Short Assignment for
Periclean Scholars
General Studies 225

April Post
World Languages and Cultures Department

Introduction for Faculty Colleagues

GST 225 is the first course members of the class of 2016 Periclean Scholars cohort, with focus on Honduras, will take together. In it, students develop a mission statement for the class and research in depth the issues and topics related to that mission. Emphasis is placed on becoming deeply familiar with the multiplicity of factors that surround the group's chosen issue and developing individual and group goals (short and long term). They will examine the process of and begin to understand how to be selective agents of social change.

This op-ed assignment will be given about 2/3rds of the way through the course. The idea for it came as a result of a recent trip I took to Honduras with a colleague to meet with potential partners for the class. After my return, a person commented that she didn’t understand why people go to places that are so dangerous. (The city we visited, San Pedro Sula, is known as the “murder capital of the world” right now outside of war zones.) Another noted after reviewing my colleague’s op-ed that he needed to explain why people should care about what’s happening in Honduras. To me, it’s obvious. But I realized that it may not be so obvious to everyone and that my students, too, are going to need to be able to explain why our country should be worried about what’s happening in Honduras right now.

I’ve never given this assignment before, but I hope that some of the writings will be good enough to actually submit to some newspapers and at the very least will be submitted to the Periclean blog site that is shared with all of the other Periclean classes and their partners.
http://blogs.elon.edu/pericleanscholars/

Background: Prior to this assignment, students will have read some examples of op-eds and will have practiced evaluating them based on their effectiveness at convincing the reader to care about a certain issue.
In response to the question posted “Should America help other countries?” on debate.org, 67% of those polled said that we should and 33% said no. One of those who said no gave the following reason:

_Overall, no I do not think America should help other countries. Occasional help is fine, but we help too many countries too often yet, we still have so many poor, suffering people in our own country that need help. Once every one here is taken care of, then maybe it would be ok to help other countries._

(https://www.debate.org/opinions/should-america-help-other-countries)

I’ve spent quite a bit of my adult life learning about people from around the world, spending time with them, learning about their customs and cultures and discussing the issues they face that make life difficult for them. And I’ve heard the comment on many occasions that America has too many of its own problems to deal with and that we should focus on those instead of helping people in other countries.

With this in mind, please respond to the following prompt in the form of an op-ed. (An op-ed, short for “opposite the editorial page”, is written by a named author who is expressing his/her opinion about a specific topic.)

_“Why should Americans care about Honduras?”_

**Audience**
Readers of a local paper (you may choose which one) and of the Elon Periclean Scholars blog.

**Length**
Check with the paper. Op-eds typically can be no longer than 650 words. Please type and double-space your work.

**Content**
Describe the problems and justify why Americans should be part of the solution. Make references to course material in your essay. Consider our class discussions, readings and conversations with partners as you write. Refer to the rubric on page 4 for more specifics.

**Response-Centered Reviews (RCRs)**
Bring 5 copies of draft 1 of your essay to class on ________. We will use the process described below to offer peer-to-peer feedback.

**Description of RCRs**  
(adapted from John C. Bean’s “Classroom Procedure for Response-Centered Reviews” on page. 297 in *Engaging Ideas*, 2011)

1. The class will divide into groups of 4-5 students and each writer will pass out copies of his/her essay.

2. Each writer will take turns reading his/her draft out loud to the group.

3. Group members will have several minutes to take notes on their responses on the +/−/? handout provided. In the + column, you will note aspects of the draft that worked well. In the − column, you will note problem areas that occurred while you were listening. For example, negative reactions such as disagreement with ideas. In the ? column, you will note questions that occurred to you while listening, such as places that need additional clarification and more development.

4. Each group member will explain to the writer what he/she found effective or ineffective, what parts were clear or confusing, and so forth. You do not need to give advice, but rather describe your personal response to the draft.

5. The writer will take notes during each response but should not enter into the discussion. The writer should be listening without defending the piece or trying to explain what he or she meant by it.

6. Next, another group member will read his/her essay and the cycle continues.

**Final Version**
Lastly, take home the feedback you received and decide what, if any, changes you will make to your piece. After making changes, include the following in a folder in this order:

- Rubric
- Final version of your op-ed with the word count noted at the top. Typed and double-spaced.
- All original drafts
- The notes you took during the RCRs
- A brief explanation of how you used your peers’ feedback.
These 5 parts should be turned in at the beginning of class on ___________.

**Rubric for Op-Ed Assignment**

Include this rubric on top of your work in your folder.

Name: ______________________________________  Final grade: ________/40 = _____

**Threshold**

To be accepted for grading, the assignment must follow these guidelines. Work that does not meet these criteria will not be graded and will be returned.

- Turned in at the beginning of class on the day it is due.
- Be in a folder.
- Include a final draft with a length of 600-650 words with the word count noted at the top of the piece.
- Include all original drafts.
- Include comments from the RCRs.
- Include a brief explanation of how peer feedback was used.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Exceeded A/B Range 10-8 points</th>
<th>Met C Range 7.9-7 points</th>
<th>Not met D/F Range 6.9 and below</th>
<th>Score and Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Gets right into the subject. Makes point immediately. Effectively uses persuasive language. Takes a side. Reader does not have to guess at position. Uses short, direct sentences.</td>
<td>Does not get right into the subject until late in the first or 2nd paragraph. Uses some persuasive language. Takes a side but may not be as clear. The reader may have to guess at position. Uses somewhat short and direct sentences.</td>
<td>Does not get right into the subject. Does not make point immediately. Doesn't take a side or jumps around. Makes the reader have to guess at position. Does not use short and direct sentences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation/Research</td>
<td>Effectively incorporates course material. Does not borrow a sentence, phrase or idea from another unless clearly identifies the source. Thoroughly researched. Clearly identifies sources and cites correctly.</td>
<td>Minimally incorporates course material. Only cites some of the time when borrowing a sentence, phrase or idea from another. Or cites partially correct.</td>
<td>Does not incorporate course material or does so inaccurately. Does not cite or cites incorrectly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td>Is somewhat persuasive, but may not give clear reasons for readers to act. May lack anecdotes, facts and statistics. May lack specific ways for how reader can act.</td>
<td>Is not persuasive and does not give clear reasons for readers to act. Does not include anecdotes, facts or statistics. Lacks specific ways for readers to act.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Drives at and ends with a direct and compelling conclusion.</td>
<td>Conclusion is only somewhat direct and compelling.</td>
<td>Conclusion is not direct and compelling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>