

## **Assignment Overview: Essay #1 (Expository – Reporting Information)**

### **What You'll be Doing for Our First Essay Assignment**

For many, our approach to writing in this course will seem foreign. Instead of just slapping words on a page and then handing in the essay with a “one down three to go!” attitude, you’ll actually learn how to research, plan, draft, revise, and proofread an essay. In other words, you’ll learn the basics of college level writing.

If this sounds like work, it is. But we’ll be breaking an essay into parts, doing work in class, and, in general, providing the time and instruction necessary for effective thinking and writing. Students remark that if they complete the homework assignments, the essay writes itself. If they don’t complete them . . . have you heard of the phrase “crash and burn”?

To avoid trips to the burn unit, the home and class work will take you through a series of steps before actually drafting the essay. First you’ll be gathering research and taking notes: in this case, reading essays and then pulling out their central themes. This will take about two weeks.

You’ll spend another week or so reviewing your notes, deciding on a central focus for your essay (called a thesis), and pulling out quotes from the essays to support your thesis.

With all of this material in front of you, the next step – writing the rough draft – will be easy. No more scratching your head deciding what to write or being worried about word counts: you’ll have much of the work already done.

We’ll spend the next week revising your essay – moving from a focus on getting it done, to a focus on making it interesting to a reader. Then, after careful proofreading, you’ll hand in the essay.

### **Purpose of Essay**

This first assignment will address a topic that should be near and dear to your hearts: “what am I in college for?” More specifically, you will report what a selection of authors believe is the purpose of a college education. Note the word “report.” This means that instead of offering your own opinion about this topic, you’ll be looking for connections expressed among the different readings and then discussing these connections in your own essay. This kind of intellectual work – making connections – is known as synthesizing.

Note that you will not merely summarize the essays in a paragraph – we’re going for higher order thinking skills here. The goal, as noted above, is on connections among different essays. Thus, your paragraphs will not focus on individual authors or essays, but on an idea noted by at least two authors/sources and contained in the essays you’ve read.

This kind of writing is a basic part of academic writing; you’ll encounter it in assignments such as a short biography of Cleopatra for a History course, a review of current research on neonatal care in Nursing, or a description of the latest interrogation techniques in Criminal Justice.

And speaking of objectives . . . remember that the goal in this essay is to remain objective: your purpose is to report on the ideas and opinions of others, not state your own. You’ll be using phrases such as “Educational critics argue,” “The writers believe,” “Professors agree that,” to separate yourself from the material you’re presenting.

And speaking of words and phrases brings me to the next topic: discourse.

### **Discourse**

Burning a disk. Keyboard. Mouse.

Am I talking about pyromania, a piano, and a small furry mammal that makes people scream?

No.

You know that the words above all refer to computers because the discourse (words used to describe activities or items associated with a particular subject) of computers includes such vocabulary.

Higher education, as a field of its own, also has a discourse that you need to familiarize yourself with and then use in your own essay. Academic writing assumes that you'll dive into the particular field of study, expanding your thinking as you expand your vocabulary. This expansion is connected more broadly to thinking: as the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein noted, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."

To help enlarge your world, you'll notice at the end of the Writer's Notes a section labeled "Discourse." You'll include words that are associated with the topic of higher education.

To get started on the discourse of education, note how often the word "critical thinking" appears in the readings. What does it mean?

## **The Writing Assignment: Essay #1**

You will write an essay which extracts a central idea on the purpose of college from the assigned readings. As noted above, this essay will not include your own opinion: you'll be objectively reporting the information. You must decide the most effective way to categorize the information these writers offer in order to effectively communicate their ideas to your readers.

The most important part of this assignment – and all assignments involving reporting information – is narrowing down your topic. You'll encounter many different views of what a college education should be: your job is to focus on one of them. And since the focus is on reporting information from others, it may be a view you don't even share.

Much of this essay will consist of cited material – it's what readers expect when you're reporting information from other sources. And "cited" is crucial here: this essay will involve paraphrasing, summarizing, and using direct quotes to incorporate words and ideas from others into your own writing. Your job will be to select, organize, and then explain the ideas of the writers. That last part, the explanation, is where your own voice comes through. After completing this assignment you will have received instruction and practice in the text-based writing that is at the core of college level composition.

Again, remember that your purpose is not to present all of the information you've read or argue with the views expressed in the readings; instead, it's to narrow down and find connections among the readings and then to objectively present their views to your readers. (Have I mentioned objectivity enough? Good.)

Unfortunately, this kind of writing can have a narcotic effect on readers: use examples, specific details from the essays, and specific descriptions to keep the reader from using your essay as a pillow.

Assume that your readers have not read these essays; it is your job to focus on *one* connection among them and show the connections so that the reader doesn't have to read them all.

### **Directions**

For starters, read the assigned essays, taking copious notes (the more notes you have, the easier it is to write a rough draft). Follow the suggestions in this packet and the course site as well. Check over the definitions of Thesis, Body Paragraph, Citation, Division/Forecasting statement, Essay, Parenthetical Citation, Topic sentence, Revision, Proofreading, and Works Cited Entries in the Glossary.

### **Requirements**

Final draft, minimum of 1,150 words (count does not include heading and works cited entries). Your essay needs to include citations from at least three of the assigned readings, though you will probably need to use more to effectively present the information. Essay must include a title; an introduction which describes the context/basis of research; thesis which sets out your specific focus; body paragraphs; a conclusion; and a Works Cited page. You must correctly cite your sources using MLA format.

### **Feedback**

At the core of writing for others (as opposed to journals or diaries) is getting feedback. This feedback allows you to test ideas and writing techniques, refine your thinking, and finally, present this in clear prose.

To help you with this, there will be several layers of feedback for each essay including peer reviews, comments from myself, and work in the Writing Center.

### **Learning Objectives**

After successfully completing this assignment, you will have learned how to

1. annotate readings and accurately summarize their main points
2. recognize and define the key terms (discourse) of a particular topic
3. find connections among different readings and organize them in categories
4. decide on an organizing principle, expressed in a thesis and forecasting/divisions statement, which effectively communicates information from a group of readings to a reader
5. accurately summarize, paraphrase, and use direct quotes in your writing while establishing credibility of sources
6. correctly document sources using MLA parenthetical citation
7. begin to identify your grammatical error patterns
8. revise an essay to suit the expectations of your readers
9. use analogies, comparisons, and detailed examples to help readers understand material from other sources
10. separate revision from proofreading
11. manage your time and complete each draft by the assigned due date

### **Grading Criteria**

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

**Organization:** A thesis and forecasting/division statement which clearly states a central theme you will focus on and how you will explain it; topic sentences that group your information into logical categories which refer back to the forecasting/division statement.

**Content:** Clear definitions of any specific terms; specific examples that connect to your thesis; accurate summarizations, paraphrases, and direct quotations of the sources; body paragraphs focused around a clear topic sentence; descriptive language and explanations to clarify your sources and keep reader from dozing off; and clear in-text references to identify a particular writer with his or her idea.

**Proofreading:** Sentences that are clear and no more than 5 major errors (these include sentence fragments, run-on sentences, verb-tense error, subject-verb agreement error, unclear phrasing, and spelling/wrong word error. Formatting errors. Each documentation error counts as 1/2 of a major error).

## **Assignment Overview: Essay #2 (Argumentative – Death Penalty)**

### **What You'll be Doing for Our Second Essay Assignment**

Now that you're familiar with the basics of academic writing – gathering research, taking effective notes, documenting sources, and then organizing, drafting, and revising a piece of writing – it's time to introduce another skill: making an argument.

Essay #2 will instruct you on the hows and whys of argumentative writing: in particular, taking a position on a stance. Instead of reading to only gather information, you'll be reading to find evidence that a particular position is valid or is not valid. You'll also begin evaluating the readings, taking into consideration such things as the bias of the speaker/writer and the basis (factual/emotional?) of their arguments.

As the readings for assignment one suggested (particularly Delbanco's essay), developing an argument – and more broadly, becoming a "college-educated" individual – means challenging preconceptions: what he described as moving away from the easy temptations of "demagoguery," to more rigorous "responsible arguments" (29). For many, the most rewarding part of college is learning to see beyond accepted mindsets and using facts instead of assumptions to guide their thinking. Get ready to be challenged and thus, get ready to think.

On to more mundane matters. This will be the first essay you'll write under a time constraint. I've incorporated this kind of writing into the course for two reasons: 1) the English Department requires a specific amount of the work be completed in class; and 2) it's good training. There will be many times in your college and work career where you'll have to quickly develop an effective piece of writing. Writing like this demands an understanding of the issue and a clear purpose – and is viewed (i.e. graded) differently than the kind of polished writing that goes through several drafts. That said, you'll have two and half hours, which means you should have enough time (if you plan it right and do not try to write too much) to complete a rough and final draft.

### **Topic of Essay**

I've been "talking" for a while now and haven't addressed the topic: this is fitting because the emphasis of this assignment isn't on the topic but on the argument. In other words, it's not your position that's important; what really matters here is how well you prove to readers that your thinking on the issue is clear and logical.

That said, our topic for this essay is the Death Penalty. You'll be reading several sources on this topic and then developing your own position and arguments based both on the readings and your own thinking.

When reading an argumentative source, remember that it is essentially a sales pitch: and as we all know, the buyer has to beware. Thus read ALL of these essays with a very questioning, very skeptical eye. See "Argumentative Fallacies" on the course site for suggestions on what to watch out for.

### **Purpose of Essay**

This essay is designed to develop your reading and analytical skills and develop your ability to communicate your thinking clearly and logically to your audience. Since it's so closely connected to your thinking, writing this essay amounts to a peek under the hood of your brain, a chance for readers to see how the engine's running. Thus, you'll be trying out several arguments and positions, disregarding those that, to keep the metaphor going, cause misfires.

It's this kind of malleable thinking, this sorting out of different possibilities and consciously choosing the ones which can be supported by evidence, that makes readers trust your judgment – and is thus the kind of thinking that you should strive for.

