GUIDELINES FOR 102 PAPERS (Handout Packet 2)
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Spring 2016

Unit 1: Thinking critically about First Amendment issues

In our first group and individual assignments, you will work on a research paper analyzing some controversial issue related to the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. For the record, it reads:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

There are three broad categories you can work with:

1. Free Speech. This means you can look at censorship of a particular media, student speech (as in dress codes), hate speech, etc.

2. Separation of Church and State. In this category, you can explore religious phrases used in the Pledge of Allegiance, monuments with 10 Commandments on government property, teaching religious principles in schools, etc.

3. Right to Assemble. Can explore rights of groups who wish to engage in public protests.

There are two key components to building your essays.

1. Examining and exploring the opposing sides of the issue, treating both as objectively as possible to establish your case (Argument and Counter-Argument).

2. Look for and cite useful sources to demonstrate the claims of the proponents on the issue you’ve chosen. You’ll be critiquing and analyzing these claims to determine which side has the more credible case.

Important ideas for this assignment include, "In thinking critically about a topic, we try to see it from all sides before we come to our conclusion. We conduct an argument with ourselves, advancing and then questioning opinions.” As you begin thinking out your approach, your text points out that you should consider:

- What can be said for the proposition, and
- What can be said against it?

Examining Topics

- Definition (What is it?)
- Comparison (What is it like or unlike?)
- Relationship (What caused it, and what will it cause?); and
- Testimony (What is said about it, for instance, by experts?).

In this case, “Testimony” means research. The opinions expressed in your argument will not be personal but rather those of the most credible and reliable sources you can find.
Steps

1. Brainstorming. In your group, you’ll discuss potential subjects and then discuss what ideas you can think of regarding the issue. You can draw a simple table, putting ideas for the different sides on each side of the list.

2. Research. Find as many useful short articles as you can on your topic. Then, as a group, determine the strengths and weaknesses of the various claims. Which side seems to have more convincing points? Why?

3. Organize. Begin building the sections of your paper demonstrating the main ideas and adding in your analysis—are these strong claims or not? Are other ideas from the other side more credible? Here, you’ll want to include citations of your direct quotes, paraphrases, and summaries.

4. As your paper grows, add in transitional words, phrases, and sentences to give your paper a flow. Once you know what your central, persuasive point is, develop your thesis, introduction, and conclusion.

5. As you prepare for the draft exchange, review the checklist on the first page of the first student packet. Here, you’ll see important pointers about what you need to look for in your editing and proofreading.

Other important matters are discussed on your syllabus. Model student papers are posted at the library website.

Below are other checklists you’ll want to look over this unit:

From: Unlocking the Mystery of Critical Thinking
By: Linda B. Nilson, PhD

Questions to ask yourself about your papers:

- What are your reasons for coming to that interpretation/evaluation?
- What are the arguments on this issue pro and con?
- How strong are those arguments? What is the evidence behind them and how solid is it?
- What are the main assumptions behind this line of reasoning?
- How can we interpret these data? What conclusions can we draw, if any?
- What additional information do we need to resolve this issue?
- What are the trade-offs, implications, and consequences of each solution we’ve discussed?
- By what standards and priorities will you judge the quality of different solutions?
- What are the limitations of your chosen solution?
- How can you defend it against the arguments in favor of other solutions?
- What are some alternatives that we have not yet explored?

Paul and Elder (2013) recommend asking questions that hold students accountable for meeting their eight standards for critical thinking: clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, and fairness, such as:

- How can you validate the accuracy of this statement/evidence?
- How is that information relevant here?
- How well does that conclusion handle the complexities of the problem?
• What is another interpretation or viewpoint on the issue?
• How does this conclusion follow from the data or earlier statements?
• How can both these interpretations be true when they lead to such different conclusions?
• Do you have a vested interest in one position or another? How honestly and impartially are you representing the other viewpoints?

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Unit 2: Using Multiple Approaches to a Local Issue

This unit has two major components:

1. In both your group and individual papers, you will focus on an issue important to Pennsylvanians. This can be as specific as an issue in a local school, school district, a city or county, or the entire state. You will want to pick something that you can find enough resources to make this a persuasive research paper.

Very important: A “local” issue means something based in this state. For example, you can’t choose immigration as an issue unless you keep your discussion focused on how Pennsylvania towns are dealing with the controversy. You can bring in national debates or things happening in other states ONLY as comparisons to what’s happening here. Choosing a wider topic and simply plugging in the name of our state will not count—and will flunk your paper.

