

Writing Challenge 10.0: Editorial

engl 281 / sec. D / autumn quarter 2009-10 / chang

Mark Twain, famous author, journalist, and satirist, once said, “Get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please.” With tongue firmly in cheek, Twain reveals then the double-edged power of rhetoric—the art of persuasion—which speakers, writers, teachers, politicians, and texts use to convince their audience of their argument (sometimes by any means possible). However, rhetoric can be responsible, evidenced, and well-crafted. Your writing challenge for the week is to identify a current, exigent issue, debate, or controversy, to take a stand or position in the issue, and to write a short editorial arguing your position. Make sure you get your facts first. Make sure you understand the scope of the debate (a little light research might be necessary). Make sure you have a clear claim or argument. And then deploy the best tactics of persuasion. Remember the three rhetorical appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos. What has already been said in the issue? What still needs to be addressed? What evidence do you need? Who are you trying to convince? How are you going to persuade them? Imagine your editorial being printed in the local newspaper or the university’s student newspaper. You might even take a look at the editorials in recent weeks for ideas. The best editorials have a clear perspective and exigence, make a specific claim, deftly blend fact and opinion, use evidence and support, and are well-organized and well-reasoned. Be careful of relying solely on personal opinion. Be careful of exaggeration and hyperbole. Finally, be careful of only appealing to pathos.

Guidelines and Due Dates

Format: 2-3 pages, typed, no title page, double-spaced, proper heading
Due: Tuesday, December 8, at the start of class

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