

Writing and the Environment: Essay #2
(First version due in class, Thursday, March 17th)

Your second major writing assignment for this course is a critical essay that builds upon your responses to two (or more) articles. Each of these articles presents a distinctive perspective on a controversial issue. Over the course of your essay, you should explain and assess the articles that you have chosen to work with. You should also develop a critical stance that allows you to unify your discussion of the two articles and to articulate your own priorities. You need not display expertise on the issue examined by these articles. You will need to draw upon some background information, but your authority here depends upon your skill as a critical reader and writer, not on your claims to superior knowledge. You need only read carefully and evaluate the logic and evidence provided to you. Use the articles that you have chosen to help us think about the priorities of the writers and about the issue that they address. Your own essay should not claim more than you can substantiate; it should, instead, build upon the insights that emerge from your critical assessment of the two articles. The structure of your essay will depend upon your own priorities, so you must decide what you want to accomplish before you begin writing. What can your readers learn by considering these articles?

Brief summaries will play a key role in your essay. They serve to inform your readers and to demonstrate your command of your subject matter (the two argumentative articles). Without summaries, your readers are unlikely to care about your topic or to understand your concerns. They are also unlikely to trust your assessment of the articles. Be patient.

While it is fine—perhaps essential for some of you—to write out a strictly argumentative response to the two articles, you should put that opinion piece to one side before you begin writing your balanced and thoughtful critical essay. As you move from the broader issues to the particulars of this controversy, you will need to focus on specific aspects of the two (or three) articles. Be sure to introduce, explain, and assess any quotes that play a significant role in your critique. You cannot assume that your readers will share your point of view unless you lead them through the analysis that lies behind it. Stay away from generalities. (You may find it useful to draw upon material that we have read for class.)

The first version of this essay should be at least six pages long (1650 words, double-spaced), but it can be as long as nine pages. The final version should be roughly eight pages long. When you come to class on Thursday, March 17th, **please bring five copies of your essay and five copies of a letter** addressed to your readers commenting on the state of your essay. Let your readers know something about your plans for revision. Point your readers to the issues that concern you.

The final version should be submitted on Friday, April 1st by 2pm. Place your essay in the box beside my office door.