2. You will explore your issue from at least four different approaches. We’ll discuss this in class, but know the four ways of looking at your chosen topic may vary widely.

For example, one topic (which you cannot use now) would be opening gambling casinos in Gettysburg. In the past, students approached this issue from the standpoints of:

1. Is it moral to use gambling to increase state revenues? This approach is discussed in your textbook, “Ways of Thinking Ethically.”

2. What are the legal issues involved?

3. What impact does gambling have on local citizens?

4. Discussing gambling specifically at Gettysburg, students have looked at the unique historical nature of the location; the financial aspects both good and bad; and possible changes to local infra-structure and local businesses.

These are but possible approaches you can choose from. If you were to explore the high costs of health care, you could look at medical consequences. There are many topics with environmental aspects. Looking at road repairs, taxes, pay raises for legislators—these have political dimensions.

In short, you’ll want to first choose your topic, research it, and then determine just what approaches best fit the subject you’re working with.

This is an ideal group project. Once you’ve determined the subject and brainstormed your early ideas, you can assign varying approaches to different group members. I advise everyone to look at the student models posted at the library website to see how these sections should finally come together as a whole. This means, after examining your topic in your essay, you’ll show
For class discussion: Read and critique the following paper. In advance, know this is NOT a model paper. Why not?

In Fairview Township there are eighty three acres of land that the company Goodman Bircher North American Management wants to build a warehouse on. This one million square foot trucking warehouse will cost upwards of around sixty million dollars. “Goodman Bircher, is a global property group that owns, develops and manages industrial and commercial property” (Whitecase). The decision to build this warehouse has caused a lot of controversy throughout Fairview Township that has affected the citizens morally, politically, environmentally, and economically.

The warehouse affects the citizens of Fairview Township morally because none of the citizens want to have to deal with the traffic noise and the view of a gigantic warehouse when they look out their windows. Susan Bumstead who has lived in Fairview Township for forty years states, “Absolutely, I will not stay and look at that from my front window” (Rivers). Another problem is the value of homes that are in the Fairview Township area. Home owners in Fairview Township fear that if they want to move then selling their homes is going to be a huge pain because no one is going to want to live near the terminal.

Cindy Petrel says, “Whether it’s cheap or not, who wants to live across the street from that?” (Rivers).

The safety of citizens will also be greatly affected. There are plenty of people walking along the roads that could end up getting hit with the influx of traffic that will be on Lewisberry Road. Children are a huge concern with all this potential traffic. With the new amount of traffic it puts all the kids that walk to Fairview Elementary School will be in danger of getting hit by a car.

Another issue is the traffic that will make driving ridiculous for anyone during the rush hours. With the traffic increasing, crashes and accidents that could cause serious injury or death to anyone involved will increase. Also there will be tons of noise which will affect people sleeping and peace of mind all throughout the day. John Bumstead, who is the residents’ spokesman, stated “this proposed warehouse is an absolute misfit and travesty because of health and safety issues, noise pollution and traffic that will affect anyone within 20 miles.” (Dejesus)

The board of supervisors of Fairview Township has to weigh the pros and the cons of the proposed warehouse. They have to factor in that most of the citizens do not want the warehouse, but there would be a great amount of revenue generated from it. Another political aspect is the debate between the board of supervisors and Troy Briggs, regional director for Goodman Bircher North America.

Another big factor in this proposed warehouse would be the taxes. It could generate “$600,000 in estimated annual county, school and township property taxes.” (Michaels) This may be the deciding factor, because the government always wants more tax money. The warehouse would also bring more jobs; therefore, the government could get taxes from that. Also the new jobs would mean more people would move to Fairview Township, which would also give the government
more tax revenue.
The biggest problem that this warehouse would cause is environmental pollution. A big issue is that to make this warehouse there will have to be deforestation and plenty of it to have a one million square foot warehouse. The main cause of the pollution is vehicles emissions. The main pollutant the vehicles emit is carbon monoxide. “Vehicles and engines account for 78% of carbon monoxide emissions in the United States.” (White 284)
The other pollution problem this warehouse causes is all of the deforestation. Deforestation is “the clearing and loss of forests” (White 188). One type of pollution that occurs through deforestation is water pollution. Due to all the trees that are currently keeping the soil in place it keeps run-off from occurring. Without the trees rain will cause most of this soil to run-off and cause a lot of water pollution in all of the freshwater in Fairview Township.

