Persuasive Letter Guidelines

Overview

- This assignment asks you to choose a campus or city sustainability issue, take a position, and draw on your mastery of the course competencies to make a well-researched, evidence-based and well-argued case for change.
- The Persuasive Letter replaces a final exam. Just as for an exam, the Persuasive Letter will require you to review and synthesize your lecture notes, readings, assignments and other class activities in order to demonstrate your learning in this course.

Instructions

(1) Issue: Choose a local issue of interest to you and clearly related to a topic we have discussed in class. A few examples are given below. Notice that there is abundant opportunity for overlap between topics and issues; thus, there are many angles from which you can approach a given issue. Depending on your familiarity with local issues, you may need to conduct a little preliminary research to determine whether a particular issue idea is relevant for campus or Bloomington. For example, if Bloomington already has an urban chicken ordinance, you wouldn’t want to write a persuasive letter specifically about that to the City Council. Do feel free to take stances that build upon current initiatives in productive ways, however. Resources for researching local issues include web-based search engines as well as specific websites such as:
  - Indiana University Office of Sustainability [http://www.indiana.edu/~sustain/home.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~sustain/home.html)
  - City of Bloomington Commission on Sustainability [http://bloomington.in.gov/sustainability](http://bloomington.in.gov/sustainability)

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<tr>
<th>Course Topic</th>
<th>Examples of Local Issues Related to Course Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Biodiversity &amp; Ecosystem Services</td>
<td>Green infrastructure, native landscaping</td>
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<td>Global Change</td>
<td>Carbon sinks, campus or city energy sources</td>
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<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Growth vs. development, local currency, sustainability indicators/happiness initiatives, community place making</td>
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<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Campus or city gardens, vertical gardening, local ordinances re: raising meat, sourcing dining hall food, farmer’s markets, local grocers or food cooperatives</td>
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<td>Energy</td>
<td>Campus lighting, heat or power systems, neighborhood energy systems, alternative transportation</td>
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<td>Waste</td>
<td>Recycling, reuse, PCBs, waste management, ecoparks, substitution</td>
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(2) Research: Rigorously research your issue. Use your course notes as an initial guide, but course notes cannot be cited in the letter. You must cite at least six credible sources in your letter. Up to two of these six sources may be relevant course readings. Use your information literacy skills and follow these guidelines for your sources of information:
• Sources must be credible and high quality (be aware of junk science and amateurs; pay attention to authority, accuracy, objectivity, content, and currency). Keep in mind that journal articles and other peer-reviewed published work is a standard all can recognize.
• Seek a diversity of expert sources (e.g. government, university, professional, etc.)
• Include at least one relevant scientific journal article. A good search engine is Web of Science, available from the IU Library Home Page. Click on Web of Knowledge, then the Web of Science tab. Or, visit your library/librarian.
• Credit your sources of information using numbered superscripts, placing a correspondingly numbered list of References Cited at the end of the letter. Format your list of references following Chicago Manual of Style format (http://www.indiana.edu/~citing/Chicago.pdf).
  o Review the university’s policy on plagiarism at: http://www.iu.edu/~code/code/responsibilities/academic/index.shtml.
  o Review the Writing Tutorial Service's helpful website on how to recognize and avoid plagiarism at: http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml.
• Do not quote directly from your sources, even with citations. Rather, paraphrase and synthesize information to create a letter that is truly in your own words and voice. Carefully reading your sources, reviewing class notes, and taking fresh notes in your own words will assist you in this.

(3) Take a position: Decide your position and objectives. What are you advocating for?

(4) Write the letter:
• Use a business letter format (See: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/)
• Respectfully address your chosen audience (i.e. either IUB President McRobbie and the Board of Trustees –OR- Mayor Kruzan and the City Council). A useful resource on protocol for forms of address to officials can be found at: http://www.formsofaddress.info/FOA_home.html.
• Body of letter. *Cite credible sources, using superscripts, to back up your statements. Focus on logic, facts, science and ethics for your argument rather than conducting an emotional appeal. In keeping with a major course competency, your letter should expertly integrate environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability.
  o Opening. Introduce your issue in an engaging way. Assert your position and objectives. (Consider whether your issue is most effectively served by presenting a case for versus against something).
  o Transition. Gracefully transition from your opening to your proposal.
  o Proposal. Make your case for action/change. Anticipate and respond to objections and/or counter arguments.
  o Closing. Wrap up in a compelling way by summing up your overall objective and emphasizing the importance and benefits of acting on it.
• Letter length should be 1 page (single-spaced), not counting lengthy headers or your list of References. Use a font size of 12 point and 1-inch margins.
• Close respectfully. Typically, “Sincerely” is used to close, followed by a space of four lines for the signature and then the sender’s typed name and title or affiliation. If you do not have your signature in electronic form you may leave the signature line blank.