English 103

Essay Instructions

For this essay, you will apply some of the critical reading, writing, and thinking skills you have been learning in this class to an evaluation of an argument that you will choose from recent published articles about current topics.

**How to Proceed: Follow the instructions/steps below**

1. Create a set of criteria based on either or both of our main texts on which to base your evaluation. In other words, make a list of the most important qualities of a strong and persuasive argument. It is very important to do this before you start the prewriting stage of your paper.

2. Go to **the editorial page** of a major newspaper such as *the Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune*, or any other newspaper that serves a large, diverse population. Select one of the articles (preferably on a topic that interests you), and analyze its elements of argumentation. If you are reading letters to the editor *in response* to an editorial, be sure to read the original editorial (you should be able to find it in the newspaper's archives), to give context to the letter and help you understand what it's all about.

3. Review the article (and maybe some responses to it on the editorial page) and determine if it meets the criteria for a strong argument.

4. Create an introduction which describes the qualities (in general) of a strong and persuasive argument.

5. Create a thesis statement which defends the article as a strong persuasive argument, and list at least three reasons in your thesis. Alternatively, you can create a thesis which says that the argument is neither strong nor persuasive, and list three reasons for your judgment.

6. The body paragraphs of your essay will be organized around each item of criteria (reason), and for support you will give the direct evidence from the articles and from our text, and you will give your judgments about how or if the article measures up to each main criteria (that you have selected) for a strong argument.

7. Your conclusion should not be a restatement of your thesis, but rather a paragraph perhaps about the value of being able to ascertain a strong argument from a weak argument—it should be about the value of using critical thinking skills in our everyday world—filled with much information which we must sort through, sometime to make important decisions (voting, for example).

**MLA format and no plagiarism**