several different abstract concepts
2. Moving from abstraction (projections about effects of economic mobility) to the concrete (examples of each)
3. Information literacy: finding, selecting, and evaluating sources
4. Turn information into knowledge by using current events, statistics, and/or historical examples to prove an argument
5. Developing engaging introductions and conclusions
6. Developing a single idea (division) over the course of two or more paragraphs
7. See the advantages of revising your work in stages (paragraph by paragraph)
8. Using more sophisticated punctuation (dashes, colons, semi-colons)
9. Proofread your work so that it does not interfere with reader's comprehension of your argument
10. Manage your time and complete each draft by the assigned due date

Directions

Follow suggestions contained in "A Writer's Guide" (294-312); and "Directions for Rough Draft of Argumentative Essay" (I&C 96).

Grading Criteria

To receive a passing grade, you must successfully complete the following:

Organization: A thesis statement which clearly states the subject, your position and the divisions of your essay. A counter-argument and rebuttal.

Content: Clear and balanced arguments, developed with examples, descriptions and stories, and a full and persuasive development of the reasoning behind each of the examples.

Proofreading: Sentences that are clear and no more than 5 major errors.

Major errors:

Sentence fragments, run-on sentences, verb-tense error, subject-verb agreement error, unclear phrasing, documentation and spelling/wrong word error.

Things to Watch for: