

English 2, Emphasis on Environmental Ethics

Paper #3: Arguing a Position while Acknowledging Opposition — 4 - 6 pages

Rough draft due:

Final draft due:

For this paper, you will be writing an argument concerning an issue of the environment/environmental ethics. That is, you'll choose an environmental issue that can be argued for or against, and take a stand on it, mustering evidence for support, at the same time acknowledging and dealing with major points of opposition. This paper spins off from Writing Assignments #7 and #8 on pages 110-113 in Writing Logically, Thinking Critically:

Arguing Both Sides of an Issue and Taking a Stand. However, though you do need to read and understand those pages, please note that the paper you will write differs from the WLTC assignments on these points:

***Note that this part is pre-writing, rough-draft material, NOT how the final draft will look:

(1) Use the WLTC Writing Assignment 7 (pp 110-111) as pre-writing. You'll write arguments both for and against the particular issue you choose. That is, "write two arguments, one defending and one refuting" the issue. "For each argument, convey clearly the position you are taking by writing a short thesis (the conclusion of your argument) at the top of the page. For each position, provide relevant reasons (premises) that are...accurate. You will have two separate papers with a paragraph for each premise."

***Note that this part stipulates how the final draft will turn out:

(2) Use their Writing Assignment 8 (pp 112-113) to compose what will eventually be your final draft. **You will be handing in ONE solid essay that takes a stand in favor of one particular side of the topic you're exploring, though it will include acknowledgment of major opposing argument(s).** As Cooper and Patton suggest, "To support your position fully, draw on the premises you presented in Writing Assignment 7, discarding reasoning that seems weak or irrelevant, adding reasons where you find gaps in your earlier paper. Strengthen your argument with as much data as you think necessary to make your case." This is not the official research paper, but you may find you need to consult a limited number of outside sources and, of course, document them.

They add, "To address opposing views, select the most important premises from your list of arguments on the other side of your position and briefly address them, acknowledging, conceding and refuting in the manner best suited to your stand on the issue."

(3) Again, the most important difference from the WLTC assignment is that you should choose as your topic an issue of environment/environmental ethics. This does not necessarily have to be a controversial topic, simply an argument with at least two sides.

Here are some examples of topics, though they may need narrowing down:

In an attempt to fulfill desires beyond needs, developed nations such as the US should stem the amounts we consume, or find alternative manufacturing methods, primarily because the world is running out of resources. OR: There are plenty of resources, one way or the other, so developed nations should stem the amounts we consume based primarily on aesthetic and moral considerations.

The science of genetically modified organisms is a wonderful and necessary breakthrough in our society. OR: The science of GMOs is an unknown that needs to be approached with the precautionary principle.

In this vein, you could select two contrasting food items — for example, organic corn on the cob vs. Doritos — and trace each item from its inception as a plant through its processing/packaging, all the way to disposal of cob or cellophane, comparing and taking a stand on each one's eco-footprint.

Humans should try to restore lost ecosystems in an attempt to put back on Earth what has been lost. OR: Humans shouldn't bother trying to restore lost ecosystems, since what we'd come up with would be of necessity artificial.

The individualistic ethical approach (such as Tom Regan's view of animal rights) is sufficient to preserve the environment and its occupants. OR: The ecocentric ethical approach (such as Aldo Leopold's) is sufficient to preserve the environment and its occupants.

Medical laboratory testing on non-human animals is justified because it fosters medical advances, thus saving human lives. OR: Medical lab testing on non-human animals is not justified because these animals are sentient beings that suffer, and/or these animals have rights, and/or there are alternative ways to conduct such tests.

Conduct an inventory of typical household or body products you use, and investigate what kinds of testing on animals they have undergone — and if such testing is called for. Make a case one way or the other as to the necessity for animal testing of toxins.

Investigate the various impacts of eating at McDonalds, vs. eating range-fed, organic meats, vs. vegetarianism, vs. veganism: Make a case for one above the others.

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Do recall strategies of dialectical argument, not getting too polarized in your presentation of the issues. Observe Rogerian tact and tactics when dealing with opposing arguments. Maintain a tone of reason and reasonableness, and a sense of openness to the possibilities. Remember that the point is to explore the issue from multiple perspectives, not to present it as black-and-white. Reality may very well lie in the gray area, anyway.