

Comparing Evil: Qualifying Crimes Against Humanity

Overview

Description

This assignment assesses students' ability to listen to, analyze, and evaluate presentations, including the evidence required to adequately support educated opinions. Students will participate in three stages of an active discussion—evidence collection, the group discussion itself, and a written results analysis—where they will learn to support claims, develop appropriate reasoning, practice persuasive argumentation, and reflect on the outcomes as they consider the “worst” crimes against humanity. This assignment also incorporates an online component and considers the impact of format on communication.

Final Product: Students will produce a 2-page written response that nominates and evaluates the research they will use in the discussion, participate in a graded online discussion, and respond with a 3-4 page position paper on the issue and the discussion process. They will arrive at these conclusions based on collaborative and individual activities.

Subject

Social Studies

Task Level

Grade 9-12

Objectives

Students will:

- Conduct independent research to locate a suitable article on a given topic.
- Evaluate a source for credibility, validity, and potential bias. Determine its potential contribution to an argument.
- Read, annotate, and analyze a text.
- Use appropriate textual evidence and valid illustrations to support their positions and to refute or support the positions of others.
- Participate and listen actively and effectively in a group online discussion.
- Engage in a scholarly critical analysis and dialogue about serious global issues and an individual's responsibility in a crisis.

- Explore the role of evidence in an opinionated argument, including when it is critical, and the consequences of proper usage.
- Draw and support complex inferences and analyze and evaluate the author's position as well as classmates' positions during the discussion.
- Recognize the effects of an online discussion, rather than a face-to-face interaction, and acknowledge individual preferences.
- Willingly question personal and societal perspectives to reach a new understanding of one's beliefs, their sources, and influences.
- Generate effective, well-written position papers capturing personal views on the issue and answering challenging, thought-provoking questions.

Preparation

- Read the Instructor Task Information and the Student Notes.
- Prepare student copies of the Student Notes pages.
- Review helpful information on position papers (<http://virginialynne.hubpages.com/hub/How-to-Write-a-Position-Paper-which-argues-a-claim>, <http://www.sfu.ca/cmns/130d1/WritingaPositionPaper.htm>, or http://www.apsu.edu/sites/apsu.edu/files/academic-support-center/Position_Paper.pdf) or general argumentation (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/724/1/>). Prepare to instruct students on the topic and/or model a sample creation as a class. Refer to the general format for a position paper and sample position paper in the Student Handouts for models.
- Review the material provided within the handouts and develop any additional discussion questions, as needed.
- Review online etiquette do's and don'ts and prepare to lead students through a discussion of this topic.
- Prepare to model basic online research strategies, source evaluation, and position response essay construction as needed.
- If your class enjoys visuals, find some videos on crimes of humanities and the Holocaust to use as examples during the topic introduction.

Prior Knowledge

- Students should have effective note-taking strategies in place to organize different readings.
- Students should have some knowledge of what serves as evidence in an active discussion.
- Students must know that in a debatable issue, an argument is the position taken on an issue or the point of view that will be defended with good reasoning.

- Students should also know good argument practices dictate equal exploration of all sides of an issue to strengthen the original position and create evidential depth. It is important that students understand the basics of research and online navigation, including the language of online discussions, to get the most from this experience.

Key Concepts and Terms

- Amnesty
- Argument
- Bias
- Claim, evidence, and reasons
- Counterclaim
- Credibility
- Defining a problem
- Discrimination and persecution
- Evaluation
- Governmental regulation
- Hate crimes
- Individual responsibility
- Justice
- Online communication
- Political boundaries
- Position response
- Resource
- Validity and reliability

Time Frame

This assignment will take five to seven 50-minute class periods to complete. This assignment can be modified to meet the needs of different classroom schedules and student ability levels. On day one, the instructor will introduce the topic—What is the worst crime against humanity?—and discuss any necessary background information, such as basic online research, source selection and evaluation strategies, and online communication etiquette. If examining one event for the whole class to discuss, you will need an additional day for discussion. For day two (or three), the class should meet in a computer or research lab where the students can preview the *Original Stance Activity* handout and begin selecting their article with guidance. Devote the following day to the completion of the *Original Stance Activity* handout. The class will meet in a computer lab the next day to conduct the online discussion component on this topic. The remaining one to two days should be spent on the discussion wrap-up, any residual topic discussion, modeling writing a position paper, reviewing the sample, and the initial completion of the *Position Paper Prompt* handout. Students will convert this prompt into a final position paper outside of class.

