Essay One Topic: The Autonomous Self and Education

Assignment Description:
Essay One will consist of a four-to-five page (minimum 1000 word) persuasive/analytical essay which incorporates at least three outside sources in response to one of the three essay prompts listed below. The essay should have a clear, concise, and assertive thesis statement (central argument), should be logically organized, and should contain concrete evidence in the form of quotations or paraphrases from the texts or concrete examples and facts.

Use of Sources and Evaluation:
Please follow MLA formatting guidelines (see your Prentice Hall Guide), and include a heading and unique title for your essay. Your essay will be graded in accordance with the HMXP 102 Writing Competency Rubric, located on the University College website, and the Writing 101 Rubric for Papers, located on the English Department website. All papers must be submitted to Turnitin; please review the English Department’s “Correct Use of Borrowed Material” (English Dept. website) for detailed information on plagiarism.

Paper Topic One: The Role of Education in an Individual’s Life

In a four-to-five page (minimum 1000 word) coherent and well-supported essay, consider the role of education in an individual’s intellectual and/or ethical development and in the formation of individual identity. What should education accomplish in the life of an individual? Should education provide technical and occupational training, thus making people able to contribute to the economy and support their families? Should education provide an individual with self-knowledge and with a desire to question and continuously learn? Should an education leave one with an understanding of how little one actually knows or understands? Do you agree with the views of Newman, Plato, or with the views of those educators quoted in “Making College Relevant”? Are technical skills more important than an understanding of classical texts, the humanities, the fine arts, or human history? Why or why not? What role, specifically, should a university education have in an individual’s formation of identity?

Also, reflect upon your own experience as a university student here at Winthrop. To what extent does your experience here match your view of what a university education should accomplish? Has your experience at Winthrop caused you to become more self-reflective, to change or modify your concept of self, or to question things you previously took for granted? Has your university experience been different from other educational experiences in your life, such as high school, academic camps, extracurricular courses, etc.? Explain.

Your paper should both forward a strong argument about what higher education should accomplish, using specific details and quoting at least three sources from our assigned readings, and analyze your own experience as a university student.

Paper Topic Two: The Role of Listening in Communication

In On Communication, Bohm states, “communication can lead to the creation of something new only if people are able freely to listen to each other, without prejudice and without trying to influence each other.” Throughout his article, it appears that Bohm cannot emphasis enough the importance of listening in a conversation. But, what does it mean to listen well? In what ways do you listen well (or not) when you are with your peers, in a class discussion, when talking with a professor? How does one demonstrate listening? Or, are you constantly thinking of your own agenda, the answer you wish to hear, or your own ideas?

For this assignment, you will spend time, outside of the formal classroom setting, with a classmate. You will enjoy a normal afternoon gathering (head to Starbucks, DIGS, Thomson, a bench somewhere, the swings on Scholars Walk, wherever you wish) and get to know one another. You may talk about whatever you wish, but there is one twist. For the first 15 minutes together, individual A may not use the word “I.” Instead, your job is ONLY to listen and ASK questions of your peer. You may not turn the topic back to something about YOU, YOUR opinion, or YOUR ideas. For the next 15 minutes together, individual B is the listener (the same rules apply). At the end of the 30 minutes, discuss the activity. How difficult is it to truly listen to someone else without interjecting your own ideas and opinions? In what ways did you find this to be a more effective or less effective method of communication?
In a four-to-five page (minimum 1000 word) well-argued and coherent essay defend either the importance or lack of importance of listening in communication. Perhaps listening has been re-defined for you... how so? Define a good listener. Contemplate the ideas of Plato, Mills, Bohm, Emerson, and other writers as you defend your response, and include at least three sources in your argument.

Paper Topic Three: The Key Traits of an Intellectually Engaged Learner

In *The Allegory of the Cave*, Plato claims, “education is not what some people declare it to be, namely, putting knowledge into souls that lack it, like putting sight into blind eyes” (5). Instead, Plato defines the quest for knowledge and understanding as a turning process—breaking free from chains that bind us and turning towards new ideas. Does our society’s approach to education align with the ideas of Plato or are we lazy thinkers? Have you ever found yourself stating, “I wish my professor/teacher, would just tell me what is going to be on the test so that I can memorize it and get an A”?

In a four-to-five page (minimum 1000 word) well-argued and coherent essay define the key element(s) that combine to create a good learner. Articulate your own definition of an active, engaged learner or an educated person. If what Plato says is true, and the “pouring in of knowledge” is NOT education, or the process of learning, what is? What, specifically, defines if one individual is an active, engaged thinker? Contemplate the ideas of Plato, Mill, Bohm, Newman, and Zernicke as you defend your response, and include at least three sources in your argument.

Grading Criteria

A strong essay will include:

- A clear, specific, and assertive thesis statement.
- Specific, concrete, and relevant evidence and examples.
- A clear link between evidence and the thesis.
- Argument about the role of education and analysis of one’s own educational experience.
- Concrete evidence (direct quotations, paraphrases, or summaries) from at least three course readings.
- Incorporation of at least three sources from our assigned readings.
- Correct use of MLA format, including a Works Cited page.
- Minimal errors in grammar and punctuation.
- Transitional statements or sentences between shifting ideas and paragraphs.
- An engaging style that is neither too formal nor too informal.

Due Date:

**Tuesday, February 11:** Paper due in class. Paper due to Turnitin by 12:00 midnight.

(Papers which are not submitted to Turnitin will not be given a grade.)