However, the economical factor of the warehouse being built is the only positive that could come out of it. The warehouse would bring an abundant amount of warehouse jobs that have “average annual salaries of $41,265 as of 2012.” (Dejesus). Also it would create a plentiful amount of truck driver jobs in the Fairview area. “200-250: construction jobs that will be created to build on the site.” (Michaels) This is a very key aspect that Goodman Bircher keeps emphasizing because it could make a good dent in the unemployment rate in Fairview Township and help the economy since more people would have jobs so therefore they would have more money to spend.

With this new warehouse it will increase the income of various companies. Rutter’s is a gas station that is located within a quarter mile of the construction site and with all the new jobs and people traveling to work there will see an increase in their income as well as all other businesses in the area. The business that will make the most money is the business running this whole warehouse operation, Goodman Bircher. “$4-4.5 million: estimated annual income from project for developer/landlord Goodman Bircher” (Michaels).

The warehouse that is being built by Goodman Bircher is a terrible idea for the area of Fairview Township. Morally it is terrible because it makes everyone’s life more difficult with the scenery of a huge warehouse, huge increase of traffic, and the safety of pedestrians walking along the road. Environmentally it is horrible with all the pollution it will cause from vehicle emissions with the influx of vehicles and tractor trailers. Politically the board of supervisors for Fairview Township have to balance all the positives, negatives, and tax money that the warehouse could generate and decide what would be best for the township. Economically the warehouse is a positive because it will create a lot of jobs and give a lot of customers to local businesses which will increase their revenue.

Works Cited
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Unit 3: Analyzing *Bowling for Columbine* and Editorials

In our third unit, your group will be analyzing the film, *Bowling for Columbine*. We’ll discuss this in class—know you’ll need to get familiar with “A Logician's View: Deduction, Induction, Fallacies” discussed in your textbook.

**Below is information specific to your individual paper.**

While the critical approach you worked on during your film analysis will continue in your individual project, this time you'll be analyzing four pieces of writing and not a film. While important points about this assignment are discussed on your syllabus, below is material to help you with this project.

Your primary task is to determine how effective or ineffective the writing seems to you. Your agreement or disagreement with the authors has nothing to do with this assignment. While you may want to comment on the issue discussed in the editorials, this is a matter to explore after you've examined the writers' effectiveness. Outside resources should be used only to support your points as to how well the writers did in their work.

Your first task will be to find four opinion pieces to work with that all deal with the same topic. Look for short articles that are obviously expressing an opinion and are not informative news items. You can find them in local newspapers on pages called "Editorials," "Opinion," or sometimes "Commentary." News magazines like *Time* or *Newsweek* often have a page set aside for such commentary on their back pages. Of course, you can look for opinion pieces on the internet. If the item is too short, you won't have enough material to analyze. If it's several pages or longer, you may have too much to read and critique.

It's worth noting that articles you think are ineffective are often the easiest to analyze. When a piece of writing is lacking in content, balance, objectivity, or reasoning, you have much you can criticize. This doesn't mean a very effective article can't be worked with--see sample student essays posted at my website for examples of how to do this. Again--look for persuasive material. News items that are meant to be informative will give you nothing to work with.

Very important notes: Summarize the articles and either include your critique as you go along or give your analysis after your summary. Do not assume your reader has read these editorials. To develop your points, quote or paraphrase phrases or sentences from the editorials so your reader knows what you're referring to. Remember: agreeing or disagreeing has nothing to do with evaluating a piece of writing. You may disagree strongly with the editorial but find it effective. You can agree with it but find it rather thin or underdeveloped.

**HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS PAPER**

1. If you feel the writer is lacking in supporting detail, what sort of information would have strengthened the points? This is where outside sources might help you.
2. If the authors do not adequately discuss opposing views, you might point out what arguments others can raise that are as effective or perhaps more important than what you read. Here is where you can compare and contrast the various pieces you're critiquing.
3. You should not use phrases like "I think Morgan made many good points" or "I think Morgan is on target when he claims . . ." Make your writing more effective by stating your opinions as "Clearly, Morgan makes many solid points" or "Most readers will find Morgan's ideas right on target because . . ."
4. You can determine a piece is effective for certain audiences but not others.
5. It's possible some aspects of the pieces are effective and others less so. You can address what you think works well in one part of your paper and point to weaknesses in another.