There are some common errors people make when developing arguments. Lucy, as shown below, has some problems with her logic.



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Lucy starts from a premise that seems to be a logical deduction based on her observation: the snow appears in the morning and it covers things up. She even trots out corroborative “evidence” – grass comes up, etc. – to support her argument. The problem is that what seems to be valid is often just that – an assumption. As Charlie Brown points out (ever notice that it’s always Charlie Brown, never just Charlie?), her logic is flawed and he “cements” (pardon the pun) his case with a specific example. Her response when confronted with an argument which concretely demonstrates her position is incorrect? She changes the subject and engages in an *ad hominem* attack (when you attack the person him or herself instead of the person’s idea). Taken as a whole, the cartoon demonstrates Lucy’s inability to fully reason through her beliefs and move to logic.

Of course, she’s just a kid . . . though the “Intellectual Free Lunch” suggests that some people still operate on playground logic. For more on avoiding logical errors, see “How Can I Tell Which Fact to Believe?” link on the course site and Chapter 4 *From Inquiry to Academic Writing*.

Moving from thinking to writing, remember that you are making an argument here, not just reporting information as in the last essay. This means that your thesis needs to make clear how you feel about the issue – even if you’re

wavering a bit yourself. The key here is to fully consider the pros and cons of the issue, choose a position ("should" or "should not" are words that come in handy) and choose reasons (from those pros and cons) that support that position.

Just as in essay #1, you should work on using "real-life" examples, either from personal experience or from the sources, to enliven your argument.

The idea of an argument is important to keep in mind here. Specifically, your goal is to take a position and present the logic of your argument to the reader. Instead of objectively reporting (as in essay #1), in this essay you'll be presenting your own opinions.

Words to remember when thinking about an issue include "what," "why," and "how." Keeping these in mind should help you develop reasons that logically consider the short and long term consequences of a particular issue.

Reasons, right? That's the key to making an effective argument: developing persuasive reasons. How do you do this? For starters, think about the subject from different points of view – and again, ask yourself "why." Why, for example, do you think capital punishment is a good or bad idea? Have you considered the costs of CP vs. life imprisonment? And are costs solely connected to dollars (i.e. political costs, social costs, etc.)? Asking these kinds of probing questions is crucial to developing a reasoned, well considered essay.

How do you come up with these probing questions? Glad you asked. Read, think, talk to others, and try the categories in "How Do I Come Up With Reasons" on the course site to trigger these kinds of questions.

Oh yes, you can use the dreaded "I" in this essay -- just be careful of overuse.

## **Discourse**

We discussed the importance of entering the academic discourse of topics for the last essay. If you remember, the assignment quoted the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein who noted, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."

For this assignment we broaden our world by entering the discourse of law and criminal justice. Thus, you'll use terms such as "trial," "defendant," "prosecutors," "justice," etc. Because this will involve society, you'll also use words like, well, "society," and associated words such as "citizens" and "justice." The repetition of justice is deliberate: it means one thing in a legal setting – and another in a society.

For starters, here's a word you'll encounter in several of the essays: *Habeas Corpus*. It refers to a judicial process, set out in the constitution and enforced by the federal court system, which ensures that all defendants in a criminal proceeding are given a fair trial.

There's another word you'll encounter in the essays: moratorium. What does it mean? . . . That's what dictionaries were made for.

## **The Writing Assignment: Essay #2**

Write an essay which argues that capital punishment helps or hurts America. Another way to look at this question is to ask whether the death penalty is good for our legal system and society or if it harms them. Use statistics and facts to support your claims/opinions. Your facts should come from the required readings on the death penalty.

Your goal is to convince readers that your position is reasonable and valid by using specific reasoning, evidence to support it, and then explanations of that reasoning. Your audience doesn't necessarily have to agree with you: your goal is to show them the thinking that is behind your opinion. Thus, this essay uses opinion, but opinion based upon logic – opinions that are tested and considered before they are offered to the reader. People aren't persuaded with only one reason, and thus you will offer several different reasons to support your position. You will be using examples (both personal and from outside sources), descriptions, and stories to explain how these reasons support your position.

You will probably have mixed feelings about this issue – which is as it should be. Complete some pre-writing to begin forming your own opinion.

Remember, I'm not a mind reader – it's your responsibility to put your thinking into words.

### **Requirements**

Your essay needs to include at least six (6) paragraphs: an introduction with an argumentative thesis; at least three body paragraphs, offering different reasons to support your position and which use examples, descriptions and stories to prove that these reasons are valid; a counter-argument (one paragraph which brings up the opposing view, and then rebuts this view); and a conclusion.

You must include a minimum of three facts, statistics, or quotes from the readings, but remember that the main basis of this essay is your own argument; you need to develop your own reasons and examples, not merely parrot what was discussed in class. That said, don't stick to your opinions if they are not rational – remember that your goal is to use logic and reasoning to show why your position is correct.

Follow MLA documenting guidelines when citing sources.