Instructional Plan

Getting Started

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Conduct independent research to locate a suitable article on a given topic.
- Evaluate a source for credibility, validity, and potential bias. Determine its potential contribution to an argument.
- Read, annotate, and analyze a text.
- Use appropriate textual evidence and valid illustrations to support their positions and to refute or support the positions of others.

Procedure

1. Ask students to read through the Student Notes.
2. Introduce the topic—What is the worst crime against humanity?—and begin discussing the issue. Define the key concepts and terms and provide an example (the Holocaust). What are the students' initial reactions?
3. Discuss the necessary background information for basic online research and source selection/evaluation strategies.
4. Describe the online discussion process that students will encounter. Ask their impressions of online communication etiquette. What might be some do's and don'ts? Fill in any gaps in their understanding.
5. Meet in the computer lab or library and help students through the selection process of choosing an article to support their position.
6. Have students complete the *Original Stance Activity* handout. This should produce a 2-page response, so push the students to think deeply and creatively about this position response. Also, push them to think outside the box in terms of how they define "crime against humanity." Encourage them to avoid the obvious and really consider the term.

Investigating

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Engage in a scholarly critical analysis and dialogue about serious global issues and an individual's responsibility in a crisis.
- Explore the role of evidence in an opinionated argument, including when it is critical and the consequences of proper usage.

- Draw and support complex inferences and analyze and evaluate the author's position as well as classmates' positions during the discussion.
- Recognize the effects of an online discussion rather than a face-to-face interaction and acknowledge individual preferences.

Procedure

1. Meet in a computer lab, or have students login to a group discussion site from their personal computers. Possible sites to use are: Blackboard discussion forums, Chatzy, Facebook chat, Skype, Windows Live, and eNotes. If this source isn't available, consider using a Harkness Table discussion (see <https://www.tip.duke.edu/node/576> or <http://www.nais.org/Magazines-Newsletters/ITMagazine/Pages/Introducing-and-Using-the-Discussion-%28AKA-Harkness%29-Table.aspx>).
2. Facilitate the discussion. The instructor can go online and install several conversations threads to get students talking, or wait and send periodic questions throughout the session. Eventually, the discussion will take on its own life, but good prompting questions are: What do you think are the main points to consider for this issue? What is your opinion on the issue? What does your author have to say about the issue? Are there any questions you want your classmates to consider? What is it like to be "talking" online? Make sure you discuss a cause-effect analysis to keep the discussion from degenerating into a comparison of "who suffered the most".
3. Remind students that they will receive a grade based on their participation in this discussion (see *Sample Participation Assessment* handout for a guide on how to grade participation). They should contribute often and thoughtfully.

Drawing Conclusions

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Willingly question personal and societal perspectives to reach a new understanding of their beliefs, the source of their beliefs, and what influences their beliefs.
- Generate effective, well-written position papers capturing personal views on the issue and answering challenging, thought-provoking questions.

Procedure

1. Meet in class and wrap up any remaining discussion. Discuss online vs. face-to-face discussion. Consider how the format affects what people say and how they say it. Consider how presenting and preserving the self vs. public "face" relates to the topic as a potential cause and/or consequence.
2. Discuss writing a position paper. You may use the *General Format for a Position Paper* handout or additional resources that you may find more

suitable. You can also discuss the *Sample Position Paper* handout and let the students “grade” this response. Is it good? Why or why not? Explain that the sample is on a different topic, but it includes teacher comments, which can be helpful when students begin to write their own papers.

3. Direct students to begin responding to the *Position Paper Prompt* handout. Provide guidance as they work through the activity.
4. Instruct students to convert their answers into a 3-4 page position paper based on this prompt. Encourage them to record the insights they gained from the novelty of the online experience.

Scaffolding/Instructional Support

- The goal of scaffolding is to provide support to encourage student success, independence, and self-management. Instructors can use these suggestions, in part or all together, to meet diverse student needs. The more skilled the student, however, the less scaffolding that he or she will need. Some examples of scaffolding that could apply to this assignment include:
- Show clips from films that attempt to depict such crimes to facilitate the initial discussion (*Judgment at Nuremberg*, *Schindler's List*, *Hotel Rwanda*, etc.).
- Consider exploring one particular event through video or an article to serve as unified starting point for the class. This will affect their initial impressions on the topic, but it also provides foundation if students have little prior knowledge of the topic, so decide which beginning is most productive for your class.
- Provide a list of possible “crimes” and related resources that students may choose from to minimize the research component and/or the scope of the project.
- Incorporate a discussion of note taking, such as the Cornell method or annotation. Provide in-class practice before students begin their individual work.
 - Allow students extra time to research and select their supporting source.
 - Provide students with assistance in the development of their personal stances.
 - Conduct the main discussion in a traditional rather than online format.
 - Assign struggling learners to work with stronger ones, monitoring to ensure that all members of the group participate.
 - Allow written notes or note cards for the online discussion.
 - Provide exemplar papers or discussion responses to students needing extra support. These students should be allowed to use the exemplar essays more heavily than other students in guiding their own writing.
 - Ask to see drafts of the responses and/or the essay prior to the final draft due date.

