

C Portfolio

English 101  
Cover letter

This class proved to be a lot more difficult than I had anticipated. Being a sophomore and hearing stories from my friends and classmates gave me the impression that English 101 was going to be a walk in the park. They talked about 2-3 page papers that included absolutely no thought or process. Pretty much just fill up the required amount of pages and turn it in. My experience in this class proved to be much more than that, and soon I realized what being a good writer as a college student consisted of.

Critical thinking was never a problem for me. I understood an assignment as well as I was expected to. I never struggled with understanding what I was to accomplish. The main problem I have is the ability to expand and examine every outlet of the topic I was to write about. I seemed to answer just the main question. I never took into consideration everything else that could have made my work that much more stronger. In this class I learned how to effectively find worthy sources that would help me advance as a writer. In example, scholarly journals that were specific to a field I was researching. And I learned to summarize the sources rather well and determined with information to omit and to include. I now take the time to dig a little deeper and determine which authors are experts in specific fields and examine their bibliography to find out what influenced them. Overall my progression with my critical thinking process has more than advanced after taking this class.

I'm not sure of what my rhetorical awareness level was before this class, but I do know that that level has increased. I now know how to establish my focus on one main idea and then branch out to smaller supporting ideas that would incur some thought in my audience. Before hand I was to prone to having either one big idea that would get too repetitive or too many ideas

that were vague <sup>never</sup> in depth. I understand the tone and voice and rhetoric I would have to use for different audiences. Especially with research papers, I learned that not everyone is going to agree with you from the start, and to impose your opinion early and repeatedly would most likely irritate and offend your audience and make my research paper ineffective. I established the ability to make my writing flexible to please to the difference in audiences. One struggle I had in particular was distinguishing how to use correct tone in a research paper. My tone always leaned to the tone of a persuasive opinion paper rather than a research paper. But after some help from the writing center I learned that how to stay away from that.

My process of writing was below par up to this point. I would spend hours on a draft and look at it once and call it a final draft. I realize now that this was not acceptable in college or anywhere for that matter. Writing is a process that lets people understand what you know. It's a major form of communication. If you don't refine your writing until it's acceptable to the standards you are writing for, it would distort the ability people perceive you to have. Also, by getting feedback from my peers helped me revise my work to the point where it's a strong piece. I learned to make multiple drafts and revise as much as possible and almost take the revision process as a process to start over and rethink many ideas that I didn't incorporate in my original draft. I also developed the ability to be as critical as I can when it came to my own writing. I can now reflect on my entire writing process and go over what work I did and what work I need to do.

My knowledge of conventions was always good, but not great. To me convention was knowing where to put a period and where to put a comma, but now I realize that it goes further than that. When worrying about conventions I have to include tone and the structure of my work. This to me is more important as knowing what punctuation to use. I had many problems figuring

out how to structure my paper so that it flows in a manner where the audience won't get confused or bored. I learned that reading an eight page paper doesn't have to feel like reading an eight page paper.

Writing Assignment #1  
January 29, 2005

## Autobiography

On June 5<sup>th</sup> 1985, GM was on the verge of buying a company called Hughes Aircraft and Reagan and Gorbachev were working out nuclear problems. But anyone who knows anyone realizes that this was the day a very important person was born into the beautiful city of Sand Diego.

During childhood there aren't too many things that one can remember. People always remember the good times like, playing Pop Warner football, going out to the park, and going out to family barbecues. When I think of my childhood I remember all of those events, but I never seem to forget the biggest culture shock of my life, the time I moved to the state of Washington from good old San Diego.

At this time my mother and father were going through a rocky time and were contemplating divorce, my older brother was too cool for school to hang out with me, and my two younger brothers were just that, young. I was 12 when this happened. This was a horrible and confusing age for a child to have to pick up and start over on the opposite side of the country. With no friends, a family that could care less to hang out with you, and a totally different environment than what I was used too would prove to be very difficult.

As the years went by I made friends and most of all I made my way through a very confusing time. Not knowing where I belonged, I bounced from one group of friends to another. I was clique hopping. Still not fitting well anywhere, I finally settled down

with a group of people that expressed much interest in me. I fell into the ROTC group. I had a great time with them though I never partied, never drank, never really stayed out that late, some would see me and think of me as a nerd or lame, but that wasn't the truth. I fit in with everyone; I was everyone's friend. I guess that was one of the benefits jumping from clique to clique, you get the best of every group, and it's easy to weed out the bad.