HELPFUL QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS PAPER

1. What is the author's purpose? Is the thesis clearly stated or are you unsure what the writer is trying to say and do? Is the writer trying to inform, persuade, or simply express an opinion?
2. Who is the writer's audience? Does the writer effectively communicate with the audience with well-chosen words, images, and information? Does the writer assume his (or her) readers know about the issue or does the author prepare the reader with background details and the contexts of the issue? Can you distinguish between facts and opinions--do facts support the author's opinions?
3. How does the writer try to get his/her point across? Is the content an appeal to emotion or does the writer use reason and logic? Is his or her approach objective or is it clearly biased? Is the author credible? Why or why not? Does the information seem to come from reliable sources or merely expressions of personal opinion?
4. Does the writer present varying points of view or does he/she simply state what they think? Does the writer address what other opinions might be and respond to various perspectives other than his or her own? In other words, is the editorial balanced?
5. Do you see any logical fallacies? (See handout on this.) If so, identify and state why a point is a generalization, slippery slope, etc.
6. Was the editorial persuasive? What could have made it more effective? This will be the core of your papers.

Important Discussions in Textbook

During this unit, you can anticipate short quizzes based on textbook readings. This is important as you’ll need to show an understanding of claims and warrants. So be sure to read carefully the pages listed on your syllabus.

Editorial for Class Discussion

Op-Ed Columnist: An Absence of Class
By BOB HERBERT. NYTimes.com

A group of lowlifes at a Tea Party rally in Columbus, Ohio, last week taunted and humiliated a man who was sitting on the ground with a sign that said he had Parkinson’s disease. The disgusting behavior was captured on a widely circulated videotape. One of the Tea Party protesters leaned over the man and sneered: “If you’re looking for a handout, you’re in the wrong end of town.”

Another threw money at the man, first one bill and then another, and said contemptuously, “I’ll pay for this guy. Here you go. Start a pot.”

In Washington on Saturday, opponents of the health care legislation spit on a black congressman and shouted racial slurs at two others, including John Lewis, one of the great heroes of the civil rights movement. Barney Frank, a Massachusetts Democrat who is chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, was taunted because he is gay.
At some point, we have to decide as a country that we just can’t have this: We can’t allow ourselves to remain silent as foaming-at-the-mouth protesters scream the vilest of epithets at members of Congress — epithets that The Times will not allow me to repeat here.

It is 2010, which means it is way past time for decent Americans to rise up against this kind of garbage, to fight it aggressively wherever it appears. And it is time for every American of good will to hold the Republican Party accountable for its role in tolerating, shielding and encouraging foul, mean-spirited and bigoted behavior in its ranks and among its strongest supporters.

For decades the G.O.P. has been the party of fear, ignorance and divisiveness. All you have to do is look around to see what it has done to the country. The greatest economic inequality since the Gilded Age was followed by a near-total collapse of the overall economy. As a country, we have a monumental mess on our hands and still the Republicans have nothing to offer in the way of a remedy except more tax cuts for the rich.

This is the party of trickle down and weapons of mass destruction, the party of birthers and death-panel lunatics. This is the party that genuflects at the altar of right-wing talk radio, with its insane, nauseating, nonstop commitment to hatred and bigotry.

Glenn Beck of Fox News has called President Obama a “racist” and asserted that he “has exposed himself as a guy, over and over and over again, who has a deep-seated hatred for white people or the white culture.”

Mike Huckabee, a former Republican presidential candidate, has said of Mr. Obama’s economic policies: “Lenin and Stalin would love this stuff.”

The G.O.P. poisons the political atmosphere and then has the gall to complain about an absence of bipartisanship.

The toxic clouds that are the inevitable result of the fear and the bitter conflicts so relentlessly stoked by the Republican Party — think blacks against whites, gays versus straights, and a whole range of folks against immigrants — tend to obscure the tremendous damage that the party’s policies have inflicted on the country. If people are arguing over immigrants or abortion or whether gays should be allowed to marry, they’re not calling the G.O.P. to account for (to take just one example) the horribly destructive policy of cutting taxes while the nation was fighting two wars.

If you’re all fired up about Republican-inspired tales of Democrats planning to send grandma to some death chamber, you’ll never get to the G.O.P.’s war against the right of ordinary workers to organize and negotiate in their own best interests — a war that has diminished living standards for working people.
for decades.

With a freer hand, the Republicans would have done more damage. George W. Bush tried to undermine Social Security. John McCain was willing to put Sarah Palin a heartbeat away from the Oval Office and thought Phil Gramm would have made a crackerjack Treasury secretary. (For those who may not remember, Mr. Gramm was a deregulation zealot who told us during the presidential campaign that we were suffering from a “mental recession.”)

A party that promotes ignorance (“Just say no to global warming”) and provides a safe house for bigotry cannot serve the best interests of our country. Back in the 1960s, John Lewis risked his life and endured savage beatings to secure fundamental rights for black Americans while right-wing Republicans like Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan were lining up with segregationist Democrats to oppose landmark civil rights legislation.

