Essay #3: ISSUES AND ETHICS

Learn, compare, collect the facts! In your work and in your research there must always be passion. Ivan Petrovich Pavlov

INTRODUCTION
We find our identities shaped by ethical issues that interest us, particularly topics involving an ethical dimension, such as doctor-assisted suicide, stem cell research, capital punishment, war profiteering, and torture.

Furthermore, we take stances on these topics and develop a line of reasoning to support these stances. An argumentative/persuasive essay is an ideal means of presenting such a stance and our line of reasoning behind it.

The next writing projects ask us to consider issues involving ethics: (1) appropriate rules for human behavior, (2) values such as right and wrong, good and bad, desirable and undesirable, and (3) obligations and duties concerning a variety of topics.

An issue is a question, problem, debate, or controversy. These issues can become research questions. (You will want to end your research paper’s introduction with such a question.) Often we can word the issue with the word “should.” For example,

1. Should the mentally ill charged with murder be executed?
2. Should Texas vote to legalize doctor-assisted suicide?
3. Should the United States destroy poppy crop in Afghanistan?

Not all issues or research questions have to begin with should:

1. Are electronic voting machines a threat to democracy?
2. Has the “Common Core” initiative been a success or a failure?

After we examine the different sides of the issue, we take a stance (or position) and word that stance as an argumentative thesis or claim. We support that thesis with our line of reasoning (reasons as well as concessions and refutations) backed up with credible, documented evidence often presented in the form of direct quotes, paraphrases, summaries, and facts and statistics.

This essay requires establishing your appeals to logos (logic), pathos (non-logical appeals to emotion), and ethos (ethics, author’s credible and authoritative persona).

ESSAY PROMPT
In a 1200-word, double-spaced argumentative/persuasive essay, select and narrow your topic, formulate an issue (research question), and take a stance (claim) on this debatable topic involving an ethical dimension. Devise an argumentative structure; incorporate at least five credible, documented sources using Modern Language Association (MLA) citation format. Your research should be documented material in the form of (1) facts and statistics, (2) direct quotes, (3) paraphrases, and (4) summaries. Use both argumentative and persuasive strategies. Establish appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos. Include a MLA work cited page. You will need to refer to chapters 6, 9 and 10 in your textbook.
PURPOSE
At times your purpose is only to convince: to take a position and present a case for that position using a carefully planned argumentative structure. Other times your purposes are to are both to convince and persuade an audience by using persuasive devices.

AUDIENCE
Make an audience analysis before writing the essay. Your audience is our class and the larger LSC student body. You might consider your audience in thirds: (1) Some members of this audience will already believe your assertion. (2) Other audience members might fall into the category of the unsure. (3) A third category of your audience is your opposition.

TONE
Your tone for this kind of essay is one of concern and involvement, even passion for a strongly held cause. Tone is a part of the persona/voice you must adopt to convey your argument. You must come across as someone who is believable, someone who cares about the topic, and someone who is a voice of authority because you know the topic. A strong tone can also be persuasive strategy.

STRATEGIES
To accomplish your purposes, you will need to use argumentative strategies that include (1) reasons, (2) concessions, and (3) refutations.

Further strategies include (1) background/history, (2) common ground, (3) definition, (4) cause and effect relationships.

In addition to argumentative strategies, this essay also requires persuasive strategies. First, keep in mind that a strong argument can be persuasive. However, appeals to pathos, that non-logical pull at the heart/emotion, are also persuasive. These appeals include persuasive diction: connotation, imagery, emotional language, figurative language (such as metaphor, simile, etc.), and allusions.

THESIS
Your thesis or claim is your argumentative stance: the side of the debatable issue you take. Your thesis might include a claim or combination of claims:

1. Position Essay (claim of value): The death penalty is immoral.
2. Problem-Solution Essay (claim of policy/action): The death penalty should be abolished because it is not an effective deterrent to criminals.

Your argumentative thesis might be a combination of claims linked with “because”:

1. Capital punishment is effective because it deters crime and is fair under certain circumstances.
2. Because the death penalty does not deter murder, it is racist, and it is expensive, it must be abolished.

Your thesis can be your argument in a “nutshell” and provide the basic argumentative blueprint for structuring your essay.