**Assignment Sheet for Evaluating Controversies**

# The Rhetorical Context

You write a newspaper column for your town titled “The Critic’s Eye,” in which you take up controversial events or issues, examine popular sources about the events and then make an argument in which you answer ONE of three questions:

* What caused this event? (For example, the Parkland School Shooting)
* What really happened? (For example, the Trayvon Martin killing)
* What is currently happening? (For example, climate change)

Your readers depend on your “critic’s eye” to give a thoughtful argument about the topic you choose. They come from varied backgrounds and tend to have very different (and strong) opinions, so you want to be as persuasive as possible in your writing.

# The Process

For this assignment, you will choose a topic from the list below and decide on the question you’ll answer in your paper.

My topic:

My question:

You’ll research your topic using popular sources: newspaper, blogs, magazines, podcasts, etc.. You’ll evaluate your sources using the CRAP criteria: currency, reliability, authority, point of view/purpose. (Don’t worry: we’ll develop strategies to for that evaluation) and you’ll construct an argument using those sources. Your ability to evaluate the sources will help you write a persuasive argument. You’ll develop a draft, engage in peer review, and meet one-on-one with your instructor – all to help you revise effectively.

# The Topics

Virginia Tech Shootings Columbine

Murder of Matthew Shepard Kent State

The murder of Trayvon Martin

Unite the Right Rally (Charlottesville) Ruby Ridge

Waco

Pulse Nightclub shootings Parkland shootings

Sandy Hook shootings

Dakota Access Pipeline Protests Ferguson Unrest

Hurricane Katrina deaths Jonestown Mass Murder/Suicide Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

Exxon Valdez Reef Collison and Oil Spill Flint Water Crisis

Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster Bhopal Disaster

Charleston Church Massacre Central Park Jogger case

Guantanamo Bay Torture

DACA

Crypto-Currency

Artificial Intelligence

Paris Climate Agreement

Mandatory Vaccinations

Florida Pipe Bomber

or Topic Approved by Instructor

# The Details

Length: 1000 to 1250 words PLUS Works Cited page. Format: Double-spaced, MLA format

Minimum number of sources: 3 Due Date for draft: Nov. 12

Due Date for final paper: Nov. 18

# The Assessment

In order to receive a “B” on this assignment, students should

* Engage with the process described above in order to research and write their persuasive arguments as demonstrated by reflective writing throughout the unit
* Meet the minimum requirements as described above as demonstrated in the final paper
* Demonstrate thoughtful analysis and evaluation of sources as demonstrated in classroom written activities and in the final paper
* Synthesize sources with attention to rhetorical context as demonstrated in the final paper
* Develop a nuanced argument and conclusion as demonstrated in the final paper
* Engage in deep revision as demonstrated in changes from the first draft to the final paper

In order to receive an “A” on this assignment, students should meet the criteria described for the “B” and go above and beyond through

* Synthesis of four or more sources
* Adept and quality revision from first to last drafts

NOTE: Students and instructor will together to develop a weighted rubric after completion of the first draft.

# The Outcomes

These represent what we expect students will be able to do by the end of the unit.

* + Students will be able to analyze a range of sources and evaluate for currency, relevance, authoritativeness, and point of view/purposeStudents will be able to explain a range of research approaches and to assess according to rhetorical contexts
  + Students will be able to construct an argument with thorough and nuanced support that acknowledges the concerns of audience and synthesizes sources appropriately
  + Students will be able to develop a nuanced and thoughtful conclusion based on their evaluation of relevant sources
  + Students will be able to support their conclusion with ample and appropriate evidence.

**Evaluating Discourse Unit**

**Friday, October 26: Class Session 1 - Gateway**

*Instructor Preparation Note:*

*Will need to be prepared to present via classroom media definitions of the word ‘controversial’; have six hard copies of a newspaper articles that appear in the editorial/opposite editorial section that discuss one or more of the topic choices in the assignment sheet (less than 500 words). Further, have a Google Doc link prepared for students, access to the class discussion board on D2L, and printed copies of the assignment sheet. Students should have access to the e-book* Everyone’s an Author*.*

**Outcomes**

* Student will demonstrate comprehension of what a controversial event or issue through exposure to media definitions of “controversy” and “controversial.”
* Student will be able to preliminarily identify and articulate an author’s position and their asserting claims in its support, as well as define reasoning and assumptions by breaking down controversial argumentative articles.

