Essay #3: Extended Definition

Now that we have completed Chapter 3 in Discovering Argument and finished the workshops, you are ready to think about the next essay assignment. The third essay will provide insight into a public policy issue in Appalachia alone or in the rest of America by taking a stand through definition. Obviously, language and an understanding of the meaning of terms is paramount to effective communication.

This essay will require you to read widely and to think critically about a current issue (the war in Iraq, HMOs and health insurance, and gun control, for example). You will analyze the language that is being used by those who are promoting conversation about this issue. These writers/speakers will often use the same key terms. After examining at least 7-10 articles, news shows, internet articles or other sources, you will be able to identify those key words or phrases. This essay will take a position on the use of these key terms in bringing the issue to light and promoting resolution. It is not the purpose of this paper to argue your position on the issue, but rather your position on the language being used in discussing the issue.

Your paper might take the following format:

• **Introduction:**
  - Discuss the issue at large, identifying key terms and settling on a single term for discussion.
  - Supply background information about the history of the term (use the Oxford English Dictionary as your source) and how its meaning has changed (or what the connotation of the term has become).
  - You may possibly present your thesis here on what should be changed to promote positive communication.

• **Body:**
  - Identify at least some (more than two, preferably) of the different groups who represent conflicting views on the issue.
  - Recognize spokespersons or “voices” for these groups (often these will be government agencies, grassroots spokespersons, and industry, among others).
  - Provide quotes or summaries of their use of the terms, and provide contextual analysis to compare/contrast their meanings.

• **Conclusion:**
  - Draw conclusions about the need for clarifying definitions among the various “voices.”
You might promote a new universal definition to alleviate the problem, recommend deleting the term from the discussion or offer another solution to the language problem.

Your thesis may appear here for the first time.

Works cited page (7-10 sources) will follow.

Remember that you will need to take a risk with this assignment! Do not take a position on the issue---only on the language being used in the academic conversations about the issue.