**ADVANCED BRAINSTROMING TOOL**

**TOPOI OF INVENTION: ARISTOTLE’S COMMON TOPICS**

**Definition**

* **Genus**—what larger class does **X** belong to?
* **Species**—what makes **X** unique within this class?

**Comparison**

* **Similarity—**what characteristics does **X** share with others?
* **Difference—**what makes **X** unique? How is it different than others?
* **Degree**—how significant are those similarities and/or differences?

**Relationship**

* **Cause and Effect**—What makes **X** happen? What brings it about? What happens because of **X**? What are its consequences? How significant are these consequences?
* **Antecedent and Consequence**—What is the context of **X**? What came before it? What will happen because of **X**? If **X**, then what?
* **Contraries**—What is the opposite of **X**? What cannot coexist with **X**? If **X** happens, what else is necessarily excluded?
* **Contradictions—**What other interpretations could there be of **X**? If **X** is not what you think it is, what else might it be?

**Circumstance**

* **Possible and Impossible**—How feasible and/or workable is **X**? What factors make **X** either possible or impossible?
* **Past Fact and Future Fact**—What precedents are there for **X**? Has **X** happened or been tried before? Based on past experience, what can you predict for the future of **X** or for the future of something else if **X** happens?

**Testimony**

* **Authority**—what sources of information do you have to support **X**? What authorities can you cite? What makes these sources authoritative? What other authorities might disagree with them?
* **Testimonial**—Who has personally experienced **X**? How might their experience lend or detract from the credibility of your position on **X**?
* **Statistics**—What documented research can you find that gives insight about **X**? How widespread or significant is **X**?
* **Maxims**—What commonly accepted wisdom or sayings are applicable to **X**? (What does proverbial wisdom or common sense say about **X**?
* **Laws**—What established laws or policies govern **X**? How does **X** influence these laws or policies? How might these laws or policies be changed because of **X**?
* **Precedents (Examples)**—What previous incidents of **X** can you cite? What can you learn about **X** from these incidents? How is what you learn different than what you might have thought?