**Introduction**

This gateway exercise introduces the concept behind and practice of evaluating controversial topics as conveyed by popular sources. A mini-lecture will be conducted with several media definitions about “controversial” and “controversy” including the Oxford Dictionary and Wikipedia. (10 minutes)

**Small Group Work**

In groups of three students will read and evaluate the editorial/op-ed piece and identify issue, position, and claim. A representative will write these on the board. To the D2L Discussion Board they will post an affirmation or denial of the author’s or source’s position or claim. (25 minutes)

**Whole Class Discussion**

A review of their findings and process, referring to key terms/outcomes. What is a controversy, and what are the stakes involved? Why is it difficult to agree on controversies? (10 minutes)

**Mini-Lecture/Intro to Homework**

Here the assignment sheet is passed out while recapping the points stressed in class. (5 minutes)

**Assessment:**

Board trace, D2L Discussion Board postings.

**Homework Assignment**

* Read Chapter 11 and be prepared to discuss all elements, definitions, and procedures discussed on pages 138-145, “Arguing a Position”.
* By Monday before class, student is to post to Google Docs three possible topic choices.

**Evaluating Discourse Unit**

**Monday, October 29: Class Session 2**

*Instructor Preparation Note:*

*Prepare sheets of paper which have one of three long-standing controversial topics (from* *https://papersowl.com/blog/35-best-debate-topics-for-students) and also have media examples/images of the different types of argument models and appeal methods prepared for sharing. Before class, ask students to arrange the classroom desks so everyone sits in a large circle.*

**Outcomes**

* Students will explore creating arguments and counterarguments as they exercise agreements and disagreements to peer’s arguments.
* Students will be able to define and demonstrate understanding of the various types of appeals: emotional, ethical, and logical as they analyze peer’s arguments.
* Students will prepare to construct their own position-based essays based on the different argument models and appeal methods and construct an argumentative paragraph as they refer to their peer’s arguments and counterarguments.

**Introduction**

Instructor will give out each student a paper that has one of three long-standing controversial topics. The controversial topics will cover, “Does technology get in the way of studying or does it help?”, “Should parents have the possibility to ban certain books from libraries and schools?”, “Should the voting age be lowered?”

**Class Activity: “Pass-Around” Arguments**

All students will write a short argument about their position on the controversial topic they received. Then they will pass it to the student on the right, who will add an opposing argument about it. On the third exchange, the students will support the first student’s opinion and add an argument that opposes the second student. On the fourth exchange, they will support the second student’s opinion and oppose the third argument. This process will continue until we reach the sixth student. By then there will be three agreeing arguments and disagreeing arguments each per paper. They will get their initial paper back. (20 minutes)

**Mini-Lecture**

Instructor models argument examples and appeal methods on the board. (5 minutes)

**Small Group Work**

In groups of two or three, students will read and identify appeals from their peer’s arguments and briefly summarize the points. (10 minutes)

**Individual Work**

Students will construct an argumentative paragraph out of the arguments and counterarguments they have on their paper from the activity. They will choose a side and also acknowledge the opposition as they write with persuasion in mind. (10 minutes)

**Intro to Homework**

A continuation of the whole class discussion where key terms are matched up with examples from the text in addition to textbook definitions being provided. This leads into the question “what do I know and do not know about my topic.” (5 minutes)

**Assessment**

Board trace, participation, instructor observation.

**Homework Assignment**

* Read Chapter 22 about evaluating sources, pages 491-499.
* Read pages 400-402 “Are there any problems with the resoning.”
* Finalize topic choice. Post to Google Doc five things they know and do not know about the topic.

**Evaluating Discourse Unit**

**Wednesday, October 31: Class Session 3**

*Instructor Preparation Note:*

*This class will recap and reinforce the assigned reading and key terms, and their application to the writing of the student’s essay. Prepare copies of multiple online posts from popular sources. The posts will be from popular news sites such as* *CNN, The Huffington Post, Fox News. There will also be posts made by anonymous internet users from Wordpress, Tumblr, Reddit, Facebook, or Twitter. They will all cover a single theme: “Social Media and Teenagers, the Pros and Cons.” Prepare copies of the CRAP Test (from https://ccconline.libguides.com/c.php?g=242130&p=2185475) to hand to students. Have access to Padlet available.*

**Outcomes**

* Students will demonstrate a furthering ability to research and assess popular sources using the CRAP (currency, reliability, authority, and purpose/point of view) standard.
* Students will be able to recognize and describe what a popular source is and will practice source evaluation through comparing news reporting sites with posts made by anonymous citizens.
* Students will demonstrate awareness and indication of many different types of possible flaws in an argument’s reasoning like begging the question, either-or arguments, ad hominem, faulty causality, bandwagon appeals, slippery slope arguments, straw man set-ups, hasty generalizations, faulty analogies by categorizing the traits that occur in the posts from popular sources.

**Introduction**

* Instructor will recap and reinforce the key terms regarding claim, reason, evidence, and assumption. (5 minutes)
* Instructor will briefly introduce the CRAP terms. (5 minutes)

**Small Group Activity**

Students will get into groups of four. Each group will be given two different social media posts about the single topic; one reported through famous news sites and one posted by an anonymous internet user. They will refer to the CRAP Test and analyze the posts according to currency, reliability, authority, and purpose/point of view. (15 minutes)

**Group Discussion**

The students will discuss within their groups and post to Padlet what they identified about the post their group had to analyze. They will talk about when the post was made in relevance to the topic, the reliability of the social media site and the poster, the authority of the post regarding the identity of the poster and the content structure, and the purpose/point of view. How do the posts live up to the CRAP standard? (15 minutes)

**Whole Class Discussion**

Students will share and summarize what they found about the different posts. They will also share their opinions about the popular sources. If you found flawed arguments, what problems could it potentially cause? (10 minutes)

**Assessment**

Participation. Padlet posts.

**Homework Assignment**

* Read pages 402-416, “Analyzing and Constructing Arguments”
* Choose 3 popular sources you would like to use and upload to D2L. Sources introduced in class may be used.

**Evaluating Discourse Unit**

**Friday, November 2: Class Session 4**

*Instructor Preparation Note:*

*Google Doc updated to show topic, reason; have printed copies of blog posts and social media posts with flawed arguments; have prepared printed copies of argument sheets to be filled-out; have prepared copies of model essays of each of the four types of arguments from educational content on the internet or other resources. Have copies of example rubric from Bean book.*

*(Classical: http://professornanderson.com/sample-classical-argument-essays/)*

*(Toulmin: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\_writing/academic\_writing/establishing\_arguments*

*/organizing\_your\_argument.html)*

*(Rogerian: http://faculty.winthrop.edu/kosterj/archives/WRIT102/rogeriansample1.htm*

*(Invitational: https://prezi.com/w\_b1tc2knd3q/invitational-arguments/)*

**Outcomes**

* Students will be able to begin to differentiate between these types of arguments: Classical, Toulmin, Rogerian, and Invitational by analyzing corresponding sample essays.
* Students will further their experience of working with the different ways to understand and structure an argument through outlining the argument method they prefer.
* Student will recognize what a rubric is and interpret its function by exposure to a sample rubric.

**Introduction**

The ability to outline/sketch one’s argument is essential to the good planning of an argumentative essay. Brief introduction to each of the four argument types and what consists the arguments. (5 minutes)

**Small Group Work**

In groups of two or three, students will have copies of each of the four types of arguments. Together they will determine the delivery of argument it is **–** Classical, Toulmin, Rogerian or Invitational. Each member of the group will then use their argument sheet to fill-out. (30 minutes).

**Whole Class Discussion**

They will be asked to choose an argument style and outline their own essays accordingly. What type of argument did you find effective? How will it work for your essay? (10 minutes)

**Mini-Lecture/Intro to Homework**

A review of each of the essays and their elements. Introduce concept of a rubric and its qualities. (5 minutes)

**Assessment**

Participation, paper trace.

**Homework Assignment**

Upload the argument outline for the essay assignment to D2L. A scan or a picture taken of the sketch is allowed.

Review example rubric and be prepared to synthesize its elements outlined in assignment sheets.

**Evaluating Discourse Unit**

**Monday, November 5: Class Session 5**

*Instructor Preparation Note:*

*Be prepared to have skeleton rubric available for viewing on media and copies of skeleton rubric to be given to students (have extra copies available). Have Google Spreadsheet accessible.*

*Skeleton Rubric: A rubric with a minimum amount of assessment criteria provided with the remaining spaces left for add-ons.*

**Outcomes**

Student will demonstrate cooperative learning skills while also clarifying unit key terms and the methods and procedures of writing a well-rounded argumentative essay. Students will be able to distinguish the components of an essay as they diagram a rubric with the instructor.

**Introduction**

* To review and stress the importance of the unit’s key terms and procedures to realizing unit outcomes and in drafting a compelling essay, and to promote a dialectic classroom, the entire class will work together to create a rubric for their assignment.
* General guidelines of the rubric should contain parameters for thesis, argument, argument reasoning, evidence, sources, acknowledging counterarguments, qualification of statements, etc. (10 minutes)

**Whole Class Discussion**

Together, skeleton rubric will be filled-in. Instructor will guide discussion and rubric content. (35 minutes) The initial rubric will begin with the following form:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name: | |  |  |
| Criteria | Description | Points Possible | Points  Received |
| Thesis |  |  |  |
| Argument | . |  |  |
| Reasoning |  |  |  |
| Evidence |  |  |  |
| Sources |  |  |  |
| Counterarguments |  |  |  |
| Comments and Questions: | | | |

(Rubric table referenced from Dr. Heidi Cephus’s rubric)

Students will access the shared Google Spreadsheet and input the points they would like to attribute to each criterion out of 100%. After the class has typed in the points, the instructor will calculate the average points for each of the criterion (excluding the highest and lowest point given). Then, the class will join in for a discussion about whether to round up or round down the average points to reach a sum of 100%.

**Assessment**

Participation. Google Spreadsheet traces.

**Homework Assignment**

Read pages 120-121 and 136-137 in preparation for next session’s activity.

Read pages 419-441, “Strategies for Supporting an Argument.”

**Evaluating Discourse Unit**

**Wednesday, November 7: Class Session 6**

*Instructor Preparation Note:*

*Be prepared to highlight points previously made and fortify them with further examples; also, be ready with copies of source list guideline sheet. Have prepared copies of sample argumentative essays.*

**Outcomes**

* Students will show a deepened understanding of the core elements of readings and discussion topics through an in-class review session.
* Students will be able to analyze and recognize the key characteristics of what forms an argumentative paper and outline reasons, evidence, assumptions, counterarguments and common ground through annotating a controversial argumentative.

**Individual Activity**

By using the list of characteristics on page 120-121 from *Everyone is an Author*, the students will annotate a piece of an article as presented on page 136-137. Through annotating, students will be able to identify the elements of a controversial argumentative essay, the style, and what goes into supporting evidence. (35 minutes)

**Mini-Lecture/Introduction to Homework**

Recap and reinforce the reading and key terms regarding claim, reason, evidence and assumption and how it can be used to examine argumentative essays critically. (10 minutes)

**Assessment**

Participation.

**Homework Assignment**

Student will read pages 238-239 in *Everyone’s an Author*. Also, student will be reminded to have readily available their sources, which were previously itemized on a Google Doc.

**Evaluating Discourse Unit**

**Friday, November 9: Class Session 7**

*Instructor Preparation Note:*

For each student, have printed copies of questions asked on pages 238-239 from *Everyone’s an Author*; have printed copies for each student checklist of elevator pitch criteria.

**Outcomes**

* Student will be able to explain the components of their essay or sources by identifying and categorizing its opening, thesis, evidence, sources, counterarguments, tone, stance, and conclusion by critically examining their essay’s and vision for it.
* Student will be able to synthesize and articulate their essay or source’s tone, stance, argument and evidence by paraphrasing and summarizing its author’s position and thesis.

