Research Essay of Persuasion: Class Notes

Setting Goals (224)
1. **Know the audience**: What is it that you know about those who will read your essay? Age group? Intelligence level? Understanding of topic? Open minded? Closed minded?
2. **Have a purpose**: Do you want your readers to accept your position? Alter their thinking? What do you want your readers to do with the information you provide or the opinion you express? Will you have a “call to action”?
3. **Understand the “rhetorical situation:”** What are the factors/situations that may affect you as the writer, your audience, the topic itself, your purpose individually within this piece—your individual stylistic choices that give your writing your individualistic voice.
4. **Select an appropriate medium and genre**: In attempting to convince your readers of your point of view, what other media, if any, besides the essay, will you use to help communicate your idea: photograph? chart? graph? Will your persuasive essay come in the form of a Letter to the Editor of a newspaper? an Editorial in a publication reaching a larger audience? a “position paper” given for a class or a business? an academic essay for a class?

Writing Processes (225)
1. **Invention**: What is it that you already know about the subject/topic/issue? How may you use brainstorming, clustering, and listing to help you research and review ideas?
2. **Organize ideas and details (248-249), and then begin writing (250-252)**: State your main point, your thesis, clearly at the beginning of your essay. All supporting details and evidence will follow that and continue throughout the essay. Major objections to your point of view need to also be recognized and considered while writing your argument.
3. **Revise, Edit, and Rewrite (255-258)**: Read what you have written aloud so that your ear can pick up places that sound incoherent, illogical, or wrongly constructed. Fix what you can.
4. **Peer Edit**: Allow someone who is qualified to read what you have written to offer advice or correction. This should be a fellow classmate, an instructor, or someone who will offer clear, unbiased advice of what you have written and how you have written it. Peer Editor does not necessarily need to agree with your point of view, but needs to be able to objectively consider HOW you have made your point. It is here where other dissenting objections can be made clear for the writer to consider in making his/her argument.
5. **Publish**: After drafting and revising, editing and peer editing, the writer needs to develop his/her final version of the essay.

Qualities of Effective Persuasive Writing (230-232)
1. **Presentation of the Issue**: Grab your reader’s attention with a startling fact, statistic, or personal anecdote. ONE rhetorical question may also as long as it is provocative, not simplistic.
2. **Clearly Stated and Arguable Claim—the thesis**: Writer needs to avoid the obvious and the simplistic. The assertion (thesis) needs to be one that could be debatable and provocative enough to be important to a wider audience.
3. **Awareness of the Audience**: Writer needs to be cognizant of the reader’s needs, situations, and perspectives. In any audience, there will be those open to considering the idea, and those who are directly opposed to considering the idea. Remember, for those who agree with the writer, persuasion is unnecessary; for those who mildly disagree with the writer, persuasion has a good chance of working; for those who will always disagree with the writer, persuasion will probably not be successful.
4. **Convincing Reasons**: The writer will need to have viable reasons that will support his/her thesis or claim. Reasoning cannot be flawed or incoherent, or the entire argument will become jeopardized.
5. **Sufficient Evidence for each Reason**: Readers need to have evidence that is clear, succinct and supportive. The best type of evidence can be found in reliable facts and statistics, expert opinion, examples, and anecdotes.
6. Appeals: There are three basic kinds of appeals—1. **Logos**: This appeals to the reader’s ability to be logical and clear thinking; 2. **Pathos**: This appeals to the reader’s emotions by connecting to a common emotional chord with the reader; 3. **Ethos**: This has more to do with the writer’s being taken seriously both in character and in credibility. See page 231 for complete details of both the advantages and disadvantages of each appeal.

7. Acknowledgement of Other Views: Every issue has another “side” or viewpoint. These alternatives need to be recognized, acknowledged, and then discussed. To be effective, the writer needs to be able to make a counterargument in a non-threatening, natural way. Conceding another valid, counterargument is NOT giving in, it is acknowledging it. The writer needs to have his/her argument be the stronger of the two. The MOST common error among writers of persuasion is NOT acknowledging opposing viewpoints.

8. Desired Result: What do you want this essay of persuasion to do for the reader? Change his/her mind? Get him/her to think in another way? Have the reader actually DO something as a result of having read this essay of persuasion? Each persuasive essay needs to have a desired result and needs to have it either expressed directly or indirectly.