Sample Assignment Sheet for Evaluating Controversies Unit: Option 1

The Rhetorical Context

You write a newspaper column for your town titled “The Critic’s Eye,” in which you take up controversial events or issues, examine popular sources about the events and then make an argument in which you answer ONE of three questions:

- What caused this event? (For example, the Parkland School Shooting)
- What really happened? (For example, the Trayvon Martin killing)
- What is currently happening? (For example, Flint Water crisis)

Your readers depend on your “critic’s eye” to give a thoughtful argument about the topic you choose. They come from varied backgrounds and tend to have very different (and strong) opinions, so you want to be as persuasive as possible in your writing.

The Process

For this assignment, you will choose a topic from the list below and decide on the question you’ll answer in your paper.

My topic: ______________________________________________

My question: ____________________________________________

You’ll research your topic using popular sources: newspaper, blogs, magazines, podcasts, etc. You’ll evaluate your sources using the CRAP criteria: currency, reliability, authority, point of view/purpose. (No worries - we’ll develop strategies for that evaluation) and you’ll construct an argument using those sources. Your ability to evaluate the sources will help you write a persuasive argument. You’ll develop a draft, engage in peer review, and meet one-on-one with your instructor in order to revise effectively.

The Topics
California wildfires of 2017
The Halloween Candy Scare of 1970
Middlebury College protest against Charles Murray
Vaping Health Crisis 2019
The death of Sandra Bland
The detention of children at the Migrant Detention Center in Clinton, Texas
Facebook and free speech policies
Virginia Tech Shootings
Columbine
The murder of Matthew Shepard
Kent State
The murder of Trayvon Martin
Unite the Right Rally (Charlottesville)
Ruby Ridge
Waco Siege
Pulse Nightclub shootings
Parkland shootings
Sandy Hook shootings
Dakota Access Pipeline Protests
Ferguson Unrest
Hurricane Katrina deaths
Jonestown Mass Murder/Suicide
Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill
Exxon Valdez Reef Collision and Oil Spill
Flint Water Crisis
Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster
Bhopal Disaster
Charleston Church Massacre
Central Park Jogger case

The Deets

Length: 1000 to 1250 words PLUS Works Cited page.
Format: Double-spaced, MLA format
Minimum number of sources: 3
Due Date for draft: ________
Due Date for final paper: ________

The Assessment
In order to receive a “B” on this assignment, students should

• Engage with the process described above in order to research and write their persuasive arguments as demonstrated by reflective writing throughout the unit
• Meet the minimum requirements as described above as demonstrated in the final paper
• Demonstrate thoughtful analysis and evaluation of sources as demonstrated in classroom written activities and in the final paper
• Synthesize sources with attention to rhetorical context as demonstrated in the final paper
• Develop a nuanced argument and conclusion as demonstrated in the final paper
• Engage in deep revision as demonstrated in changes from the first draft to the final paper

In order to receive an “A” on this assignment, students should meet the criteria described for the “B” and go above and beyond through

• Synthesis of four or more sources
• Adept and quality revision from first to last drafts

Students and instructor will together develop a weighted rubric after completion of the first draft.

The Outcomes
These represent what we expect students will be able to do by the end of the unit.
• Students will be able to analyze a range of sources and evaluate for currency, relevance, authoritativeness, and point of view/purpose

• Students will be able to explain a range of research approaches and to assess according to rhetorical contexts

• Students will be able to construct an argument with thorough and nuanced support that acknowledges the concerns of audience and synthesizes sources appropriately

• Students will be able to develop a nuanced and thoughtful conclusion based on their evaluation of relevant sources

• Students will be able to support their conclusion with ample and appropriate evidence