Essay 1: The Explainer | Due: Outline - Sept. 18, Draft - Sept. 25, Final Draft - Oct. 2

Goal:
The goal of this assignment is to practice research skills and develop a research-based informative paper.

Assignment:
The online magazine *Slate* has a recurring feature called "The Explainer". Inspired by current events and pop culture, "The Explainer" uses research to provide a relevant, concise, and contextualized answer to those "I wonder why. . ." questions. **Your assignment is to become the Explainer and write an informative article in which you report on/explain a public issue, supported by research.**

The final essay should do the following, in **three to four double-spaced pages** (12-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins on all sides, no extra space between paragraphs, no superfluous spacing)**:**

- Include an introduction that frames and defines the scope of your essay;
- Offer readers some contextual background on the subject of your research;
- Use **three to four credible/reputable sources** to compose informative body paragraphs;
- Provide a general sense of the different (relevant) perspectives on the issue, including what is established/accepted by most/all and what is still open to debate;
- Help your audience understand the stakes involved in the issue and the limitations of the information you have used to report on it;
- Conclude your essay by pointing toward additional research, Natural Next Questions, and analysis that can be done to better understand the issue as part of an ongoing conversation.
- Properly and accurately cite all resources used in the paper using an appropriate citation style.

Invention and Inquiry:
In preparing this assignment, identify **a topical and debatable public issue that brings you closer to answering your Big Question** (from Exercise 2). Brainstorm how the issue is related to your Big Question (and how it can help you and your audience get closer to answering it), reasons why the issue should be of interest to others, what kinds of conversations revolve around the issue, and what public policies are related to it. **Remember that you are not taking a position yet** but looking to inform readers about the topic in a way that enables them to judge for themselves how to join the conversation you are beginning to map out.

Conduct preliminary research using key words/phrases to search web-based resources. Follow the **Question Cycle** and create **Content Summaries** for each potential source you find. Gather five or more reputable sources related to your issue and evaluate their credibility. Annotate and summarize each source and make notes about the various situations in which they are embedded (e.g., authors, audiences, genres, contexts, policies, etc.). Consider what perspective each source represents and group them into categories. Your research should help you understand the conversation and inform the audience.

Audience and Tone:
The Explainer is designed to share real research with a general reader who might be interested in the topic and wish to learn more. You want to engage the reader in this topic; imagine yourself submitting your Explanation to *Slate*. This essay should be written using authoritative language to present your findings. Your tone should be professional and informative, but not overly formal.

If you have any questions or concerns about this assignment, I encourage you to e-mail me or come see me during my office hours. Also consider visiting the Miller Writing Center for help.