**Introduction**

The ability to synthesize information by paraphrasing and summarizing the source’s position, argument and conclusion – and the ability to communicate it – is essential to not only one’s practice of critical thinking, but also an element of basic communication skills in practically any social or professional setting. (5 minutes)

**Group Work**

In groups of two or three and with their copy of the questions from pages 238-239, students will take turns synthesizing their own essays and/or their source’s by identifying its relevancy, audience, position, stance,thesis, evidence, sources cited, counterarguments and conclusion. (25 minutes)

**Whole Class Discussion**

What might be some characteristics of your source’s audience? Can it be said that these ‘types’ of person may share a similar idea of what is valuable, thus a similar stance on a controversial subject? (10 minutes)

**Mini-Lecture/Introduction to Homework**

Review of the elevator-pitch’s components and its impending practice in groups and in front of the entire class. Stress the importance of questioning your own work – as in, “What does my essay want?” “Why does it want it?” “How can it get it?” (10 minutes)

**Evaluation**

Participation, paper-trace of questions responded to.

**Homework**

Sign-up for conferences on Google Doc. Begin or continue asking questions *of* your essay.

**Evaluating Discourse Unit**

**Monday, November 12: Class Session 8**

**Drafts Due**

*Instructor Preparation Note:*

*Have rubric, peer review questions, and response sheets printed to be given to each student; be prepared with guideline sheet. Also, for each student have printed copies of elevator-pitch criteria.*

**Outcomes**

* Student will be able identify the presence/absence of peer’s stance and position, thesis, supporting argument, source evaluation, and conclusion by carefully evaluating their peer’s essay draft.
* Students will be able to characterize the elements of an elevator-pitch, and construct and articulate a draft of one for their peer’s essay.

**Introduction**

Peer Review

* Students will work in groups of two. Reading one another’s paper, they will complete the review sheet. On the response sheet, they will record comments about the peer’s writing as they answer the peer review questions. (20 minutes)
* Students will return the response sheet to their partner and begin by summarizing the essay by reciting an elevator pitch of their peer’s paper. After which, they will have a small discussion on how the essay satisfies/does not satisfy the assignment rubric. (15 minutes)
* Students will review and plan the next steps of revision. (6 minutes)

**In-depth Peer Review Activities**

* Read back through both of your peers’ papers. Write a question mark next to anything that you have questions about. This might be the definition of a word, a process that they describe, or a detail you wish you knew. Then talk about where the author could add clarifications or additional details to help resolve these questions.
* Discuss which parts of the essay might need to be deleted and which need to be reframed.
* Discuss the integration of the sources Where could the author provide more interpretation for the quotes? What could be summarized instead of quoted?

**Mini-Lecture/Introduction to Homework**

What did you discover from the experience? Did you or did you not expect it? Were you able to identify what your essay wanted and why? If not, why not? (7 minutes)

**Assessment**

Participation, response sheets.

**Homework**

Prepare two questions for individual conference that highlight an area of concern, and have prepared two possible solutions for each question.

**Evaluating Discourse Unit**

**Wednesday, November 14: Class Session 9**

**Conference Day.**

*Instructor Preparation Note:*

* *One-on-one Conferences. Have prepared considerate and thorough feedback for student drafts.*
* *Prepare rubric and questions for the students to reflect on their own strategies for writing.*
* *Help them check if they had met certain requirements and analyze their writing further.*

**Outcomes**

* Students will be able to evaluate and synthesize instructor feedback by careful interpretation and exploration of revision suggestions and by integrating them into their revision.
* Students will be able to construct and convey two questions and two possible solutions regarding perceived deficiencies in their drafts by asking questions of it.

**Activity**

Conference with instructor (15 minutes per students).

**Assessment**

Participation. Prepared with questions and possible solutions to those questions.

**Homework**

Complete Individual Conference Feedback Sheet. (Includes section for easy fixes, things to note, what’s working, what needs some work.)

Be prepared to present two-minute presentation (aka elevator pitch).

**Evaluating Discourse Unit**

**Friday, November 16: Class Session 10**

**Two-Minute Presentation Day**

*Instructor Preparation Note*

*Prepare tools to help time management (phone or watch) and prepare to answer questions.*

**Outcomes**

* Students will be able to articulate concisely to a group of people their topic, position, thesis, argument, sources, reasoning, evidence, possible counterarguments and conclusion of their essay.

