

Grade 9-10

Expository Compositions

Controversial Issues - What This Would Look Like in College

English 1A

Assignment #4

Writing an Argument

Your reading in SMG (chapters 6 and 19) has discussed and provided examples of ways to present clear, effective, persuasive arguments, while chapters 16-18 have explored ways to define, classify, and distinguish among ideas, issues, and facts.

In this essay you will be presenting, clearly and specifically, your own argument on an interesting, perhaps controversial issue. You should present a clearly articulated thesis, relevant definitions and background information, clear and logical reasons for holding your position, relevant evidence supporting your position, and a fair response to opposing views or positions.

You do not have to prove your position is correct. Your purpose is only to present it as a reasonable, plausible, intelligent position supported by rational thought and relevant facts. You will not be graded on whether or not you persuade me to adopt your position or on whether I shared your position prior to reading your essay. Any position, if supported clearly and effectively, can form the basis of a successful essay.

Please do not undertake the following topics: death penalty, abortion, euthanasia, gun control, affirmative action, drug testing, racial profiling. Also, please do not use issues raised in our reading. Instead, when seeking a topic, begin with a question: Should X group of people be allowed to ___? Should X group of people be forced to ___? Should X group of people be prevented from ___? Should X action be limited, abridged, enforced, or controlled, and if so why? Should students be allowed/forced/expected to ___? Should schools be allowed/forced/expected to ___? Should employees be allowed/forced/ expected to ___? Should employers be allowed/forced/expected to ___? Should government or its officials be allowed/forced/expected to ___? Should citizens (or non-citizens) be allowed/forced/expected to ___?

You will want to define the issue, clearly and effectively, engaging the reader's interest and concern. You will want to lay out your position and your reasons for holding that position, clearly and specifically. You will also want to provide sufficient facts (dates, events, statistics, interviews, anecdotes, whatever) to inform your reader and support your position. Consideration for readers' likely concerns, questions, objections, or beliefs will be important, as will the fair

discussion and refutation of opposing positions. You may also need to define terms, contexts, limitations, or history, and you may need to provide comparisons or contrasts. Your essay should be organized, with cueing devices and logical development from idea to idea, fact to fact.

You will need to consult and provide quotes from at least two (2) sources. (These sources will not necessarily share your position, however: you might use them instead simply as a source for facts or as an example of the opposing position.) Reputable sources, like books, respected magazines, and websites provided by credible sources will be preferable to Bob's homepage.

Your essay will be 4-5 pages long, in MLA format. You will need to provide a bibliography using MLA format. (Consult my handouts and chapter 22 of SMG.)

Peer Review

An argumentative essay should contain the following elements: a clearly stated thesis; developed discussion of that thesis; specific support with relevant, clearly described, clearly explained examples, quotes, or facts; a coherent organizational structure, including topic sentences and focused paragraphs; appropriate tone and word choices; and solid MLA format, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Does this essay have an effective title? ___ Does this essay have an effective, tone-setting, attention-getting introductory paragraph? _____ Does the essay seem to be responding appropriately to the assignment? _____

Does this essay have a clearly stated, focused, arguable thesis? _____ What do you think that thesis is? _____

Does the essay offer a sense of the significance of its argument or topic? _____

Does the essay provide discussion and reasons in support of its thesis? ___ Does the essay provide specific, relevant examples in support of its thesis?.

Does the essay provide relevant, useful quotes, and does it explain them effectively in terms of its argument? _____ Are those quotes part of grammatically complete sentences? _____ Do ideas, quotes, or other pieces of evidence seem irrelevant, unexplained, unconnected to the argument or to the paragraph in which they appear? ___ Could you suggest additional pieces of support, additional examples that would be useful?

Are transitions or links provided between paragraphs (or related groups of paragraphs)? _____ Could you suggest more effective ways of linking paragraphs, ideas, or examples? Would a different order of paragraphs, ideas, or

examples be more effective? _____ Is each paragraph focused on a specific idea, example, or closely related set of examples?, _____ Does each paragraph contain a clearly stated topic sentence? _____ Are any paragraphs unfocused, with too many (or too few) ideas or examples? _____

Does the essay have an effective conclusion, one that sums up the overall argument and leaves the reader with a sense of completeness? _____

Does the tone seem appropriate, objective, informed, professional, college-level? Does the essay have acceptable grammar, spelling, and punctuation? _____

What final suggestions can you make that would help the writer improve this essay?

1. [Rubrics](#)
2. Lesson Plans
3. Sample Essays
4. [Related Assignments](#)
[Related Assignments](#)
[Related Assignments](#)
[Related Assignments](#)
[Related Assignments](#)