

Persuasive Essay Prompt

due April 28th

The Documentary Analysis called for you to take a stance on the credibility of a film and its use of rhetorical strategies. The Persuasive Essay focuses on making connections between your stance on a particular topic and the sources you use to support those ideas or opinions, in order to fully evaluate and analyze both the topic and your own argument. Indeed, you should only form opinions after learning about (researching) a topic. By learning how to back up your claims and opinions, you will more fully understand the value of research and scholarship. Anyone can make a claim; indeed, in years gone by, many civilizations have risen and fallen by the power of claims. Since the Renaissance, we have learned to wait for the research before making claims. Consider the metaphor of Burke's Parlor:

"Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar."

- Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Form*

It is very important that you fully research your topic before you begin writing this essay.

Prompt:

Choose a stance on a topic of significant social importance and analyze/describe the topic from your point of view using 4-6 academically acceptable sources to back up your claims and perspective (**NO Wikipedia**). I recommend looking on reputable news sites and Google Scholar. All topics can be viewed from more than one perspective, so analyze at least one of these other perspectives in contrast to your own point of view, and use your sources to diminish the opposing argument and strengthen your own. **6-8 pages** full in length, not including your works cited page. No block quotes, figures, or photos are permitted.

In this essay you will do the following:

- Introduce the larger conversation about the issue. Only choose one.
- Provide historical context for the politics surrounding this issue.
- Why is this topic important?
- Conclude your essay with a call to action: how is it possible to openly and respectfully discuss or remedy this divide in America?

Possible Persuasive topics include, but are not limited to:

- A Popular Conspiracy Theory (Elvis, Moon Landing, Roswell, etc)

Persuasive Essay Prompt

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- note: if you choose this topic, you must argue *for* the conspiracy. Your audience does not need to be convinced that the moon landing happened, as that is the popularly accepted truth. Your job is to argue *against* popular opinion. This is certainly a challenging, yet very interesting and fun option!
- Barbie/Gendered Toys
- Healthcare Reform
- Plastic Bag Ban
- Processed Foods vs. Organic Foods
- Raising the Legal Driving Age to 18
- The Current Healthcare Situation in America
- Examining America's Economic Situation
- Funding for Planned Parenthood
- Choose your Own Topic

All of these issues are multi-dimensional, meaning there are many sides to each topic. If you pick your own, make sure it is a topic that can be effectively presented and argued, then clear it with me. Good luck and good writing!!!

In this essay you should:

1. Define the topic you are investigating using sources
 - a. Historicize your topic
 - b. Contextualize your topic
2. Support your position with arguments/ claims backed by sources
 - a. After you have thoroughly defined your topic and introduced your argument, you should present a strong case for your argument, using source material to back that argument up.
3. Examine other points of view
 - a. You should examine at least one opposing view point, and refute it, using source material.
 - b. By weakening the opposing argument, you will strengthen your own.
4. Summarize/ contextualize the topic, stances, and argument into one cohesive idea/conclusion.

In this essay, I suggest utilizing a drafting process.

The Persuasive writing process:

1. Gather Evidence/ Materials
 - a. Choose a topic (choose from the list below, or choose your own. Topics must be cleared by me.)

Persuasive Essay Prompt

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- i. Your first step is to research your topic. My advice is to utilize the College library webpage and Google Scholar to find articles and books on your topic.
- b. Organize evidence/ materials
 - i. Once you have done some reading and research, begin to sort out what information might be useful to proving your argument.
 - ii. Decide what information will be useful to refuting the opposing argument.
2. Pre-write
 - a. Brainstorm, cluster, free-write, or use any of the pre-writing strategy of your choice to help you get started with your essay.
 - b. An outline will really help you on this one.
 - i. Consider organizing your topic, argument, and sources using an outline.
3. Creation
 - a. With your ideas and sources in hand, begin composition.
4. Revise
 - a. Revise as you go
 - b. Participate fully in the drafting and peer review process
5. Create Final Draft

Evaluating a Persuasive Essay:

Introduction

- Does the writer use an effective attention grabber? How could the writer develop it more interesting?
- Does the reader give enough information about the background information? If not, what else could be shared?
- Does the writer give a clear thesis that includes a suggestion + 3 reasons for evidence? If not, what is missing?

Counterargument

- Does the writer examine a counterargument? Is the argument actually against the thesis? If not, what could be a possible counterargument?
- If the writer does have a counterargument, does the writer actually respond to the counterargument, or does the writer just give another supporting reason for the thesis? What could the writer say to improve the response to counterargument?
- Does the writer provide enough supporting details, examples, or evidence in the counterargument paragraph to show that the counterargument is weak, and therefore, reinforce the thesis?

Persuasive Essay Prompt

due April 28th

Ideas and Sequence

- Does the order of the body paragraphs make sense? How could the writer rearrange the paragraphs so they are in a more logical order?
- Does the writer stayed focused on the thesis in the paper? If not, where can the writer delete extraneous information or explain how something relates to the thesis?
- Does each body paragraph have a separate reason that supports the thesis? If not, which ones are the same? What are other reasons that could be used in a new body paragraph?
- Does each body paragraph have supporting details that explain or give clear examples for the reason? If not, what are some examples or supporting details the writer could add?

Transitions

- Does the writer use complex transitions between paragraphs? If there are basic transitions, what are examples of transitional phrases or sentences that could be used instead?
- Does the writer use transitions within each body paragraph to connect the examples/supporting details to the reason? If not, what transitions can the writer use to do so?
- Are any transitions used incorrectly? If so, what would be a better transition to use?

Conclusion

- Does the conclusion use an effective closing strategy? How could the writer change the conclusion to persuade the reader?
- Does the conclusion have more than just a strategy used? If not, what information could the writer include to sum up the main reasons and the essay as a whole?