Definition-based Toulmin Argument - In-course Essay Midterm:
Assignment Description

In an essay of at least 700 words (minimum) of well-proofread writing, present a definition-based persuasive labeled with at least one each of the 8 Toulmin stages (**Claim, Reasoning, Qualifier, Warrant, Backing, Evidence, Rebuttal, Response**). This is a timed exam: you will type this essay in your own word processing application and then copy/paste it into the submission window within iLearn that is set to count down from 2 1/2 hours once you click to begin the exam.

Please see the sample student definition essay on our main 714 course page for an example of how you should be labeling your essay with the individual components of the Toulmin model once you've written it. 700 words is roughly equivalent to 2 full pages of double-spaced 12-point text, but please be sure to use the word count tool in your application to ensure you're hitting the 700-word requirement for the assignment. Essays that come in under 700 words will *not* be accepted for credit.

You won't be graded on essay formatting (spacing, tabbing, margins, etc.) as those are not uniform or easy to control within the iLearn text window you'll be using for this exam. Just worry about the writing work itself and the minimum word count as that's what I'll be evaluating.

You must label each Toulmin stage of your argument at least once in the body of your essay by placing the relevant stage term in parentheses immediately after you've completed the corresponding stage of argument construction. Essays that are not correctly labeled with at least one instance of each of the 8 stages of the Toulmin model will *not* be accepted for credit.

Be sure to log-in at least 3 hours before the assignment deadline expires so that you'll have time to create your essay within the 2 1/2 hour timeframe and submit it before it's due. Late submissions of this assignment will *not* be accepted nor will any revision opportunities be offered. Because you have 2 1/2 hours to create a 2-page essay, the minimum expectation is that you will have ample time to plan, write and proofread an essay that is completely error-free at the sentence and paragraph level and that displays a mastery of definition-based argumentation strategy and aspects of the Toulmin model.

The Final Exam Trigger:

Essays that do not display competency in those areas listed above will not pass. This in turn will trigger the final exam requirement for you: The final exam, administered as another online exam during finals week, will be a timed essay assignment just like this one, but *it will only be required for students who do not pass this midterm exam*.

The upshot here is that I want you to show me your ability to build and sustain a coherent, well-supported and well-developed argument, properly structured and labeled and also error-free. If you can do that here, you will be exempted from having to take the final exam; if you don't show clear mastery here, you'll be required to take the final exam and pass it in order to pass the course overall.

Again, you will have 2 1/2 full hours for the exam once you click the Attempt Quiz Now button in iLearn. Once you begin, the test window cannot be closed or paused; if you stop the test or close the test window before completing the exam, your work will be lost and you will lose your opportunity to retake the test. You must click the Submit button whenever you finish and within the allotted time: closing the test or allowing the time to run out without submitting will cause your work to be lost and you will lose your opportunity to retake the test.

Please note that I do not have the ability to recover partial, lost, or unsaved work from the system. I recommend saving a copy of your work onto your machine to forward to me in case of a test tool failure in iLearn.

Please note: If you are faced with having to email me a backup copy of your work, it must be sent to me **within 5 minutes of having closed or completed your test-taking period** or it will not be accepted for credit.

Your browser window will NOT be locked down once you start the exam, meaning you are free to access whatever materials you wish to help you with this assignment, either online or elsewhere on your machine as long as you do not close the test window. If you do use external source material in your work - which you are encouraged to do - please be sure to fully introduce the source in your writing and page or paragraph cite your sources with parenthetical references, as always. Properly attributing your sources is extremely important: un-cited source work will trigger a failing mark on the exam. You are not required to submit a reference or works cited list for this assignment.

Please remember to review whatever previous commented writing you've gotten back from me to ensure that you're not repeating the same error patterns I've already called your attention to and which I'll be monitoring for again here. Please review the Error Patterns Primer and the Proofreading Notes sheets on our 714 course page and read your work aloud to yourself in a quiet place (this is a good method of catching errors your eye misses) before you submit your final version so as to make sure you're eliminating all of the most common student writing error patterns from your writing work before submitting it.

The Exam Focus

You will choose the parameters of your own argument, following the guidelines listed below.

I have chosen to model this essay after the writing portion of the GMAT (or GRE) that you all encountered prior to taking this course because I, like that test, am trying to assess your ability to think critically with text and effectively communicate argument propositions in a coherent and sustained manner. (You can see this exam as an opportunity to avenge that earlier test result if you want to.) The instruction language is a modified version of the GMAT test language, as are the individual subject prompts that will be generated at random for each one of you separately once you begin the actual test. You will not all be responding to the same randomly selected subject prompt.

I have copied the instruction language below for you to review now. You will not be able to see your actual subject prompt until you start the exam. Once you've gotten your subject prompt, you will be free to use only it to generate your essay response or to do some brief research online to gather additional ideas or source material to use in your essay writing. You are not required to cite any outside sources, but you may find the 2 1/2 hours you'll have to write the essay to be ample time to do a little bit of research with which you may fill out your body paragraphs with relevant specific support and illustration material to help you make your arguments.

A note about the Toulmin labeling you'll do for the essay: don't worry so much about this while you write your essay. Any well constructed argument will already contain all of the principal components of the Toulmin model. Focus on your definition-based argument construction and support, then go back in and find each Toulmin component and label it. If you think too much about the Toulmin labeling while you write, you'll likely paralyze yourself by trying to build each Toulmin piece as you go, making the writing process way more difficult and overly complex than it needs to be. Focus on your argument and paragraph work, and do your Toulmin labeling and proofreading after.

Your rhetorical tasks will be these:

1. Identify and analyze significant flaws in the argument you're reading OR posit your own alternate position
2. Develop and Support your critique or argument using relevant supporting reasons and/or examples
3. Demonstrate good sentence control (e.g. diction, syntax, and conventions of standard written English)
4. Demonstrate good paragraph control (e.g. topic sentence + textual or material support + analysis)
5. Demonstrate mastery of definition-based argument speech and the Toulmin framework

Test Instructions (you'll see this again once you start the exam and receive your own randomly generated subject topic):

"Respond to or critique this argument to help you arrive at your own alternate position on the topic(s) it addresses. If you choose to critique the argument here, you may want to discuss how well-reasoned it is and how well it uses specific evidence to support its contentions as a way of bolstering your own position(s). If you choose to respond to the argument with your own alternate argument, you may want to focus on the logical, ideological, moral, fiscal, political, etc. shortcomings of the argument you're responding to here.

Remember to base your own argument formulation on a definition-based warrant and/or reasoning and remember to label the parts of your argument with the 8 stages of the Toulmin model (Claim, Reasoning, Qualifier, Warrant, Backing, Evidence, Rebuttal, Response). Please put those labels in parentheses after each part and make your Toulmin labels all the same color that's different from your essay text, like this: (claim).

You will have 2 1/2 hours for this exam. Please make sure it's effectively proofread to eliminate all sentence-level errors before submission. Good luck."