Essay 1: Objective Analysis and Comparison

The basis of all good argumentative writing is a basic understanding of both sides of whatever argument you wish to join.

Assignment:

Write a concise, coherent paper of 400 to 600 words explaining, objectively, two sides to a current issue and analyzing the methods of argument being used by both sides. The prompts for this essay can be found on page 121 of The Elements of Argument. Choose one from questions 6, 7, or 8:

6. Locate two editorials or two articles that take different stands on the same controversial issue. Write an analysis in which you objectively compare the two as examples of argumentation.

7. Locate two editorials or two articles that take different stands on the same controversial issue. Write an essay in which you argue which of the two is a more effective argument and why. Note: you should not argue for or against one side based on its merits and/or whether you agree with it. This is strictly an argument about which side proves its points better.

8. Explain in an essay which of the two essays about MySpace presents a stronger argument, Kevin Alexander’s or Bob Sullivan’s.

For questions 6 and 7, you may use any outside source you would like; however, if the articles are not easily available online, you must provide a photocopy or scan of the article/editorial you are using when you submit your paper.

This essay will focus on the objective facts of a case. Your opinion of the matter at hand should not be a part of your essay; instead, write about how the case is argued. Consider which side presents more credible facts; who has better sources; which side is written most persuasively; which side is most logically constructed. Do not consult any outside material or relate any outside expertise beyond the two articles or editorials you write about.

The essay will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Organization. The essay should be clearly organized around a main thesis, which should be an answer to the question, “Which of these pieces presents a stronger argument, and why?” Nothing should be included that doesn’t help answer this question. The essay should flow well; use transitions between paragraphs.

2. Clarity: The essay should make its points clearly without distracting errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, formatting, or language. Never use 15 words when 5 will do. Don’t use words if you aren’t confident about what they mean.
Writers are highly encouraged to make use of their required grammar books and the resources available at the LBCC Writing Center early and often.

3. Fulfillment of the assignment: Your essay should be well thought-out and well presented. It should be insightful, not a repeat of what I could read in the textbook. Essays that deviate widely from the above or approved topics cannot receive a passing grade. Essays that fail to reach the minimum word count cannot receive a passing grade.

4. Revision: Any essay that doesn’t show signs of revision and proofreading will not succeed. Signs of not proofreading include: switched words (“form” instead of “from”), missing words (“we went the beach”), random characters ( ), and text-speak (“we went 2 the beach” or 😊).

5. Consideration of audience: This essay should be written formally, not conversationally. Avoid unnecessary use of slang and contractions, except when quoting from sources.

6. Works cited. This essay will require you to cite at least two sources and include them on a separate (not counted into your total word count) Works Cited page. Use MLA citation style. If both sources are from *The Elements of Argument*, please list them separately. See your grammar book for clarification.

7. Formatting: The essay must follow the guidelines printed on your syllabus.

**Deadlines:**

**Due** in-class for peer-editing: Tuesday, January 19. Bring three printed copies of your essay to class with you on Tuesday. I will direct a session of peer editing which will provide you with a chance to receive comments from your peers that can help you revise your essay. The editing will be accomplished in class, and you will take all three copies home with you on Tuesday. **Students who do not participate in the peer editing process will lose an unrecoverable 10 percent of their grade on this essay.**

Use these comments to make changes to your essay before the final due date. **Bring all commented essays to class with you on Thursday.**

**Due** to me on Thursday, January 21. If you would like to print out the essay and receive hand-written comments in return, you must bring the essay to class with you on Thursday. If you choose to submit your essay electronically, you must send it to jenn.kepka@linnbenton.edu. I have to receive it by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, and I will confirm its receipt with a reply message.