English 103: Essay #1

**Why War?**

**Assignment:** Write an essay that makes an argument about why war exists. Strive for an assertive (thesis-driven), well-organized, well-supported essay that gives thoughtful attention to the argument of one or more of the class materials from this unit.

When writing about why war exists (what causes it and/or keeps it going), you can focus on any sort of reason (such as root causes or contributing factors). For example, you might consider any idea (or any combination) from the following list and discuss what role it plays in the existence of war:

- Aggressive instincts, hatred, inequality, power, profits, resources, lack of cultural awareness, media, schooling, religion, honor, sacrifice, defense, democracy, and/or freedom.

**Sources:** You can include outside research, but you must focus on at least one of these sources:

- The Einstein-Freud Correspondence on War
- Eugene Jareki’s Why We Fight
- Mead’s “War Is Only an Invention”
- Hayden’s “The Roots of War”
- Bush’s Speech to the Naval Academy
- Sebastian Junger’s War

**Specific Objectives:**

1. Make your argument about the causes of war look as strong as possible (using support from class material) while pointing out weaknesses of others’ arguments (at least one) and maintaining a respectful tone. In your argument, be sure to use and give emphasis to the bulleted words below:

   - Bias
   - Claims, Reasons, Causes
   - Evidence

   **Bias** surfaces when one appears partial. **Claims, reasons, and causes** can be one and the same (for example, in the claim “the reason why we have wars is because…”). **Evidence** includes facts, examples, statistics, analogies, testimony of authorities, personal anecdotes, etc.

   **Tip:** Arguments about war are complex because the topic is complex. If an argument about war showed no bias, addressed every possible reason, and supplied unquestionable evidence, then it might be a perfect argument—but that seems impossible. This is what opens the doors of argumentation and encourages us to question others. People’s arguments about complex issues are imperfect, and this suggests ours are imperfect, too. Thus, it helps to think of our arguments not as being right or wrong but as being more or less persuasive. Be as persuasive as possible.

2. Acknowledge and defend your own limitations (bias).

   You can’t cover everything. It’s better to focus and “say more about less” than to spread yourself thin. In a brief essay, tight focus allows us depth, whereas broad coverage confines us to surfaces. However, since focused arguments examine only part(s) of an issue, they risk appearing partial (biased). This is why it helps to acknowledge and defend your limitations.
Let’s say, for example, I choose to focus on war profiteering. I know it’s not the only reason (and maybe not even the main reason) for war, but I don’t need to, or want to, cover every reason. I will acknowledge other reasons (not all of them) but will stick with my tight focus.

There are many ways to defend your focus. Think about what makes your focus worthwhile. What makes it interesting or sets it apart? For example, are you focusing on reasons for war that are deeper, or more fundamental, or more realistic, or more useful, or more urgent, or more surprising, or more commonly ignored or misunderstood than other reasons?

**General Objectives:** Strive to think critically about our class materials and to communicate your insights in an effective and credible manner. Your basic goals are these:

- Make a clear argument. Signal your key points clearly by making your thesis statement (a specific arguable claim in your introduction) and topic sentence claims easy to find.
- Make an engaging argument. Take advantage of the spots where engaging your readers matters the most: the opening and the conclusion. Create interest in the topic and leave readers feeling like the topic matters to them.
- Support your argument with developed body paragraphs. Include quotes and examples, and demonstrate thoughtful attention to the arguments of your sources.
- Organize your argument by creating assertive topic sentences, unified paragraphs, and smooth transitions.
- Establish credibility by presenting a convincing, professional-sounding, and professional-looking paper. Maintain a respectful tone, quote and cite according to MLA format, and carefully proofread your essay.

**Avoid Plagiarism**—don’t let another source speak for you and rob you of a chance to think and write for yourself; if you use outside sources, give them credit; acknowledge, quote, and cite them whenever necessary.

- Your essay needs to be uploaded to Turnitin.com online (this will be explained in class) and also needs to be submitted as a paper copy.

**Grading Criteria:** Papers will be evaluated upon the effectiveness and clarity with which they address the assignment and meet its objectives.

**Note:** *If you’re interested in approaching this assignment from a different angle, please check with me.*

**Format:** Four complete pages (approx. 1400 words), minimum, not including the works cited page. MLA style, typed, 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced.

**Rough Draft:** This is due for peer review one class before the final draft. Bring two typed copies of your rough draft. At minimum, drafts need to reach the top of the 3rd page. Also, students also need to be in class for peer review credit. Not meeting these goals reduces an essay’s final score by 3.5 points.

**Percentage of Course Grade:** 15%  
**Due Dates:** See our class Reading and Assignment Schedule.