Since then, the right-wingers have taken over the G.O.P. and Mr. Lewis, now a congressman, must still endure the garbage they have wrought.

Logical Fallacies

Ad Hominem. Attacking the messenger rather than addressing the issue; distracting the reader with personal attacks rather than dealing with the subject.

Ex.: I can't support President Clinton's economic policies because he sleeps with interns.

Appeal to Authority (False Authority). Supporting a position by citing someone who may be a credible authority in one field, but not necessarily for the issue in question.

Ex.: Dr. Ethel Barrymore is an acknowledged expert in forensic science, so her views on our economic policies are important.

Appeal to Emotion. Manipulates emotions and ignores logic to make points using fear, flattery, pity, spite, or unrealistic wish fulfillment.

Exp.: We should boycott the outdoor show because they banned assault weapon sales.

Banwagon. Claiming your position is best because so many others are in agreement.

Ex.: Because most of the community is opposed to building the mosque, it shouldn't be allowed to be constructed.

Begging the Question. Circular reasoning in which the conclusion is a restatement of the premise, often using synonyms.

Ex.: Opium induces sleep because it has a
Soporific quality.

Equivocation. An evasive statement that is not literally false but that cleverly avoids an unpleasant truth. Intentionally vague or ambiguous.

Ex.: Hot dogs are better than nothing. Nothing is better than steak. Therefore, hot dogs are better than steak.

1. Fallacy of Composition. Inferring that something is true of the whole from the fact that it is true of some part of the whole.
2. Ex.: The basketball team will be the best in the league because it has star players.

False Analogy. Making an unfair or misleading comparison between two positions; "comparing apples to oranges."

Ex.: Employees and nails are the same. As it is necessary to hit nails on the head in order to make them work, the same must be done with employees.

False Cause (also Post hoc). Claiming an event from the past is the cause of events that followed.

Ex.: Taking prayer out of public schools has led to all our social problems ever since.

False Dilemma (also False Dichotomy). Claiming an "either, or" position, that there are only two possible solutions or outcomes. Either black or white.

Ex.: Either medicine can explain how Ms. X was cured, or it is a miracle. Medicine can't explain how she was cured. Therefore it is a miracle.

1. Genetic Fallacy. Points to origin of something rather than what it means currently.

Ex.: Wedding rings are sexist because they originated with ankle chains used to keep women from running away from their husbands.

Guilt by Association. Attempting to cast aspersions against someone or a group by saying they are remotely connected to someone or a group that is unsavory.

Ex.: Sarah Palin felt President Obama was associated with terrorists because he once sat on a community board which included a former terrorist.

Hasty Generalization. Attempting to make huge assumptions based on stereotypes.

Exp.: Most men are interested in sex, cars, and not much else.

Non Sequitur. Means "it does not follow," where the premise does not lead to the conclusion.
Ex.: Martin Luther King had a dream. Dreams are where Elmo and Toy Story had a party and I was invited.

Oversimplification an exaggeration (reductive fallacy). an act of excessive simplification; the act of making something seem simpler than it really is.

Ex.: Education today isn't as good as it used to be - obviously, our teachers are not doing their jobs.

Poisoning the Well. Presenting unfavorable information (be it true or false, relevant or irrelevant) about the target before they can speak.

Ex.: Before my opponent speaks, let me remind you that he has been in jail.

Red Herring. Attempting to distract the reader by pointing to an unrelated idea rather than the issue being discussed.

Ex.: We don't need to worry about the defense budget when we have so many inner city problems to deal with instead.

   Slippery Slope. Claiming if one event occurs, that will lead to many future problems. Establishes a downward spiral based on speculation.

Ex.: If we pass this legislation to limit gun sales, this will lead to the government taking our guns away.

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Unit 4: Pulling It All Together

For your last group and individual papers, you will choose one topic you've not dealt with before and is not on the list of banned topics (abortion, smoking, the drinking age, and using cell phones). In this assignment, you will explore the topic, implementing all of the principles we've covered this semester.

1. Your paper will again be persuasive. Include a thesis and conclusion that demonstrates what you've written should convince a reader of one point or another.

2. Look at your issue from at least four different approaches which you can explore in separate sections or intermingle depending on what works for your flow.

3. Analyze and critique both the arguments and counter-arguments using the skills you practiced in the last assignment. However, this time you're NOT critiquing four articles or the techniques of the writers but rather the effectiveness of the claims and warrants put forward from your sources. In other words, look at the evidence and logic to determine the strengths and weaknesses of all claims and their support.