

Responding to Student Writing Sample Essays

The Assignment

- For introductory biology course.
- Students were asked to make a research-based argument in favor of (or against) an environmental policy.
- This is a first draft. Students will have a chance to revise.

Jane Smith

Who Turned the Heat Up?

Global warming is becoming a serious issue as scientists all over the globe are noticing a substantial change in the world's climate. Carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere is higher now than it has been in more

than 400,000 years. The global temperature is also rising at an alarming rate. Although it is often debated why

these trends are occurring, most scientists attribute it to human industrialization. Carbon dioxide concentration is 30% higher now than in pre-industrialized times.

We do not know for sure if this sudden rise in temperature is directly related to the rise in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. However, there are investigations going on right now that show a strong correlation between

risks in carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere and the rising global temperatures.

With the rise in global temperatures, there are many potential dangers that could seriously alter our way of life. Climate changes will cause more serious weather incidents, such as floods or droughts. Health is also an

issue when considering global warming. Rising temperatures could cause tropical diseases to expand to areas

that have never experienced their wrath. In addition deteriorating air quality could cause an increase in

respiratory illnesses. Also, as temperatures continue to rise, sea level will also rise. This could result in the loss

of many coastal areas, including the Florida Keys.

Many scientists attribute the rise in carbon dioxide concentration to several by-products of human industrialization. They warn that the only way to slow the global warming trend is if we reduce our current use

of fossil fuels, increase our use of alternative fuel sources, and stop the destruction of our forests.

Is this the environmental policy that you are supporting? If so, it is vague and offers little discussion + evidence on how these will help. Where is the research?

(See end comments)

format?

people
contribute to
debate this.

better
why not?

new?

ref?

which ones?

word choice

what kind of change?
what makes it
substantial?

what do you mean by this term? Is all
industrialization bad? This is an unearned
assertion.

which ones are you referring to

this is a very
Euro/North
American-
centric
assumption

vague
vague
specifics.

you are adding general statements, but
not supporting them w/evidence... strong

arguments
are based on
good concrete
evidence.

Jane:

There are a lot of interesting ideas here that will eventually make a solid research-based argument, but you are not at that point yet. I think you still have several more drafts to go through. I've made many marginal notes to help you in your revisions but my overall comments are as follows:

- 1) Right now your paper lacks the research component of this assignment. You repeatedly assert that "many scientists" do x, or that "scientists all over the globe" are "noticing" x, etc. These are places where you can replace your vague statements with sound research studies that scientists (name them!) have conducted. You also have a tendency to present statistics without the context that will show why they are important. As I say in my marginal notes, the best arguments are supported by sound evidence.
- 2) Overall your argument is much too general. Some of this can be addressed by adding in a discussion of your research, but there is also an issue of how you structure your essay. Your draft reads like a newspaper article: very short paragraphs with general statements, which is not the goal of the assignment. Notice that all your paragraphs are the same length and follow the same pattern. While I think you have some idea of what each paragraph should do, I don't think your organizational structure is working right now. You don't get to the environmental policy you are arguing for until the final sentence of the paper. If you bring that up front then that will make the discussion of global warming seem more purposeful. Once you get an organizational structure that works for the entire paper you can focus on how each paragraph will support your argument. You might try outlining each paragraph and including in the outline 1) the topic sentence of the paragraph, 2) the research you want to include, 3) the necessary background/context info on the research, 4) the significance of this research in the context of your argument. This organizational system, while initially formulaic, may give you the structure you need to make this a stronger paper.

Please come see me if you would like to discuss these comments



— ZOOM + ↗



Jane Smith

Who Turned the Heat Up?

Global warming is becoming a serious issue as scientists all over the globe are noticing a substantial change in the world's climate. Carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere is higher now than it has been in more than 400,000 years. The global temperature is also rising at an alarming rate. Although it is often debated why these trends are occurring, most scientists attribute it to human industrialization. Carbon dioxide concentration is 30% higher now than in pre-industrialized times.

We do not know for sure if this sudden rise in temperature is directly related to the rise in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. However, there are investigations going on right now that show a strong correlation between rises in carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere and the rising global temperatures.

