Exploring Classification

**Purpose:** This assignment should help you to develop your skills in identifying, organizing, and sorting various interrelated items into discrete categories by utilizing the rhetorical strategy of classification. It should help you to identify how seemingly disparate categories may be united under a commonly shared organizing principle. The essay should help you develop a focused, thesis-driven piece of prose that maintains its cohesive integrity throughout the process of developing individual body paragraphs that share a common unifying principle. Ultimately, your writing here should clearly demonstrate the dialogic interdependency between your essay’s Thesis Statement and your development of the individual topics to be classified in the essay’s Body by presenting these various topics in an organized, cohesive, and purposeful implementation that reflects back upon and persuasively supports the overarching principle of unification that you elucidated in your Thesis Statement.

**Assignment:** Write an essay in which you cohesively and logically categorize a group of seemingly homogenous items into a variety of clearly distinguished classifications. Make sure that you find a group type that initially appears globally cohesive, but that, under closer scrutiny, reveals constituent items that can be distinguished and categorized into smaller, closely related subsets of the larger, seemingly cohesive group. Make sure that you clearly differentiate between the various subsets you wish to identify. However, you must never let the reader forget that the items being classified are often considered, at least at first glance, to be part of a larger cohesive whole.

**Ways to Proceed:** First, engage in some prewriting (brainstorming, clustering, or freewriting) to help you find a suitable subject for classification. Make sure that your subject is easily divisible into three or four discrete categories. Once you have done enough prewriting to generate your categories, construct an outline in which you develop three or four categories into individual body paragraphs. Next, write your draft, and make sure that you reference your outline in order to keep your writing focused throughout your essay. After constructing your draft, work on revising your essay, paying special attention to the "big picture" items: FOCUS, STRUCTURE, and DEVELOPMENT. Is your essay focused on the writing topic? Are your Body Paragraphs focused on your Thesis Statement? Do you have a well-structured Introduction? Body Paragraphs? A Conclusion? Do your Body Paragraphs substantially develop their topic using both the generic characteristics of the class as well as a specific piece of evidence (usually an anecdote) that serves to add depth, character, and vision to your Body Paragraph? If you answer "NO" to any of these questions, you need to revise your essay until your answer to all of these questions is "YES"! Remember, College-Level Essay writing is PURPOSEFUL writing. If you aren't sure exactly why you included a classification, the characteristics of that class, or how that class is best exemplified anecdotally, you need to do some SERIOUS soul searching to make sure that you understand the purpose and intent of EVERYTHING you include in your Classification Essay. Once you've done that, you can focus on a final reading that pays attention to sentence structure, grammar, and spelling. After you've put on these final polishing touches, the only thing left to do is turn it in!

**Criteria for Evaluation:** Your essay should be at least four (4) pages in length. The text should be typed, double-spaced, with one inch margins (top, bottom, right, left), and it should use a 12 point standard font (e.g., Calibri, Verdana, Arial, Times New Roman, Garamond, Courier New). Your essay should generally conform to the MLA style of essay formatting. You will be expected to categorize three to four individual items; nevertheless, you should always keep in the back of your mind how your items for categorization can—and usually are—considered part of a larger, more globally homogenous body of work.

Your essay will be graded according to how well you classify your 3-4 items, and how well you establish a unified connection between these classified items. Moreover, your essay will be graded on how well you construct a Thesis-Driven essay. Special attention will be paid to: (1) how well you construct an Introduction that introduces the topic of discussion for the essay; (2) how well your Introduction functions as a natural lead-in for your Thesis Statement (n.b., Your Thesis Statement ALMOST ALWAYS should be the last sentence in your Introduction; it’s LITERALLY your focused, pithy take on the issue under discussion, so PLEASE, don’t start your Introduction with your thesis, and don’t bury it in the middle of your Introductory paragraph); (3) how well your Thesis PREDICTS the topic of your essay, CONTROLS the overall scope of your paper, and OBLIGATES you substantiate whatever claims you made in your Thesis Statement; (4) how well you construct individual Body Paragraphs that (a) present/explore ONE specific topic in the paragraph and (b) relate back to your Thesis; and (5) how well you construct a Conclusion that restates (without repeating) your Thesis.

**Good Luck on this assignment!**