### **Learning Objectives**

After successfully writing this essay you will have learned how to

1. examine and question generalizations
2. choose a specific stance/position on a controversial issue
3. use examples to illustrate your points
4. explain how the examples prove your point
5. explain the reasoning behind your stance
6. effectively use argumentative discourse
7. use counterarguments and rebuttals
8. evaluate sources
9. cite sources correctly
10. plan effectively to write an in-class essay

### **What you can bring in**

1. Completed Outline/Reasons and Evidence worksheet
2. Completed Thesis/division statement
3. Completed Works Cited sheet
4. Dictionary/Thesaurus
5. Textbook and any additional readings for essay #2
6. An Oreo cookie to supply a much needed sugar rush

NOTE: all work will be collected at the end of each class.

### **Directions**

Begin at home!! (Ignore at your own peril)

- Plan out essay –see the “Planning an In-Class Essay” page on the course site for step by step suggestions; review chapter 9 “From Ethos to Logos” in *From Inquiry to Academic Writing* for suggestions on argumentative approaches
- Keep all scrap papers and hand in with essay
- Write in ink
- Write on one side of the page
- Double-space

**Budget your time.** Work on finishing a draft in the first class and then revising it next class. Leave at least 30 minutes to carefully proofread. Read your essay backwards to catch any errors.

### **Reminder**

All work on the essay itself needs to be completed in class, either by hand or on the college's laptops. You cannot bring in paragraphs from home nor can you take a draft of the essay home to revise. Planning will be done outside of class; all drafting and revision will be during the class times we're working on the essay. Bring in printed copies of your Reasons and Evidence sheet – you will not be able to use your own flash drives to keep a copy of this essay.

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



## Assignment Overview: Essay #2 (Argumentative – Digital Life)

### What You'll be Doing for Our Second Essay Assignment

Now that you're familiar with the basics of academic writing – gathering research, taking effective notes, documenting sources, and then organizing, drafting, and revising a piece of writing – it's time to introduce another skill: making an argument

Essay #2 will instruct you on the how's and why's of argumentative writing: in particular, taking a position on a stance. Instead of reading to only gather information, you'll be reading to find evidence that a particular position is valid or is not valid. You'll also begin evaluating the readings, taking into consideration such things as the bias of the speaker/writer and the basis (factual/emotional) of their arguments.

As the readings for assignment one suggested (particularly Delbanco's essay), developing an argument – and more broadly, becoming a "college-educated" individual – means challenging preconceptions: what he described as moving away from the easy temptations of "demagoguery," to more rigorous "responsible arguments" (29). For many, the most rewarding part of college is learning to see beyond accepted mindsets and using facts instead of assumptions to guide their thinking. Get ready to be challenged and thus, get ready to think.

On to more mundane matters. This will be the first essay you'll write under a time constraint. I've incorporated this kind of writing into the course for two reasons: 1) the English Department requires a specific amount of the work be completed in class; and 2) it's good training. There will be many times in your college and work career where you'll have to quickly develop an effective piece of writing. Writing like this demands an understanding of the issue and a clear purpose – and is viewed (i.e. graded) differently than the kind of polished writing that goes through several drafts. That said, you'll have two and half hours, which means you should have enough time (if you plan it right and do not try to write too much) to complete a rough and final draft.

### Topic of Essay

I've been "talking" for a while now and haven't addressed the topic: this is fitting because the emphasis of this assignment isn't on the topic but on the argument. In other words, it's not your position that's important; what really matters here is how well you prove to readers that your thinking on the issue is clear and logical.

That said, our topic for this essay is social media. You'll be reading several sources on this topic and then developing your own position and arguments based both on the readings and your own thinking.

When reading an argumentative source, remember that it is essentially a sales pitch: and as we all know, the buyer has to beware. Thus read ALL of these essays with a very questioning, very skeptical eye. See "Argumentative Fallacies" on the course site for suggestions on what to watch out for.

### Purpose of Essay

This essay is designed to develop your reading and analytical skills and develop your ability to communicate your thinking clearly and logically to your audience. Since it's so closely connected to your thinking, writing this essay amounts to a peek under the hood of your brain, a chance for readers to see how the engine's running. Thus, you'll be trying out several arguments and positions, disregarding those that, to keep the metaphor going, cause misfires.

It's this kind of malleable thinking, this sorting out of different possibilities and consciously choosing the ones which can be supported by evidence, that makes readers trust your judgment – and is thus the kind of thinking that you should strive for.

There are some common errors people make when developing arguments. Lucy, as shown below, has some problems with her logic.



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Lucy starts from a premise that seems to be a logical deduction based on her observation: the snow appears in the morning and it covers things up. She even trots out corroborative “evidence” – grass comes up, etc. – to support her argument. The problem is that what seems to be valid is often just that – an assumption. As Charlie Brown points out (ever notice that it’s always Charlie Brown, never just Charlie?), her logic is flawed and he “cements” (pardon the pun) his case with a specific example. Her response when confronted with an argument which concretely demonstrates her position is incorrect? She changes the subject and engages in an *ad hominem* attack (when you attack the person him or herself instead of the person’s idea). Taken as a whole, the cartoon demonstrates Lucy’s inability to fully reason through her beliefs and move to logic.