With the rise in global temperatures, there are many potential dangers that could seriously alter our way of life. Climate changes will cause more serious weather incidents, such as floods or droughts. Health is also an issue when considering global warming. Rising temperatures could cause tropical diseases to expand to areas that have never experienced their wrath. In addition deteriorating air quality could cause an increase in respiratory illnesses. Also, as temperatures continue to rise, sea level will also rise. This could result in the loss of many coastal areas, including the Florida Keys.

Many scientists attribute the rise in carbon dioxide concentration to several by-products of human industrialization. They warn that the only way to slow the global warming trend is if we reduce our current use of fossil fuels, increase our use of alternative fuel sources, and stop the destruction of our forests.

Christopher Manion

Citation needed

Christopher Manion

Needs a thesis statement

Christopher Manion

AWK.

Christopher Manion

So what?

Christopher Manion

Vague.

Grade out of 0

Assignment Comments

What's the environmental policy you're proposing? Your argument is lost because the paper lacks a clear and coherent thesis statement. I suggest drafting a thesis statement which emphasizes your main points and putting it in the first or second paragraph of the paper. You might also consider why your argument is significant and what is at stake with the issue of global warming and your overall argument. Also, you need to back your points up with solid, cited scientific evidence. That's the whole point of this assignment--did you read the prompt carefully?

Christopher Manion, Aug 14 at 8:36am

Add a Comment



SUBMIT

Responding to Student Writing Sample Essays

The Assignment

- For introductory biology course.
- Students were asked to make a research-based argument in favor of (or against) an environmental policy.
- This is a first draft. Students will have a chance to revise.
- What do you think should be the most important criteria for responding to this assignment?
- If we were to take these essays as representative of the class, what sorts of recommendations would you make to the class to help them improve their work and to clarify your expectations?

Jane Smith

Who Turned the Heat Up?

Global warming is becoming a serious issue as scientists all over the globe are noticing a substantial change in the world's climate. Carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere is higher now than it has been in more than 400,000 years. The global temperature is also rising at an alarming rate. Although it is often debated why these trends are occurring, most scientists attribute it to human industrialization. Carbon dioxide concentration is 30% higher now than in pre-industrialized times.

We do not know for sure if this sudden rise in temperature is directly related to the rise in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. However, there are investigations going on right now that show a strong correlation between rises in carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere and the rising global temperatures.

With the rise in global temperatures, there are many potential dangers that could seriously alter our way of life. Climate changes will cause more serious weather incidents, such as floods or droughts. Health is also an issue when considering global warming. Rising temperatures could cause tropical diseases to expand to areas that have never experienced their wrath. In addition deteriorating air quality could cause an increase in respiratory illnesses. Also, as temperatures continue to rise, sea level will also rise. This could result in the loss of many coastal areas, including the Florida Keys.

Many scientists attribute the rise in carbon dioxide concentration to several by-products of human industrialization. They warn that the only way to slow the global warming trend is if we reduce our current use of fossil fuels, increase our use of alternative fuel sources, and stop the destruction of our forests.

Is this your own opinion?

Jane,

I think you do a good job in this first draft laying out some of the important issues. In your next draft, could you focus your argument on a specific policy? What exactly are you proposing? Also, could you more clearly cite the research that supports the policy? What are the particular studies that support what you're arguing?



Assessment

Grade out of 0

Assignment Comments



Dear Jane,



Nice start on your essay! I offer you the following comments, though, to help you improve your essay as you revise it.

You obviously care about the environment and you back up your concern with some scientific evidence and stats. I like that. However, make sure you clearly cite the research, so that the reader can check your sources.

As interesting as the points you have made are, your essay make me wonder what environmental policy you are in support of (or against)! Because global warming itself isn't a policy, you need to tell me what policy you are referencing. Assert yourself here.

Also, I'd like to hear more of your voice. Why are you in support of (or against) this environmental policy? What has made you feel the way you do? To persuade me, you need to add more of a personal touch.

Feel free to come see me during my office hours to discuss your paper more.

Christopher Manion: Aug 14 at 9:18am

Add a Comment



SUBMIT

+

Jane Smith

Who Turned the Heat Up?

Citations? (

Global warming is becoming a serious issue as scientists all over the globe are noticing a substantial change in the world's climate. Carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere is higher now than it has been in more than 400,000 years. The global temperature is also rising at an alarming rate. Although it is often debated why these trends are occurring, most scientists attribute it to human industrialization. Carbon dioxide concentration is 30% higher now than in pre-industrialized times.

