Writing assignment #1

Why all the Fuss?

Understanding the Points of View in a Controversy

Writing tasks:

You will write a paper that demonstrates your clear and in-depth understanding of a controversy that impacts a local organization. You must identify and describe at least three unique points of view. Your paper should examine the points of view of others rather than state your own opinion about the controversy.

Discussion:

The first step in taking part in a responsible discussion about a controversial issue is to understand all of the points of view that make the controversy so controversial. You need to know first why reasonable people disagree about the issue. To succeed in this paper assignment, then, you need to search out why people disagree, not merely what they argue. Understanding a controversy requires that you try to see the reasons for disagreement through the eyes of others, even those with whom you might disagree.

By this time in the semester, you have practiced the tasks of careful analysis. Understanding a controversy also requires that you understand how those involved use rhetoric to participate in the conversation. In other words, analyzing the rhetorical context and the rhetorical strategies that are used in the debate will allow you to learn how those who take various sides in the controversy make their cases.

So the goal of this paper is to show that you understand why and how reasonable people disagree about a controversy that impacts a local organization.

In constructing your paper, you must do some research in order to understand as fully as possible the points of view that are part of the controversy. You are also expected to describe the multiple perspectives accurately. Your paper must acknowledge the real opinions that exist, demonstrate that you understand the arguments in favor of those opinions, and show that you understand why the issue has no one obvious right or wrong solution.

You are important in this paper, and you should write some space for yourself as a person who is trying to understand the issue. Your thoughts are important, and you should use first person pronouns and your own voice where appropriate. Do not use a “just the facts” approach; rather,
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include storytelling to show why you became interested in the issues and how you worked to find the reasons for disagreement.

Similarly, keep in mind your audience’s experience of reading the paper. Use language to inspire readers to care about the issues in the paper.

Requirements:

Evidence of an in-depth understanding of the controversy

- Your paper shows why people disagree by seeking out root reasons
- Your paper shows how people disagree by examining their rhetoric
- Your paper includes a description of at least three points of view (minimum)
- Your paper is not limited to describing only the obvious, surface qualities of the controversy but instead identifies nuances in reasons and arguments
- Your paper includes a description of how the controversy affects a local organization

Writing process:

- Compose multiple drafts and keep research notes
- Revise (i.e. re-write or re-think) extensively between first and final drafts
- Re-read this assignment prompt many times and ask me if you have questions
- Participate fully in class workshopping activities
- Proofread and edit carefully

Rhetorical quality:

- Your paper should be interesting to your target audience; your classmates and professor should be interested in learning about the controversy
- Empathize with your reader in order to help them become engaged
- Use rhetorical appeals with an understanding of their effect in multiple contexts
- Use formality and informality as appropriate
- Make space for yourself in the paper

Purposes:

By completing this assignment, you have the opportunity to learn and practice skills such as:

- Understanding how controversies are created
- Learning the value of understanding a controversy
- Using research skills to explore several points of view
- Engaging in an effective writing process including multiple drafts and workshopping
- Using your skills of written communication to offer a clear and in-depth description
Grading Criteria:

Papers satisfying the requirements and fulfilling the purposes listed above will receive a satisfactory grade of between C- and B. Papers that do not satisfy the criteria above will receive an unsatisfactory grade of D or lower. Papers that demonstrate mastery of the criteria above will earn a grade of B+ or higher. All grades will be assigned on the percentage scale outlined in the course syllabus.

Formatting and Other Minutia:

- Turn in using ICON dropbox before midnight on the due date
- Papers should be between 4 and 6 pages long, as a rough guideline
- Double space
- Include a separate title page (not included in page count)
- Page numbers at the bottom right of each page
- Use APA style formatting requirements

Dates (descriptions of process steps will follow in handouts):

Proposal: 9/16

Preliminary research notes: 9/21

Draft workshop: 9/23

Final draft due: 9/30
Writing assignment #1 process steps

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Proposal assignment

Due 9/16/2011

Bring to class a proposal that describes your paper topic. In about a page of typed text, describe:

1. The controversy you propose to study
2. A description of how the controversy affects a specific local organization
3. Your existing beliefs and assumptions about the controversy
4. The points of view you believe might exist in the controversy
5. The questions about the controversy that you think you’ll need to answer before you can write the paper
6. Several questions you have related to the assignment
Writing assignment #1 process steps

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Preliminary research notes

Due 9/21/2011

Bring to class a minimum of three annotations of sources that you think might help you refine your focus for the paper. The annotations should each include:

1. A full APA style reference citation
2. A quick summary of the source’s content
3. A quick summary of the source’s dominant rhetorical qualities
4. A paragraph describing how the source helps you think about the controversy
Writing assignment #1 process steps

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Draft workshop

Due 9/23/2011

Write your paper! Write the best draft you are able. Bring it to class for the workshop along with a list of questions that you are struggling with. Staple the questions to the top of your paper. Participation in the workshop is required; your paper grade will be dropped by half of a letter grade for non-participation.