Of course, she’s just a kid . . . though the “Intellectual Free Lunch” suggests that some people still operate on playground logic. For more on avoiding logical errors, see “How Can I Tell Which Fact to Believe?” link on the course site and Chapter 4 *From Inquiry to Academic Writing*.

Moving from thinking to writing, remember that you are making an argument here, not just reporting information as in the last essay. This means that your thesis needs to make clear how you feel about the issue – even if you’re

wavering a bit yourself. For instance, many/most Americans use social media today. Even students constantly on Facebook can write essays arguing that social media the problem; conversely, those who don't even have an account can argue for its benefits. The key here is to fully consider the pros and cons of the issue, choose a position ("should" or "should not" are words that come in handy) and choose reasons (from those pros and cons) that support that position.

Just as in essay #1, you should work on using "real-life" examples, either from personal experience or from the essays in the textbook, to enliven your argument.

The idea of an argument is important to keep in mind here. Specifically, your goal is to take a position and present the logic of your argument to the reader. Instead of objectively reporting (as in essay #1), in this essay you'll be presenting your own opinions.

Words to remember when thinking about an issue include "what," "why," and "how." Keeping these in mind should help you develop reasons that logically consider the short and long term consequences of a particular issue.

Reasons, right? That's the key to making an effective argument: developing persuasive reasons. How do you do this? For starters, think about the subject from different points of view – and again, ask yourself "why." Why, for example, why do so many people use social media? How does it affect your relationship with your friends? Family? Can it have an impact on your education? Career? Have you considered the costs of social media? And are they solely connected to dollars? What about its political, psychological, and social costs? Asking and then finding the answers to these kinds of probing questions is crucial to developing a reasoned, well considered essay.

How do you come up with these probing questions? Glad you asked. Read, think, talk to others, and try the categories in "How Do I Come Up With Reasons" on the course site to trigger these kinds of questions.

Oh yes, you can use the dreaded "I" in this essay -- just be careful of overuse.

### **Discourse**

We discussed the importance of entering the academic discourse of topics for the last essay. If you remember, the assignment quoted the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein who noted, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."

For this assignment we broaden our world by entering the discourse of social media. Thus, you'll use terms such as "audience," "monetization," "privacy," "branding," "censorship," "fake news," etc. Because this will involve society, you'll also use words like, well, "society," and associated words such as "citizens" and "justice." And remember that justice means one thing in a legal setting – and another in a society.

## **The Writing Assignment: Essay #2**

Write an essay which argues that social media, overall, helps or hurts America society. Use statistics, facts, and narratives to support your claims/opinions. Your facts should come from the required readings on social media.

Your goal is to convince readers that your position is reasonable and valid by using specific reasoning, evidence to support it, and then explanations of that reasoning. Your audience doesn't necessarily have to agree with you: your goal is to show them the thinking that is behind your opinion. Thus, this essay uses opinion, but opinion based upon logic – opinions that are tested and considered before they are offered to the reader. People aren't persuaded with only one reason, and thus you will offer several different reasons to support your position. You will be using examples (both personal and from sources), descriptions, and stories to explain how these reasons support your position.

You will probably have mixed feelings about this issue – which is as it should be. Complete some pre-writing to begin forming your own opinion.

Remember, I'm not a mind reader – it's your responsibility to put your thinking into words.

## Requirements

Your essay needs to include at least six (6) paragraphs: an introduction which defines social media and includes an argumentative thesis; at least three body paragraphs, each offering a different reason supporting your position and using examples, descriptions and stories to prove that the reason is valid; a counter-argument (one paragraph which brings up the opposing view, and then rebuts this view); and a conclusion.

You must include a minimum of three facts, statistics, or quotes from the readings, but remember that the main basis of this essay is your own argument; you need to develop your own reasons and examples, not merely parrot what was discussed in class. That said, don't stick to your opinions if they are not rational – remember that your goal is to use logic and reasoning to show why your position is correct.

Follow MLA documenting guidelines when citing sources.

## Learning Objectives

After successfully writing this essay you will have learned how to

1. examine and question generalizations
2. choose a specific stance/position on a controversial issue
3. use examples to illustrate your points
4. explain how the examples prove your point
5. explain the reasoning behind your stance
6. effectively use argumentative discourse
7. use counterarguments and rebuttals
8. evaluate sources
9. cite sources correctly
10. plan effectively to write in class essay

## What you can bring in

1. Completed Outline/Reasons and Evidence worksheet
2. Completed Thesis/division statement
3. Completed Works Cited sheet
4. Dictionary/Thesaurus
5. Textbook and any additional readings for essay #2
6. An Oreo cookie to supply a much needed sugar rush

NOTE: all work will be collected at the end of each class.

## Directions

Begin at home!! (Ignore at your own peril)

- Plan out essay –see the “Planning an In-Class Essay” page on the course site for step by step suggestions; review chapter 9 “From Ethos to Logos” in *From Inquiry to Academic Writing* for suggestions on argumentative approaches
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**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 which that no more than 5 major errors (Sentence fragments, run-on sentences, verb-tense error, subject-verb agreement error, unclear phrasing, documentation error and spelling/wrong word error).