(see rubric) (

My Do not know for sure if this sudden rise in temperature is directly related to the rise in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. However, there are investigations going on right now that show a strong correlation between rises in carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere and the rising global temperatures.

With the rise in global temperatures, there are many potential dangers that could seriously alter our way of life. Climate changes will cause more serious weather incidents, such as floods or droughts. Health is also an issue when considering global warming. Rising temperatures could cause tropical diseases to expand to areas that have never experienced their wrath. In addition deteriorating air quality could cause an increase in respiratory illnesses. Also, as temperatures continue to rise, sea level will also rise. This could result in the loss of many coastal areas, including the Florida Keys.

thesis?

Many scientists attribute the rise in carbon dioxide concentration to several by-products of human industrialization. They warn that the only way to slow the global warming trend is if we reduce our current use of fossil fuels, increase our use of alternative fuel sources, and stop the destruction of our forests.

See rubric for further comments -

... ..
... ..

... ..

... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..

... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..
... ..

... ..
... ..
... ..

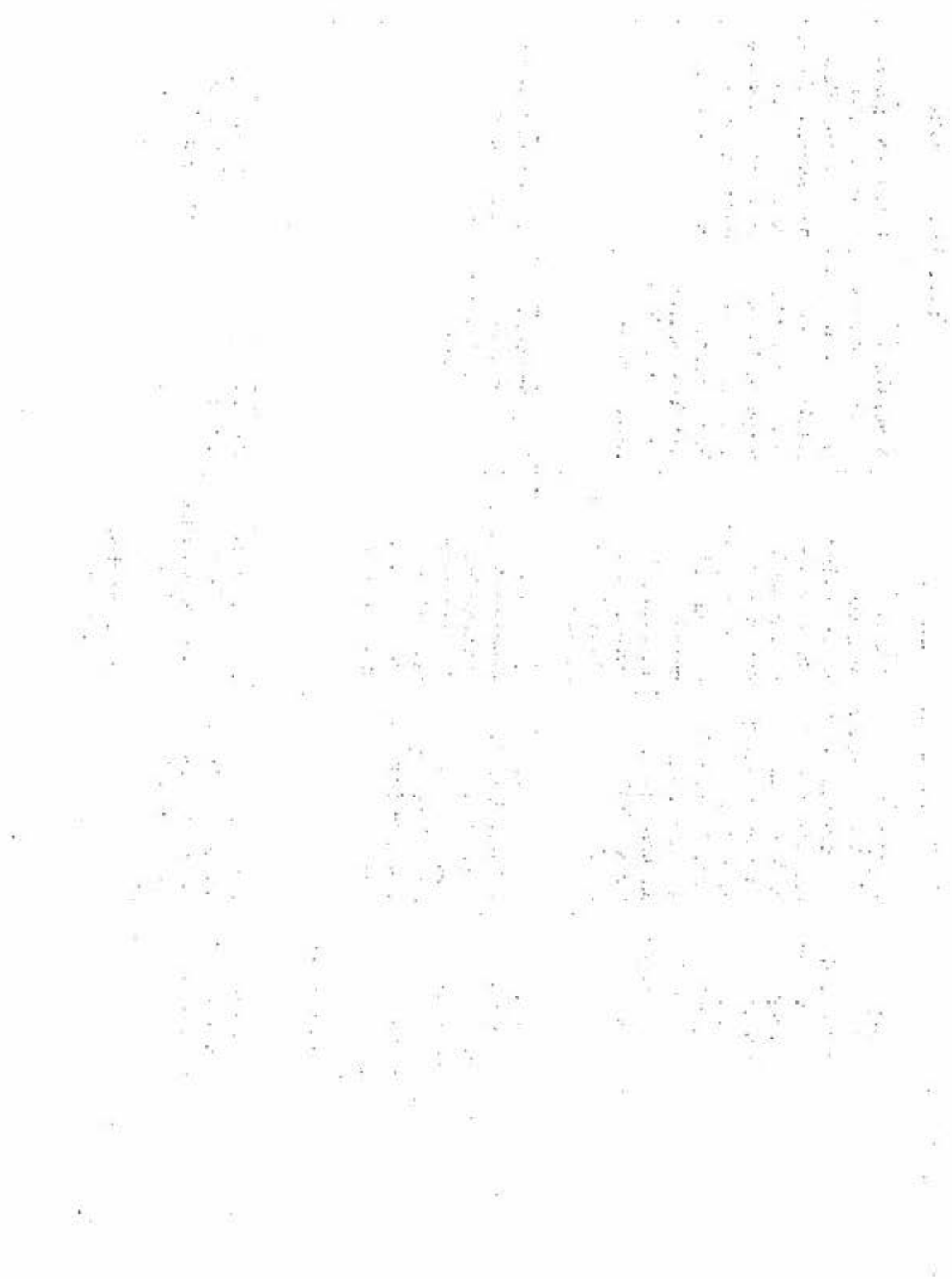
Grading Rubric

Name: _____

TOTAL: 60 /100

needs improvement!