Solutions

The information below is intended to help you assess students' final work products. It may not represent all possible strategies and ideas. The accompanying scoring guide provides specific examples of ways a student might demonstrate content understanding and mastery of cross-disciplinary skills.

Necessary Elements

- Clear and detailed arguments and text support throughout the assignment.
- Sufficient information gathering.
- Conclusions based on evidence.
- Clearly written and error-free position paper.
- Organized, thoughtful, and stimulating online discussion.
- Appropriate consideration of online etiquette.
- A thorough understanding and resulting portrayal of a convincing, persuasive statement of the student's position on the issue, complete with supporting details and successful incorporation of evidence and reasons.

Key Connections

- Clear comprehension of the content area.
- Clear understanding of evidence and standards of effective usage.
- Applied understanding of strategic reading, as it is needed to generate support for a controversial argument.
- The ability to question textual content and explore the importance of each included element.
- Well-developed higher-level thinking that results in interesting discussion and stance essays.

Common Misconceptions

- Students may be tempted to choose the most publicized and readily available crimes against humanity, but encourage them to slow down and really think about the term's definition. Is it possible that there are heinous crimes being committed right now that receive little or no attention? Wouldn't that contribute to the injustice of the act? Push them to explore beyond the first five Google results and choose a subject that speaks to them personally.
- Even though students are familiar with online communication in the form of blogging, texting, emailing, facebooking, etc., participating in an online discussion can be a bit frustrating. It is often not as linear as in-person discussions, so students need to be prepared for the unfamiliar experience and should be encouraged to just embrace the process with a mind to evaluate it later.

- Students may think this assignment is a debate and that they should have a clear stance on one side of the issue. However, this issue is more complex in that what may be right for one context may not be appropriate for another. Encourage them to think about all the angles that might be involved in this issue rather than trying to argue a definitive resolution. Depth, clarity, and insightful responses are the goals here. As always, the evidence they use to support their position is key to their “success.”
- Due to the openly explorative nature of this discussion, students should focus on adding onto to each other’s ideas rather than devaluing each other’s opinions. Constructive criticism is certainly encouraged, but its goal should be getting closer to a “truth” rather than being right about a particular point, as one might be in a standard debate.

TCCRS Cross-Disciplinary Standards Addressed

Performance Expectation	Getting Started	Investigating	Drawing Conclusions
<i>I. Key Cognitive Skills</i>			
A.1. Engage in scholarly inquiry and dialogue.	✓	✓	
A.2. Accept constructive criticism and revise personal views when valid evidence warrants.		✓	✓
B.1. Consider arguments and conclusions of self and others.		✓	✓
B.2. Construct well-reasoned arguments to explain phenomena, validate conjectures, or support positions.		✓	✓
D.1. Self-monitor learning needs and seek assistance when needed.	✓	✓	✓
D.2. Use study habits necessary to manage academic pursuits and requirements.	✓	✓	✓
D.3. Strive for accuracy and precision.	✓	✓	✓
D.4. Persevere to complete and master tasks.	✓	✓	✓
E.1. Work independently.	✓	✓	✓
E.2. Work collaboratively.	✓	✓	✓
F.1. Attribute ideas to source materials and people.	✓	✓	✓
F.2. Evaluate sources for quality of content, validity, credibility, and relevance.	✓	✓	✓
F.3. Include the ideas of others and the complexities of the debate, issue, or problem.		✓	✓
F.4. Understand and adhere to ethical codes of conduct.		✓	✓
<i>II. Foundational Skills</i>			
A.3. Identify the intended purpose and audience of the text.	✓	✓	✓
A.4. Identify the key information and supporting details.	✓	✓	
A.5. Analyze textual information critically.	✓	✓	
A.6. Annotate, summarize, paraphrase, and outline texts when appropriate.	✓	✓	✓

A.8. Connect reading to historical and current events and personal interest.	✓	✓	✓
B.1. Write clearly and coherently using standard writing conventions.		✓	✓
C.5. Synthesize and organize information effectively.		✓	✓
C.6. Design and present an effective product.			✓
C.7. Integrate source material.	✓	✓	✓
E.1. Use technology to gather information.	✓		
E.3. Use technology to communicate and display findings in a clear and coherent manner.		✓	
E.4. Use technology appropriately.		✓	✓

TCCRS Social Studies Standards Addressed

Performance Expectation	Getting Started	Investigating	Drawing Conclusions
<i>I. Interrelated Disciplines and Skills</i>			
A.3. Analyze how physical and cultural processes have shaped human communities over time.	✓	✓	✓
B.3. Analyze causes and effects of major political, economic and social changes in U.S. and world history.	✓	✓	✓
C.2. Evaluate changes in the functions and structures of government across time.	✓	✓	✓
C.3. Explain and analyze the importance of civic engagement.	✓	✓	✓
E.4. Identify and evaluate the sources and consequences of social conflict.	✓	✓	✓
F.2. Analyze ethical issues in historical, cultural, and social contexts.	✓	✓	✓
<i>II. Diverse Human Perspectives and Experiences</i>			
A.2. Evaluate the experiences and contributions of diverse groups to multicultural societies.	✓	✓	✓
B.1. Explain and evaluate the concepts of race, ethnicity, and nationalism.	✓	✓	✓

B.3. Analyze diverse religious concepts, structures, and institutions around the world.	✓	✓	✓
B.4. Evaluate how major philosophical and intellectual concepts influence human behavior or identity.	✓	✓	✓
B.6. Analyze how individual and group identities are established and change over time.	✓	✓	✓
<i>III. Interdependence of Global Communities</i>			
A.1. Distinguish spatial patterns of human communities that exist between or within contemporary political boundaries.	✓	✓	✓
B.1. Apply social studies methodologies to compare societies and cultures.	✓	✓	✓
<i>IV. Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation of Information</i>			
A.1. Identify and analyze the main idea(s) and point(s)-of-view in sources.	✓	✓	✓
A.2. Situate an informational source in its appropriate contexts.	✓	✓	✓
A.3. Evaluate sources from multiple perspectives.	✓	✓	✓
A.4. Understand the differences between a primary and secondary source and use each appropriately to conduct research and construct arguments.	✓	✓	✓
B.4. Identify and collect sources.	✓	✓	
D.1. Construct a thesis that is supported by evidence.			✓
D.2. Recognize and evaluate counter-arguments.		✓	✓
<i>V. Effective Communication</i>			
A.1. Use appropriate oral communication techniques depending on the context or nature of the interaction.	✓	✓	
A.2. Use conventions of standard written English.	✓	✓	✓
B.1. Attribute ideas and information to source materials and authors.	✓	✓	✓

TEKS Standards Addressed

NOTE: The application of some of the TEKS listed below depends on the particular Crime Against Humanity the student chooses. For example, issues like history, citizenship, geography, or economics may apply to some situations but not others.

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113.43.c.1. History. The student understands how geography and processes of spatial exchange (diffusion) influenced events in the past and helped to shape the present. The student is expected to:
113.43.c.1.A. analyze the effects of physical and human geographic patterns and processes on the past and describe their impact on the present, including significant physical features and environmental conditions that influenced migration patterns and shaped the distribution of culture groups today.

113.43.c.2. History. The student understands how people, places, and environments have changed over time and the effects of these changes. The student is expected to:
113.43.c.2.A. describe the human and physical characteristics of the same regions at different periods of time to evaluate relationships between past events and current conditions.

113.43.c.5. Geography. The student understands how political, economic, and social processes shape cultural patterns and characteristics in various places and regions. The student is expected to:
113.43.c.5.A. analyze how the character of a place is related to its political, economic, social, and cultural elements.

113.43.c.7. Geography. The student understands the growth, distribution, movement, and characteristics of world population. The student is expected to:
113.43.c.7.D. examine benefits and challenges of globalization, including connectivity, standard of living, pandemics, and loss of local culture.

113.43.c.8. Geography. The student understands how people, places, and environments are connected and interdependent. The student is expected to:
113.43.c.8.A. compare ways that humans depend on, adapt to, and modify the physical environment, including the influences of culture and technology;
113.43.c.8.B. interpret political, economic, social, and demographic indicators (gross domestic product per capita, life expectancy, literacy, and infant mortality) to determine the level of development and standard of living in nations using the terms Human Development Index, less developed, newly industrialized, and more developed; and
113.43.c.8.C. evaluate the economic and political relationships between settlements and the environment, including sustainable development and renewable/non-renewable resources.

113.43.c.9. Geography. The student understands the concept of region as an area of Earth's surface with related geographic characteristics. The student is expected to:
113.43.c.9.A. identify physical and/or human factors such as climate, vegetation, language, trade networks, political units, river systems, and religion that constitute a region; and
113.43.c.9.B. describe different types of regions, including formal, functional, and perceptual regions.

113.43.c.10. Economics. The student understands the distribution, characteristics, and interactions of the economic systems in the world. The student is expected to:
113.43.c.10.A. describe the forces that determine the distribution of goods and services in free enterprise, socialist, and communist economic systems;
113.43.c.10.B. classify where specific countries fall along the economic spectrum between free enterprise and communism;

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113.43.c.10.C. compare the ways people satisfy their basic needs through the production of goods and services such as subsistence agriculture versus commercial agriculture or cottage industries versus commercial industries; and

113.43.c.10.D. compare global trade patterns over time and examine the implications of globalization, including outsourcing and free trade zones.

113.43.c.11. Economics. The student understands how geography influences economic activities. The student is expected to:

113.43.c.11.A. understand the connections between levels of development and economic activities (primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary);

113.43.c.11.B. identify the factors affecting the location of different types of economic activities, including subsistence and commercial agriculture, manufacturing, and service industries; and

113.43.c.11.C. assess how changes in climate, resources, and infrastructure (technology, transportation, and communication) affect the location and patterns of economic activities.

113.43.c.12. Economics. The student understands the economic importance of, and issues related to, the location and management of resources. The student is expected to:

113.43.c.12.A. analyze how the creation, distribution, and management of key natural resources affects the location and patterns of movement of products, money, and people; and

113.43.c.12.B. evaluate the geographic and economic impact of policies related to the development, use, and scarcity of natural resources such as regulations of water.

113.43.c.14. Government. The student understands the processes that influence political divisions, relationships, and policies. The student is expected to:

113.43.c.14.A. analyze current events to infer the physical and human processes that lead to the formation of boundaries and other political divisions;

113.43.c.14.B. compare how democracy, dictatorship, monarchy, republic, theocracy, and totalitarian systems operate in specific countries; and

113.43.c.14.C. analyze the human and physical factors that influence the power to control territory and resources, create conflict/war, and impact international political relations of sovereign nations such as China, the United States, Japan, and Russia and organized nation groups such as the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU).

113.43.c.15. Citizenship. The student understands how different points of view influence the development of public policies and decision-making processes on local, state, national, and international levels. The student is expected to:

113.43.c.15.A. identify and give examples of different points of view that influence the development of public policies and decision-making processes on local, state, national, and international levels; and

113.43.c.15.B. explain how citizenship practices, public policies, and decision making may be influenced by cultural beliefs, including nationalism and patriotism.

113.43.c.16. Culture. The student understands how the components of culture affect the way people live and shape the characteristics of regions. The student is expected to:

113.43.c.16. B. describe elements of culture, including language, religion, beliefs and customs, institutions, and technologies;

113.43.c.16.C. explain ways various groups of people perceive the characteristics of their own and other cultures, places, and regions differently; and

113.43.c.16.D. compare life in a variety of urban and rural areas in the world to evaluate political, economic, social, and environmental changes.

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113.43.c.17. Culture. The student understands the distribution, patterns, and characteristics of different cultures. The student is expected to:

- 113.43.c.17.A. describe and compare patterns of culture such as language, religion, land use, education, and customs that make specific regions of the world distinctive;
- 113.43.c.17.B. describe major world religions, including animism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism, and their spatial distribution;
- 113.43.c.17.C. compare economic, political, or social opportunities in different cultures for women, ethnic and religious minorities, and other underrepresented populations; and
- 113.43.c.17 .D. evaluate the experiences and contributions of diverse groups to multicultural societies.

113.43.c.18. Culture. The student understands the ways in which cultures change and maintain continuity. The student is expected to:

- 113.43.c.18.A. analyze cultural changes in specific regions caused by migration, war, trade, innovations, and diffusion;
- 113.43.c.18.B. assess causes, effects, and perceptions of conflicts between groups of people, including modern genocides and terrorism;
- 113.43.c.18.C. identify examples of cultures that maintain traditional ways, including traditional economies

113.43.c.20. Science, technology, and society. The student understands how current technology affects human interaction. The student is expected to:

- 113.43.c.20.B. examine the economic, environmental, and social effects of technology such as medical advancements or changing trade patterns on societies at different levels of development.

113.43.c.22. Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to:

- 113.43.c.22.B. generate summaries, generalizations, and thesis statements supported by evidence;
- 113.43.c.22.C. use geographic terminology correctly;
- 113.43.c.22.D. use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation; and
- 113.43.c.22.E. create original work using proper citations and understanding and avoiding plagiarism.

113.43.c.23. Social studies skills. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to:

- 113.43.c.23.A. plan, organize, and complete a research project that involves asking geographic questions; acquiring, organizing, and analyzing information; answering questions; and communicating results; and
- 113.43.c.23.C. use problem-solving and decision-making processes to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

Comparing Evil: Qualifying Crimes Against Humanity

Introduction

Slavery. The Holocaust. Darfur. Genocide. Apartheid. Just speaking these words or specific events emanates unmentionable violence, tragedy, and devastation. It is easy to look back at these acts with disdain and a feeling of had / been there, the outcome might have been different. But would it? What is an individual's responsibility or even option against such crimes against humanity? Part of their guilt-producing impact is the unfathomable scope of often unnoticed persecution, which raises several questions: How many atrocities are occurring today without public awareness? What exactly about the act or event makes it particularly monstrous? Is one evil worse than another? Now you have the chance to explore these and other relevant issues through online and oral discussions. You will then write your own take on; What is the worst crime against humanity?

Directions

Getting Started

1. Listen as your instructor introduces the topic and participate in a discussion about your initial reactions to the "crimes against humanity" topic.
2. Take notes on any necessary background information, such as basic online research and source selection/evaluation strategies.
3. Anticipate what the online discussion process might be like. What are some possible do's and don'ts of online communication etiquette?
4. Meet in the computer lab or library and begin the process of choosing an article to support your position.
5. Complete the *Original Stance Activity* handout. This should produce a 2-page response, so make sure you think deeply and creatively about this position response.

Investigating

1. Meet in the location designated for you by your teacher.
2. Actively participate in the online discussion. Respond to any instructor prompts, "talk" with your peers, and ask questions of your own. Get involved,

and try to keep the conversation going. You will receive a grade based on your participation, so contribute often and thoughtfully.

Drawing Conclusions

1. Meet in class and wrap up any remaining discussion.
2. Discuss writing a position paper with your class.
3. Begin responding to the *Position Paper Prompt* handout.
4. Convert your answers into a 3-4 page essay based on this prompt. Include any insights you gained from the novelty of the online experience.
5. Turn in your essay.

Original Stance Activity

To Begin:

Decide which event you feel constitutes the worst crime against humanity. Then find an article that helps support or is related in some way to your opinion.

On a separate piece of paper, state the following:

1. Your stance on the issue (what is the worst crime and why do you feel it is the worst?)
2. The name of the article you have chosen and why you selected it.
3. Your author's main argument.
4. Your author's main points, including your view of his/her most persuasive points.
5. An explanation of how your chosen article supports your viewpoint.

Sample Participation Assessment

The Online Discussion (? points):

Quantity of responses	Excellent__:_:_:_:_:___Poor
Insight into and analysis of the issue	Excellent__:_:_:_:_:___Poor
Ability to analyze discussion and respond with purpose	Excellent__:_:_:_:_:___Poor
Ability to support statements with reasons and evidence	Excellent__:_:_:_:_:___Poor
Ability to respond respectfully and thoughtfully to specific points	Excellent__:_:_:_:_:___Poor

Overall Assessment _____(total: ? points)

General Format for a Position Paper

From: http://www.montana.edu/craigs/HDCF_371_POSITION_PAPER_FORMAT.html

A position paper **presents an arguable opinion about an issue**. The goal of a position paper is to convince the audience that your opinion is valid and worth listening to. Ideas that you are considering need to be carefully examined in choosing a topic, developing your argument, and organizing your paper. It is very important to ensure that you are addressing all sides of the issue and presenting it in a manner that is easy for your audience to understand.

- **Your job is to take one side of the argument and persuade your audience that you have well-founded knowledge of the topic being presented.**
- It is important to support your argument with evidence to ensure the validity of your claims, as well as
- to address the counterclaims **to show that you are well informed about both sides.**

Issue Criteria: To take a side on a subject, you should first establish the arguability of a topic that interests you. Ask yourself the following questions to ensure that you will be able to present a strong argument:

- Is it a real issue, with genuine controversy and uncertainty?
- Can you distinctly identify two positions?
- Are you personally interested in advocating one of these positions?
- Is the issue narrow enough to be manageable?

Analyzing an Issue and Developing an Argument

Once your topic is selected, you should do some research on the subject matter. While you may already have an opinion on your topic and an idea about which side of the argument you want to take, you need to ensure that your position is well supported. Listing out the pro and con sides of the topic will help you examine your ability to support your counterclaims, along with a list of supporting evidence for both sides. Supporting evidence includes the following:

- **Factual Knowledge** - Information that is verifiable and agreed upon by almost everyone.
- **Statistical Inferences** - Interpretation and examples of an accumulation of facts.
- **Informed Opinion** - Opinion developed through research and/or expertise of the claim.
- **Personal Testimony** - Personal experience related by a knowledgeable party.

Once you have made your pro and con lists, compare the information side by side.

Considering your audience, as well as your own viewpoint, choose the position you will take. In considering the audience, ask yourself the following questions:

Who is your audience?

- What do they believe?
- Where do they stand on the issue?
- How are their interests involved?
- What evidence is likely to be effective with them?
- **In determining your viewpoint, ask yourself the following:**
 - Is your topic interesting?
 - Can you manage the material within the specifications set by the instructor?
 - Does your topic assert something specific and propose a plan of action?
 - Do you have enough material to support your opinion?
- **Organization** Your introduction should lead up to a thesis that organizes the rest of your paper. There are three advantages to leading with the thesis:
 - 1. The audience knows where you stand.
 - 2. The thesis is located in the two strongest places, first and last.
 - 3. It is the most common form of academic argument used.

Below is a generic sample outline for a position paper:

I. Introduction

- ___ A. Introduce the topic
- ___ B. Provide background on the topic
- ___ C. Assert the thesis (your view of the issue)

II. Counter Argument

- ___ A. Summarize the counterclaims
- ___ B. Provide supporting information for counterclaims
- ___ C. Refute the counterclaims
- ___ D. Give evidence for argument

III. Your Argument

___ A. Assert point #1 of your claims

- ___ 1. Give your opinion
- ___ 2. Provide support

___ B. Assert point #2 of your claims

- _____ 1. Give your opinion
- _____ 2. Provide support

___ C. Assert point #3 of your claims

- _____ 1. Give your opinion
- _____ 2. Provide support

IV. Conclusion

- ___ A. Restate your argument
- ___ B. Provide a plan of action

Position Paper Prompt

After completing the discussion, respond to the following questions:

1. What are your views on this issue after today's discussion? How would you now define the worst crime against humanity?
2. Did your opinion change? Why or why not?
3. Why did you pick this event(s) as the worst? What are the main components that made it particularly atrocious?

Process Discussion:

4. How did your chosen article contribute to the discussion? In retrospect, was it helpful or not?
5. What do you think were the most convincing arguments from the day's discussion? Why did you choose these points?
6. How did your participation change as a result of the discussion being in person rather than written?
7. How do you think the verbal format affected the day's discussion? Compare the results to a written essay. What was the same? What was different?
8. Do you think everyone felt this way? What kind of learner might prefer a written essay? What kind of learner might prefer a face-to-face discussion? What makes the difference?
9. How is a written essay similar to texting, tweeting, emailing, blogging, and posting on social networks? How is it different?

Back to the Topic:

10. As to our topic, what are the key components an event must have to qualify as a crime against humanity? Consider scope, seen or unseen, victims, persecutors, etc.
11. What do you think are the main reasons crimes against humanity occur?
12. Are these concepts new or have they been going on for generations? In other words, are crimes against humanity an inevitable part of human nature?
13. Who or what has the responsibility of stopping these crimes?
14. What can be done to prevent future crimes?
15. What do you see as the greatest consequence of these crimes?
16. Is one evil worse than another? Explain your answer.

Sample Position Paper

From: <http://web.cerritos.edu/jswanson/SitePages/E100/SamplePosition1.htm>

NOTE: This paper is NOT about a crime against humanity, but it does show helpful tips on how, generally, to write a position paper.

Teacher comments are in blue.

Punishing the Girls **Always give your work a title.**

Begin with the Definition of the Problem. Notice how the beginning of this work looks very much like the beginning of the Prospectus.

A few years ago, I watched a terrifying story on ABC's 20/20. It was a story about a teenage girl who had gotten pregnant. She successfully managed to keep her pregnancy from everyone, even her immediate family. She secretly gave birth to a baby girl--by herself-- at the basement of her house. Out of fear, she covered the baby with a blanket and the baby died. There was an investigation and trial on the teenage girl, whether she should be convicted of murder or not.

Every year, more than one million teenagers become pregnant. 84% of them are unintended pregnancies. About half of those seek abortion. Many teenagers who seek abortion come from dysfunctional, abusive, or single parent family. In 38 states of America, a minor must have a parental consent or judicial bypass in order to go through abortion. This is a problem because the law pushes these young women to choose more dangerous options: running away, attempt to suicide, or unsafe abortion. In some cases, such as the case seen in 20/20, some teens even end up killing their newborn or "trashing" their babies in garbage cans. The law "only punishes those girls who come from dysfunctional families," whose parents are not so supportive.

Below the writer summarizes an article.

In a lengthy article of CQ Researcher, Clark points out some very crucial points and important facts as a person who opposes the law requiring parental consent. The vast majority of America is in "favor" of parental involvement in this matter. However, this idealistic idea is sometimes "impossible". The law, which forces a minor to tell her parents, induces violence. Parents almost always react violently and the young women have to pay an abusive consequence (Clark 443). **MLA format correctly used here: author and page number in parentheses.** This part of Clark's article can be useful towards defining the problem and figuring out the causes. I can also use this article to point out how girls get physically abused after telling their parents.

Below the writer offers an evaluation of the article.

Clark's article was very helpful. He gives national statistics and points out that every year, more than one million young women under the age of twenty, become pregnant. Eighty-four percent of these pregnancies are unwanted pregnancies, and about forty-two percent of them are

aborted (Clark 443). He also adds that many girls who choose abortion come from an abusive, dysfunctional, or single parent family. This part of the article will be used to show a specific percentage of girls that will not benefit from the law. [Here the writer indicates how the article will be used.](#)

The first thing to do is differentiate the idea of involving parents in minor abortion and the anti-abortion belief. In Clark's article, he points out "most of the lobbying for parental involvement laws is done by anti-abortion activists" (Clark 445). He also presents the common idea shared by American Psychological Association, American Civil Liberties Union's Reproductive Freedom Project, and Feminist Majority; "It's all a secondary strategy to banning abortion". This part of essay can be used to inform my readers that if a person is pro-life, then he/she will never approve of the minor abortion. Thus, this gave me a clear idea that I should focus on the pro-choice group.

Some advocates of parental involvement law say that such crisis "forces communication" and ultimately causes the family to come together (Clark 444). Although "two-thirds of the family has been found to be supportive," it is the initial reaction that induces violence. This opinion can be used for my counter argument: it is evident that even the supportive family will often react violently to a teenager's confession.

Summary

Sol Gordon's article from September/October issue of Humanist offered some very important facts. The majority of the teenagers who chooses abortion live with a single parent and "as many as 25% do not know who their father was" (Hager A-1). Many of the teenagers also come from dysfunctional families or abusive background. Teenagers who have a close relationship with their parents end up telling their parents. "This law does nothing for the functional families" he said. The law only "punishes the daughters of dysfunctional families" and leaves them to face the abusive and cruel parents and "further cruelty and abuse" (Hager A-1). This article will be used with Clark's article to emphasize the inadequate background of some pregnant teens.

This law pushes young women to the edge and forces them to seek for more dangerous options: running away, suicide attempt, and unsafe abortion (Gordon 41). Telling their parents that they are pregnant is admitting to their sexual behavior and sexual misconduct. Most teenagers are more afraid of their parents' initial reaction than their pregnancy itself. This brings tremendous fear and anxiety, and "telling the parents" becomes the last resort for them. These pregnant teens would rather run away--as many as 200,000 girls each year--than to having to face their parents (Gordon 41).

Evaluation

Gordon's article was helpful because it provided very useful statistics. I can use this article to support my argument that many girls end up in a dangerous situation.

Summary + Evaluation

In 1992, San Francisco Superior Court judge ruled that parental or judicial consent for an abortion was unconstitutional. This article from *Los Angeles Times* also strongly points out that such law "violates a minor's right to privacy under the California Constitution." The article also quotes Judge Maxine M. Cheseny saying that "the Great majority of minors possess the cognitive ability and maturity to make fully informed choices as to abortion" (Hager A-1). This article can be used as counter argument to those who think teenagers are too immature to decide for themselves.

I had a private interview with a close friend of mine who had an abortion when she was eighteen years old. She was able to get an abortion by herself because she had reached the legal age. I asked her, "What would you have done if you got pregnant at 17 and the law required you to have a parental consent before the procedure?" There was a long silence. I asked her if she would have told her parents and she replied with "Hell, no!" She thought I was "crazy" and later told me that she "would have done any thing but to tell [her] parents" (Kelly). This interview clearly shows that for whatever reason, fear or embarrassment, a teenage girl does not have many options. To many girls, telling their parents is, literally, the last thing they would do.

Clark also introduces a study done by John Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health in 1989. Black, teenage girls with similar socioeconomic background were monitored for two years after being tested for pregnancy. The girls who had abortion were less likely to become pregnant, less likely to have psychological problems, more likely to finish high school, and more likely to be economically stable (Clark 444). This study can be used to point out some of the benefits and possible out come of teenage abortion.

Notice this assignment includes a [Works Cited page](#). Be sure to check chapter 22, especially the [sample paper at the end](#) to see how to abide by the MLA format.

Works Cited

Kelly, XXXXX. Personal interview. May 10, 2001.

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