## **Assignment Overview: Essay #2 (Argumentative – Income Inequality)**

### **What You'll be Doing for Our Second Essay Assignment**

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Essay #2 will instruct you on the hows and whys of argumentative writing: in particular, taking a position on a stance. Instead of reading to only gather information, you'll be reading to find evidence that a particular position is valid or is not valid. You'll also begin evaluating the readings, taking into consideration such things as the bias of the speaker/writer and the basis (factual?/emotional?) of their arguments.

As the readings for assignment one suggested (particularly Delbanco's essay), developing an argument – and more broadly, becoming a "college-educated" individual – means challenging preconceptions: what he described as moving away from the easy temptations of “demagoguery,” to more rigorous “responsible arguments” (29). For many, the most rewarding part of college is learning to see beyond accepted mindsets and using facts instead of assumptions to guide their thinking. Get ready to be challenged and thus, get ready to think.

On to more mundane matters. This will be the first essay you'll write under a time constraint. I've incorporated this kind of writing into the course for two reasons: 1) the English Department requires a specific amount of the work be completed in class; and 2) it's good training. There will be many times in your college and work career where you'll have to quickly develop an effective piece of writing. Writing like this demands an understanding of the issue and a clear purpose – and is viewed (i.e. graded) differently than the kind of polished writing that goes through several drafts. That said, you'll have two and half hours, which means you should have enough time (if you plan it right and do not try to write too much) to complete a rough and final draft.

### **Topic of Essay**

I've been “talking” for a while now and haven't addressed the topic: this is fitting because the emphasis of this assignment isn't on the topic but on the argument. In other words, it's not your position that's important; what really matters here is how well you prove to readers that your thinking on the issue is clear and logical.

That said, our topic for this essay is income inequality. You'll be reading several sources on this topic and then developing your own position and arguments based both on the readings and your own thinking.

When reading an argumentative source, remember that it is essentially a sales pitch: and as we all know, the buyer has to beware. Thus read ALL of these essays with a very questioning, very skeptical eye. See “Argumentative Fallacies” on the course site for suggestions on what to watch out for.

### **Purpose of Essay**

This essay is designed to develop your reading and analytical skills and develop your ability to communicate your thinking clearly and logically to your audience. Since it's so closely connected to your thinking, writing this essay amounts to a peek under the hood of your brain, a chance for readers to see how the engine's running. Thus, you'll be trying out several arguments and positions, disregarding those that, to keep the metaphor going, cause misfires.

It's this kind of malleable thinking, this sorting out of different possibilities and consciously choosing the ones which can be supported by evidence, that makes readers trust your judgment – and is thus the kind of thinking that you should strive for.

There are some common errors people make when developing arguments. Lucy, as shown below, has some problems with her logic.



Schulz, Charles. *Peanuts*. 18-21 January 1955, *Fandom*. [http://peanuts.wikia.com/wiki/January\\_1955\\_comic\\_strips](http://peanuts.wikia.com/wiki/January_1955_comic_strips). Accessed 7 August 2017.

Lucy starts from a premise that seems to be a logical deduction based on her observation: the snow appears in the morning and it covers things up. She even trots out corroborative “evidence” – grass comes up, etc. – to support her argument. The problem is that what seems to be valid is often just that – an assumption. As Charlie Brown points out (ever notice that it’s always Charlie Brown, never just Charlie?), her logic is flawed and he “cements” (pardon the pun) his case with a specific example. Her response when confronted with an argument which concretely demonstrates her position is incorrect? She changes the subject and engages in an *ad hominem* attack (when you attack the person him or herself instead of the person’s idea). Taken as a whole, the cartoon demonstrates Lucy’s inability to fully reason through her beliefs and move to logic.

Of course, she’s just a kid . . . though the “Intellectual Free Lunch” suggests that some people still operate on playground logic. For more on avoiding logical errors, see “How Can I Tell Which Fact to Believe?” link on the course site and Chapter 4 *From Inquiry to Academic Writing*.

Moving from thinking to writing, remember that you are making an argument here, not just reporting information as in the last essay. This means that your thesis needs to make clear how you feel about the issue – even if you’re

wavering a bit yourself. The key here is to first understand and then fully consider the pros and cons of the issue, choose a position ("should" or "should not" are words that come in handy) and choose reasons (from those pros and cons) that support that position.

Just as in essay #1, you should work on using "real-life" examples, either from personal experience or from the essays in the textbook, to enliven your argument.

The idea of an argument is important to keep in mind here. Specifically, your goal is to take a position and present the logic of your argument to the reader. Instead of objectively reporting (as in essay #1), in this essay you'll be presenting your own opinions.

Words to remember when thinking about an issue include "what," "why," and "how." Keeping these in mind should help you develop reasons that logically consider the short and long term consequences of a particular issue.

Reasons, right? That's the key to making an effective argument: developing persuasive reasons. How do you do this? For starters, think about the subject from different points of view – and use the words listed above. What, exactly, is income inequality? When did it start? Who does it affect? Why them? How does it affect political decisions (and why should we worry about political decisions)? How does it affect our health – both physical and mental? Can it have an impact on your education? Career? Asking and then finding the answers to these kinds of probing questions is crucial to developing a reasoned, well considered essay.

How do you come up with these probing questions? Glad you asked. Use the categories in "How Do I Come Up With Reasons" on the course site to trigger these kinds of questions.

Oh yes, you can use the dreaded "I" in this essay -- just be careful of overuse.

### **Discourse**

We discussed the importance of entering the academic discourse of topics for the last essay. If you remember, the assignment quoted the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein who noted, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."

For this assignment we broaden our world by entering the discourse of economics. Thus, you'll use terms such as "social mobility," "income quintiles," "wages," "wealth," "free-market," "supply side economics," etc. Because this will involve society, you'll also use words like, well, "society," and associated words such as "citizens" and "justice." And remember that justice means one thing in a legal setting – and another in a society.

## **The Writing Assignment: Essay #2**

Write an essay which argues that income inequality helps or hurts America. Use statistics, facts, and narratives to support your claims/opinions. Your facts should come from the required readings on income inequality.

Your goal is to convince readers that your position is reasonable and valid by using specific reasoning, evidence to support it, and then explanations of that reasoning. Your audience doesn't necessarily have to agree with you: your goal is to show them the thinking that is behind your opinion. Thus, this essay uses opinion, but opinion based upon logic – opinions that are tested and considered before they are offered to the reader. People aren't persuaded with only one reason, and thus you will offer several different reasons to support your position. You will be using examples (both personal and from sources), descriptions, and stories to explain how these reasons support your position.

You will probably have mixed feelings about this issue – which is as it should be. Complete some pre-writing to begin forming your own opinion.

Remember, I'm not a mind reader – it's your responsibility to put your thinking into words.

### **Requirements**



Your essay needs to include at least six (6) paragraphs: an introduction which defines/explains income inequality and includes an argumentative thesis; at least three body paragraphs, each offering a different reason supporting your position and using examples, descriptions and stories to prove that the reason is valid; a counter-argument (one paragraph which brings up the opposing view, and then rebuts this view); and a conclusion.

You must include a minimum of three facts, statistics, or quotes from the readings, but remember that the main basis of this essay is your own argument; you need to develop your own reasons and examples, not merely parrot what was discussed in class. That said, don't stick to your opinions if they are not rational – remember that your goal is to use logic and reasoning to show why your position is correct.

Follow MLA documenting guidelines when citing sources.

### **Learning Objectives**

After successfully writing this essay you will have learned how

1. to examine and question generalizations
2. choose a specific stance/position on a controversial issue
3. use examples to illustrate your points
4. explain how the examples prove your point
5. explain the reasoning behind your stance
6. effectively use argumentative discourse
7. use counterarguments and rebuttals
8. evaluate sources
9. citing sources correctly
10. plan effectively to write in class essay

### **What you can bring in**

1. Completed Outline/Reasons and Evidence worksheet
2. Completed Thesis/division statement
3. Completed Works Cited sheet
4. Dictionary/Thesaurus
5. Textbook and any additional readings for essay #2
6. An Oreo cookie to supply a much needed sugar rush.

NOTE: all work will be collected at the end of each class.

### **Directions**

Begin at home!! (Ignore at your own peril)

- Plan out essay –see the “Planning an In-Class Essay” page on the course site for step by step suggestions; review chapter 9 “From Ethos to Logos” in *From Inquiry to Academic Writing* for suggestions on argumentative approaches
- Keep all scrap papers and hand in with essay
- Write in ink
- Write on one side of the page
- Double-space

**Budget your time.** Work on finishing a draft in the first class, and then revising it next class. Leave at least 30 minutes to carefully proofread. Read your essay backwards to catch any errors.

### **Reminder**

All work on the essay itself needs to be completed in class, either by hand or on the college's laptops. You cannot bring in paragraphs from home nor can you take a draft of the essay home to revise. Planning will be done outside of class; all drafting and revision will be during the class times we're working on the essay. Bring in printed copies of your Reasons and Evidence sheet – you will not be able to use your own flash drives to keep a copy of this essay.

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

## 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 means 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 use the readings in one of the chapters (starting on page 401) in the textbook *From Inquiry to Academic Writing* and develop an argumentative topic from it.

This will be the main essay for this semester and it's essential to understand an issue before you develop an opinion about it. Thus you will be not only focusing on the readings in the textbook but broadening your search to include readings from multiple sources.

### Discourse

Privilege, masculinity, poverty, presentation of self, models of gender, advertising, neuro-enhancement, addiction, race, climate, sustainability, GMOs, branding. These are all terms that you will encounter in these chapters and give you an idea of some of the topics for this essay.

## The Writing Assignment: Essay #3

Write an essay which develops an argument based on one of the “Conversation of Ideas” chapters from the textbook (starting on page 401). 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 the textbook and on the course site. As stated in the Assignment sheet for essay #1, for this and all essays, assume your audience is college educated (or getting there) – but doesn't know much about your topic. You'll have to explain it for them before you begin your argument.

### Requirements

Final draft, minimum of 1,500 words: 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), and at least one of the sources must be from the textbook. That said remember the emphasis is on your reasoning: it's what you actually do with the sources that makes a good essay. Your essay should meet reader expectations by including an introduction (with thesis and division statement); body paragraphs; counter-arguments and rebuttals; and conclusion.

### Note on sources

One of the sources must be from the textbook. If taken from the internet, this outside research MUST be from EBSCOhost, SIRS, etc. databases (see “How Do I Find Sources” on the course site and chapter 7 of *From Inquiry to Academic Writing* for instructions), 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.** Inclusion of unapproved open Internet sources will limit your grade to a D or below.

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**

After successfully completing this assignment you will have learned how to

1. articulate the differences and similarities between several different abstract concepts
2. move from abstraction (sociology, psychology, etc.) to the concrete (examples of each)
3. find, select, and evaluate sources
4. turn information into knowledge by using current events, statistics, and/or historical examples to prove an argument
5. develop engaging introductions and conclusions
6. develop a single idea (division) over the course of two or more paragraphs
7. learn the advantages of revising your work in stages (paragraph by paragraph)
8. use 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 chapters 5 through 12 of *From Inquiry to Academic Writing*; see also "Directions for Rough Draft of Argumentative Essay" posted on the course site.

### **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 (sentence fragments, run-on sentences, verb-tense error, subject-verb agreement error, unclear phrasing, documentation and spelling/wrong word error).

## Assignment Sheet Essay #4 (Reflective)

### Assignment

Our first set of readings looked at the purposes of college (note plural). The authors suggested a range of possibilities including developing your intellect, fostering democracy, and preparing for a career.

Of course, many mentioned reading, thinking, and writing -- the basis of our course -- and these skills form one of their main beliefs: college prepares students for "lifelong learning" ("What is," Delbanco 31-34). Now that we're at the end of a core college course, it's time for reflection, with, as noted above, an eye for life both in and beyond the classroom.

We turn to [metacognition](#) here (reflecting on your thinking) but this time the scale is much broader. Specifically, for this essay you'll discuss the three most surprising, relevant, or helpful things you learned in this class. It could be about reading, thinking, writing, etc.

The key here is the second item: think. Don't just jump to your first impressions: think deep.

Thiede, Keith. "[Learning to Learn and Metacognition](#)." *Encyclopedia of Education*, edited by James W. Guthrie, 2nd ed., vol. 4, Macmillan Reference USA, 2002, pp. 1470-1472. *Opposing Viewpoints in Context*, [link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CX3403200371/OVIC?u=oceancc&xid=70f5a90](http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CX3403200371/OVIC?u=oceancc&xid=70f5a90). Accessed 16 Oct. 2017.

### Specific Assignment

Write an essay that explains the specific ideas, skills, and/or philosophies you've developed in this course.

### Requirements

Meet reader expectations by including an introduction, a thesis and division statement, body paragraphs which develop your thesis and divisions and use examples, descriptions and stories to prove that the thesis is valid, and a conclusion.

### Sources

For this essay, you'll be pulling from material you've already read or produced. The readings for Essay 1 would work well here, as would the [metacognition](#) essay noted above, material from the textbook and course site, and even your own work. The same cautions on sources from the open internet noted in previous assignments apply here: remember -- databases are your friends.

Follow current MLA documenting guidelines when citing sources.

Required number of sources? As many as your essay needs.

### Learning Objectives

After successfully completing this assignment, you will have demonstrated the following:

1. an ability to reflect on your learning and/or intellectual/emotional growth;
2. an ability to synthesize material and ideas from a variety of disciplines and sources and personal experience;
3. a repertoire of writing techniques (analogies, comparisons, and detailed examples, introducing sources) that clarifies your own thinking to others;
4. competency using MLA parenthetical citation;
5. your ability to write an essay with a minimum of proofreading errors;
6. an improvement in your ability to manage time.

### Planning

We've worked through several different methods of planning and revising essays. You have here an essay topic and requirements: what do you need to do write a competent essay?

Need a reminder? Review directions for essays one through three and remember the two part body paragraph development: connect your division to facts and then explain/argue why that division is applicable. Above all, think, research, think, plan, draft, think and revise.

Continue reviewing comments from previous assignments: incorporate what worked and avoid what didn't. Continue, as well, using the course site for suggestions on planning, revision, and proofreading.

### **Grading Criteria**

To receive a passing grade, your essay must successfully meet the following criteria:

**Organization:** A thesis statement which clearly states the subject, your position and the divisions of your essay. Sentences throughout essay that guide readers through your information.

**Content:** Explanations that prove the validity of your thesis and divisions using examples, descriptions and stories: readers need to see the thinking behind the thesis.

**Proofreading:** Sentences that are clear and no more than 5 major errors (which include sentence fragments, run-on sentences, verb-tense error, subject-verb agreement error, unclear phrasing, documentation error and spelling/wrong word error).