	Outstanding	Competent	Average	Needs Work	Revision Suggested
<p>Thesis Clarity and Originality (30%)</p> <p>24/30</p>	<p>Thesis is clear, argumentative, and acts as an organizing tool for the paper. Thesis topic is creative, entirely original, and offers a unique way of looking at the texts in relation to each other.</p>	<p>The thesis has a clear argument and acts as organizing tool, but could use some rewording for clarity. Thesis topic is somewhat original and creative and attempts to address the "so what" question.</p>	<p>Argument is somewhat clear. Thesis could be strengthened by rewording or restructuring. Vague organization for paper is offered. Thesis topic is creative, but does not address the "so what" question.</p>	<p>The thesis attempts an argument, but it is not clear and offers no organization for the paper. Thesis makes an attempt to be creative, but recycles some class discussion and has no critical analysis.</p>	<p>Thesis contains no argument and offers no organization for the paper. The thesis argument repeats class discussion and lacks a critical perspective.</p>
<p>Paper Organization (15%)</p> <p>11/15</p>	<p>The paper is well organized with an informative introduction, good transitions, and a thoughtful conclusion. The paper's organization strengthens the thesis argument.</p>	<p>The paper is pretty well organized. The introduction, transitions, and conclusion clearly connect to the thesis argument.</p>	<p>The paper is somewhat clear and organized, but deviates at times from making connections to the thesis argument.</p>	<p>The paper has clear organizational flaws that distract from the thesis argument.</p>	<p>Has no clear or logical organizational structure.</p>
<p>Supporting Evidence (15%)</p> <p>7/15</p>	<p>The paper offers several examples and quotations that support thesis argument. There are no irrelevant quotations. Outside sources are present to enhance argument.</p>	<p>The paper offers several examples and various quotations that support and enhance argument outlined in thesis statement.</p>	<p>The paper offers evidence from outside texts, but the evidence is not always clear or relevant and there are claims that may not be adequately supported.</p>	<p>The paper offers minimal evidence, but does support some claims.</p>	<p>The paper has very little evidence. The evidence that is present is confusing and distracts from the argument.</p>



Grammar and Mechanics (5%) 9 /5	The sentence structure, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word choice are intentional and help strengthen the overall paper and argument.	The sentence structure, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word choice are correct. /	An occasional instance of poor sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and/or word choices and misspellings.	Need to improve the sentence structure, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and/or word choices. There is a pattern of errors in the paper.	Several grammatical and mechanical errors.
Citations and Works Cited Page (5%) 0 /5	The paper has no citations errors and a correct works cited page.	The paper has 1-2 citation errors and a correct works cited page.	The paper has 1-2 citation errors and 1-2 errors on works cited page.	The paper has several errors with both internal citations and on works cited page.	The paper includes little to no citations and no works cited page.
Critical Analysis (20%) 14/20	The paper offers a clear and unique critical analysis that is thoughtfully articulated. Several useful connections are made with course content.	The paper offers a clear critical analysis of the text that shows comprehension of course content, terms and ideas. Connection made between thesis and course content.	Presents ideas from the course, but some need to be more fully developed. Critical analysis is attempted and paper attempts to make connections between the thesis and course content. /	Presents ideas from course in a basic way. The paper has minimal connection to course content.	Lack of comprehension of course ideas and terms. No connections are made to course content. The paper offers no critical analysis.
Evidence of Draft Process (10%) 0/10	The final draft has been significantly revised. The author has taken peer feedback into account to strengthen their paper as well as made changes on their own.	The final draft has been revised and is stronger than the original draft.	The final draft has been revised.	The final draft has some changes, but significant portions of the original draft have not been revised.	The final draft closely resembles the original draft.

Comments:

