The purpose of this assignment is to give you practice constructing your own argument and using sources, before you go on to add doing the research as well. Like the Analysis Assignment, this draws on your critical thinking skills and knowledge of argument, but here you are constructing your own argument rather than critiquing another’s.

**Timeline:**  
Draft due to share with peer group (4-5 copies, or share electronically, groups TBA), Monday, March 12  
Peer comments due Wednesday, March 14 (guidelines to be provided)  
Completed paper due Wednesday, March 21 (one hard copy).

Write an argument using course readings as sources. Cite your source use according to MLA style. This assignment is worth 15% of your course grade.

**Topics, Sources, and Approach**

You may choose any of the topics we have read about in *Practical Argument* which have multiple readings: Indian mascots (pages 646-50); the value of college (pages 29-47 and 670-82); or the drinking age (456-77).

Use the readings in the textbook as your sources; you are not expected to do any additional research for this assignment. (You are also welcome to use personal experience and observations where those are appropriate to the topic and may add support to your argument or enhance your ethos.)

You may address any aspect of the topic (within the limits of what the sources make possible) and define your position in any way you can support. With these limited resources, you may not feel comfortable taking a strong position on the issue. If you do, great. If not, that’s not a problem. What you should do is conclude what you feel able to conclude, and if that’s only part of the picture, explain why you aren’t prepared to go further yet. You are also welcome to establish a position not yet identified in the sources you’re using, such as a compromise or an alternate solution. In short, think about what the sources have said and decide what you think about all this. That doesn’t necessarily have to be a totally original contribution: What matters is how you explain, support, and present whatever you decide.

Write for a general, but intelligent and thoughtful audience. Your audience is broadly familiar with the issue, but individuals may not have much specific knowledge about it and may or may not have read any of the sources you are using. They know as much as you know about what makes for an effective argument. They expect to be given the reasoning and support for your claims and to be referred to your sources. They also expect you to be aware of and responsive to other opinions on the issue.
A Few Notes

1. You do not have to use all of the sources in the textbook, but you do have to be responsive to them. For example, if you make a claim that one of the sources has already made, you should acknowledge that. If you make a claim that a source has challenged, you have to be clear on why you think the claim is still valid.

2. Cite sources when you use them, quote or paraphrase them correctly, and provide a list of works cited. Use the MLA in-text method of citation. Note on the citations: The readings in Practical Argument are examples of one of the more complicated citation challenges. For now, I want to ease you in to doing citations, so I will create the Works Cited list entry for each of the essays for this assignment and post them in D2L. Copy the appropriate ones for your paper.

3. There is no specific length requirement; focus instead on making the best argument you can with the information available. (Around 1000-1500 words is a good ballpark.)

You may find some of these sections of Practical Argument useful as you plan and write your argument:

On writing an argument: 242-67
On paraphrasing and quoting: 314-19
On integrating sources: 323-27 and 358-61
On when to cite (avoiding plagiarism): 352-56

Definition arguments: 398-402
Cause/effect arguments: 440-47
Evaluation arguments: 484-87
Proposal arguments: 518-23

What Your Grade Will Be Based On

Does the paper identify a clear issue and take a position on that issue?
*Is that position supported and argued effectively? This includes sound logic, use of appropriate evidence, awareness of available ideas and information, and (when appropriate) use of strategies such as ethos, pathos, and responding to opposing views or likely objections.

Is the argument organized effectively, including an introduction, conclusion, and title?
Is source material integrated smoothly, both into the overall structure of the paper and within paragraphs and sentences?
Are all ideas paraphrased appropriately or quoted accurately?
Are sources cited when necessary, using MLA in-text citations?
Is a Works Cited list in MLA style included, giving the bibliographic information for the sources used?
Are grammar, punctuation, word choice, and spelling correct, appropriate, and effective?
Does it follow format guidelines? (double-spaced, etc.)