Audience Assessment
for Audiences Who Disagree

As you write each of your essays, you will need to adequately assess your audience and anticipate possible objections to the argument you are developing. This exercise can help with those considerations. When in an argument, people often attack their opponents or insult them. That tendency may be a natural human reaction, but it certainly doesn't help you convince the audience. A far better strategy is to be respectful and polite toward the audience--especially those who disagree with your argument. This assignment should help with that challenge. **This assignment may be completed any time during the writing process for your argumentative essay. It is to be typed, and turned in with your rough draft.**

1. Visualize a person *whom you respect very much* (someone you actually know or a hypothetical person) who would <u>disagree</u> with the thesis of your argument. Describe this member of your audience--including his or her appearance, background, occupation, family, economic status, political leanings, level of education, and any other information that you think might affect how that reader views your argument (gender? race or ethnicity? sexual orientation? religion? or what?). Develop as genuine an *identity* for this person as you can and write it out.

2. Next, imagine the reasons s/he might offer for disagreeing with your thesis. These reasons, remember, will arise from his/her personal integrity--their sense of who they are as a person and what they believe and value. List these objections. Choose two of what seem to you to be the strongest reasons and develop them into full paragraphs, supporting them as you imagine this member of your audience would do.

3   Now explain, in full paragraphs, how you would respectfully respond to each of these objections so that this person might come to understand and accept your thesis. Remember, even if you don't succeed in changing every reader's mind, your goal is for readers to come to see how a reasonably thinking person could believe your thesis to be true, or good, or necessary, or possible, or important--depending on the type of question at issue you are addressing.