

Due Date: October 1st. Essay is due in class. Late essays, which must be handed in either during my office hours or in my mailbox in Mendocino Hall 3000, will be docked 5 points per day excluding Saturday and Sunday. Any essay not handed in on October 1st, in class, will be considered late.

The primary objective of this class is to improve students' critical abilities. In such, thus far we have discussed and reviewed effective communication, principles upon which the study of logic is based, the nature of reason, the nature of opinion, what it means to think critically and the basic structure of arguments (we will discuss this more next week). In the coming weeks, we will begin to look much more closely at what types of arguments there are and the multiple methods of evaluating arguments. Your first essay assignment will expand upon the concepts that we have thus far investigated.

Assignment Details:

For this assignment, you will be provided with an essay that you will need to *breakdown* into its component parts by answering the following questions (the essay is attached below):

- 1) **In essay form**, you must identify each of the following in the article provided (Note: do not number or letter the answers to these questions. You should have one fluid essay/summary *with only one title* at the beginning of the essay – a different title than the one given in the original essay):
 - a. What the article is titled, where it appeared, and what it is about (generally).
 - b. The conclusion statement (What is the author's conclusion)
 - c. Each main premise used to support the thesis statement
 - d. A *brief summary* of each supporting detail offered to support the main premises (this should be a basic summary about how the author supported each premise he or she used – what information did the author provide to support each premise)
 - i. If one or more of the premises offered by the author is a counter-example, you should also explain how it is a counter-example (a counter example is when one provides what his/her opposition argues and then he/she argues against that opposition argument).

Note: This is not an evaluative essay. I only want to know what the author's argument is – the component parts of said essay. You **ARE NOT** to provide an argument for or against his/her position. Before we get there, you must demonstrate that you can actually recognize and summarize an argument itself. Again, your essay should only provide a summary of the argument. I **DO NOT** want to know if it is a good or bad argument.

The following is the location of the article (Note: I also include the article in full below). You must use this information to complete the required bibliography page: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/28/opinion/the-wrong-ruling-on-vouchers.html>.

Basic Structure / Grammar Requirements:

- 1) Your essay should be no longer than two pages total (There is no bibliography page needed)
 - a. **Note again: This is not a research essay. You are NOT to provide your opinion of the argument. The assignment is to provide a short summary of the argument provided.**

- 2) Your name, class, and date should appear in the upper right hand corner of the first page. No cover page should be included.
 - a. You must include a properly formatted APA header on the upper left hand side of each page. If you have question about how this should be constructed, please see the *Owl at Purdue* website at the following link: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/>
 - i. *Failing to follow these instructions will result in an automatic 10 points off*
- 3) You must employ proper grammar in this assignment. Each grammar error will result in .5 points deducted from your essay. It is not required for this class, but I do recommend that you purchase a grammar/writing handbook and/or stop in the writing center here on campus for assistance.

Grading Rubric:

- 1) *Content*: Did you adequately answer each of the questions listed under assignment details. Did you properly list each main premise and sub-premises (Potential 80 points)
- 2) *Structure*: Did you follow each of the structural requirements listed above? (Possible 10 Points off if these instructions are not followed. Note: By following them you are not automatically awarded 10 points. They must be followed exactly as I have outlined them or you will be penalized)
- 3) *Grammar*: .5 Points will be deducted for each grammatical error.

All questions should be directed either to my email – joshua.carboni@csus.edu - or, preferably after class or in my office hours.

Below is the essay that you must summarize.

ESSAY 3

The Wrong Ruling on Vouchers

NEW YORK TIMES

JUNE 28, 2002

The country has been waiting for several years now to see how the Supreme Court would rule on school vouchers. Yesterday, in a 5-to-4 decision, the court issued a sweeping ruling upholding Cleveland's school voucher program. It was a bad decision on constitutional grounds, and a bad one for American education.

In theory, Cleveland's voucher program allows children to use state stipends to go to any school they want. In practice, the choice it offers them is between a failing public school system and the city's parochial schools. This is not a choice that the Constitution intended public tax money to underwrite.

The problem with the Cleveland program begins with the size of the stipends, which are capped at \$2,250. That is far less than most private schools cost. But it is just right for parochial schools where, for a variety of reasons, tuition is far lower. Not surprisingly, fully 96.6 percent of students end up taking their vouchers to religiously affiliated schools.

Once students enroll in those schools, they are subjected to just the sort of religious training the First Amendment forbids the state to underwrite. In many cases, students are required to attend Mass or other religious services. Tax dollars go to buy Bibles, prayer books, crucifixes and other religious iconography. It is hard to think of a starker assault on the doctrine of separation of church and state than taking taxpayer dollars and using them to inculcate specific religious beliefs in young people.

The majority argues that the Cleveland program does not, as a technical matter, violate the First Amendment because it is parents, not the government, who are choosing where the money goes. But given the reality of education in Cleveland, parents do not have the wealth of options that would make their selection of religious schools meaningful. And in any case, the money ultimately comes from taxpayers, and therefore should not be directed—by whatever route—to finance religious training.

This ruling does as much damage to education as it does to the First Amendment. A common argument for vouchers is that they improve public schools by forcing them to compete for students. What is holding the public schools back, however, is not lack of competitive drive but the resources to succeed. Voucher programs like Cleveland's siphon off public dollars, leaving struggling urban systems with less money for skilled teachers, textbooks and computers. They also skim off some of the best-performing students, and the most informed and involved parents, from public schools that badly need their expertise and energy.

Yesterday's decision also undermines one of the public school system's most important functions: teaching democracy and pluralism. In public schools, Americans of many backgrounds learn together. In the religious schools that Cleveland taxpayers are being forced to sponsor, Catholics are free to teach that their way is best, and Jews, Muslims and those of other faiths can teach their co-

religionists that they have truth on their side. As Justice John Paul Stevens wrote in dissent, "Whenever we remove a brick from the wall that was designed to separate religion and government, we increase the risk of religious strife and weaken the foundation of our democracy." This court has removed many bricks.