**Introduction**

There are no answers in life, only responses. As such, having the ability to respond clearly and concisely, or possessing the ability to interpret or unveil a concise clarity upon something, from or for another, allows the opportunity for one to think and act deliberately and with purpose, and in an informed manner. (2 minutes)

**Presentations**

Students will have a maximum of one minute and fifty seconds to present in full to the class their essay in accordance to the criteria previously outlined, discussed and practiced. (46 minutes)

**Homework**

Read Chapter 32, “Checking for Common Mistakes”

Students reminded to bring Individual Conference Feedback Sheet to class for Peer Review. (2 minutes)

**Evaluating Discourse Unit**

**Monday, November 19: Class Session 11**

*Instructor Preparation Note:*

*Be prepared with printed peer-editing sheet and peer-review guideline sheets for micro-edits; have printed copies of self-reflection expectation sheet. Also, have copies of sample reflective essays.*

**Outcomes**

* Students will be able to apply knowledge acquired from their reading of chapter 32 that relate to micro-editing by the skillful assessment of their peer’s papers.
* Through the mini-lecture and its accompanying discussion, students will be able to recognize a reflective essay and differentiate its characteristics as a personal statement about the acquisition of topical knowledge, its comprehension and application. Further, student will begin to prepare themselves to conduct an analysis and evaluation of their final draft and its overall synthesis of course readings, classwork, class discussions, peer-reviews, instructor conferences, and homework.

**Introduction**

A peer review day that will focus on the grammatical/syntactical aspects of the student’s essays.

**Small Group Work**

Peer-review. Students will read and assess peer papers according to peer-editing sheet while following peer-review guidelines. (40 minutes)

**Mini-Lecture/Intro to Homework**

Discuss the reflective essay and its components. Pass out expectation sheet. (10 minutes)

**Assessment**

Participation, editing sheet, peer-edit trace (which includes proofreading indicators like comma mistakes, run-on sentences, spelling, plural/possessive issues, subject/verb agreement, concision issues and redundant spots).

**Homework Assignment**

Read sample reflective essays and be prepared to write one of your own during next class period.

**Evaluating Discourse Unit**

**Wednesday, November 21: Class Session 12**

**Final draft due. Submit alongside rough draft.**

*Instructor Preparation Note:*

*Be prepared to collect all material and discuss reflective essay process; have printed copies of reflective essay guide-sheet.*

**Outcomes**

* As themselves as the subject of the essay, students will be able to critically reflect upon their processing the material covered in the course section and its synthesis to complete the work, and convey an evaluative assessment of themselves in relation to the experience.

**Introduction**

Reflection on one’s own research and writing process – and the ability to learn from one’s reflection – is essential to a writer’s growth. This in-class assignment urges the student to ask themselves – and respond – why they chose their topic, and provide background on the stance/position they decided upon; further, they’ll touch upon the style of argument they modeled theirs on, the sources used, and what they discovered about themselves pertaining to their rhetorical strength and weaknesses through an analysis of their comprehension, application and synthesis of newly acquired knowledge – and what they might do differently next time with it. (5 minutes)

**In-Class Work**

Using guide sheet, students will compose their reflective essays. (40 minutes)

**Group Discussion**

Question and response session. (5 minutes)

**Assessment:**

Reflection draft (paper or electronic copy).

**Acknowledgements and References**

Everyone’s an Author

Oxford Dictionary and Wikipedia

Controversial Topics: https://papersowl.com/blog/35-best-debate-topics-for-students

CNN, The Huffington Post, Fox News. Wordpress, Tumblr, Reddit, Facebook, Twitter.

CRAP Test: https://ccconline.libguides.com/c.php?g=242130&p=2185475

Argument Types:

Classical: http://professornanderson.com/sample-classical-argument-essays/

Toulmin: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\_writing/academic\_writing/establishing\_arguments/

organizing\_your\_argument.html

Rogerian: http://faculty.winthrop.edu/kosterj/archives/WRIT102/rogeriansample1.htm

Invitational: https://prezi.com/w\_b1tc2knd3q/invitational-arguments/

Dr. Heidi Cephus’s rubric

Dr. Heidi Cephus’s peer review activity

Dr. Heidi Cephus’s conference questions

Dr. Heidi Cephus’s peer-editing activity