During the semester of my sophomore year, I was doing great. I had a job, a beautiful girlfriend, a car (that's not quite as beautiful as the girlfriend), and friends that would do anything for me. There was nothing else I could ask for. There was nothing else that I wanted. But when it came time to choose a college that I wanted to attend, I was absolutely clueless. I didn't even know what I wanted to do when I grew up. Then I realized that I wanted to go to WSU and that I wanted to be in the Air Force. I applied to the university and everything was smooth sailing from there, or so I thought. *why?*

Right before my freshman year in college, I hit a few bumps that I really wasn't ready for. My girlfriend was going into the Air Force. My dad moved to Hawaii after my parents divorced. My brother was kicked out of the house, and my mom had to work two dead end jobs to help me pay for college that I so desperately wanted to attend.

This brings me to my first year at WSU. I was your typical lonely freshman, with a roommate that I couldn't stand. My roommate was addicted to drugs and drug dealer, but things like that usually go hand in hand. All my best friends were back home, working the daily grind. My classes were tough, so tough that I started believing that high schools nowadays give you a diploma so they don't have to baby-sit you anymore. Who would have thought that there was so much reading, writing, and math involved in

college. Lonely with nowhere to go, I decided to look at fraternities. I toured a few of the bigger houses, met a lot of people, saw a lot of things, and forgot a lot of names. I ended up settling with the smallest fraternity on campus, but that was fine, I wasn't looking for 80 men in one house, or the social life, or the biggest party house. I was perfectly content with the great brotherhood that was in the worst looking house. That's when things started to look up. My grades pulled up, I went out more, and I had friends again that would help me out at the drop of a dime, I had brothers.

The true test that I used to find out if my brothers were really my brothers was when the unthinkable happened. My girlfriend of two years who was also my fiancé of three months and I decided that we couldn't be together anymore. All my brothers were there at my weakened moment. This is the moment that I found out who my real friends were and who weren't. This was the time that I knew that I was in the right place to be.

It's hard to think that most of my life right now revolves around my fraternity and the Air Force. But in all actuality, that's all that's modeled my life. I strived to be better at what I did because of the Air Force. Every decision that I made until this point was influenced by the fact that I'll one day be an officer in the Air Force. My friends back home have shaped the way that I think and the way I act. I always thought to myself, how would my friend Adrien or Josh go about this situation, or how is this going to affect the way my friends look at me.

But the biggest factor that shapes my life now is my fraternity. This place has taught me such good work ethic and what friendship and brotherhood was about. Especially when I didn't have a friend in the world, or when my family wasn't within reach.

## Research Statement

Capital punishment has been an issue that all different types of people have discussed. People often question whether it's right, ethical, or if it's morally just. Capital Punishment may be a useful form of deterrence but the United States would be better off without.

When we think of death penalty we think of the question "is what we're doing right". According to Wesley Lowe, capital punishment is the only form of deterrence that America has, and that prisons don't prove to be any better than the capital punishment methods used in 38 states. But that's just one person's opinion. But for the opinions that should really matter, they say something completely opposite. The MVFR, or Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation, chose to take a very different view of the matter. This organization is comprised of families of murder victims and capital punishment abolitionists. They view capital punishment as institutionalized violence, and that all capital punishment really does is create more murder victims. Not only are the families of murder victims opposed of this brutal form of ultimate punishment, so is the general public. In the state of Illinois, Scott Turrow explains that the general consensus of the state is that they are tired of the lengthy trials and the overall blunders of the prosecution team (Turrow, Ultimate Punishment 17).

But for the most part the American people are not affected directly. But indirectly capital punishment takes the money from US citizens pockets. According to a study done by Professor Philip J. Cook at Duke University, the state of North Carolina spent \$2.6 million more per



execution than they needed to if those executions were life imprisonments. But apparently paying three to six times more for the ending of someone's life is more appealing than resorting to a lifetime sentence. It's funny to think that the chair or noose or injection needle can cost upwards of \$2.16 and higher, but in all actuality, it's the conviction that cost so much. But can a prosecution team honestly say that the person they are convicting is the correct person for the chair.

So far to date from 1973 there have been 119 exonerated people from death row. But to the opinion of Hugo Bedau, this is 119 too many. Bedau and his colleagues have gone through and published more than three hundred cases where persons were wrongfully accused of a capital punishment crime or a potential capital punishment crime. To me this says there is too much error in our judicial system to let them or any jury decide who should and shouldn't die.

To me the death penalty can work, but we have to ask ourselves if this form of punishment is morally just and are we willing to risk the life of another innocent life or wrongfully convicted person. Better yet we have to ask ourselves if we were certain of exactly who did a crime worth dying for. But until the citizens of this country cannot afford to spend more than \$2.16 million per execution to support such a method of punishment. The money that the government spends on executions can easily be allocated somewhere else, somewhere it's absolutely needed. Capital punishment is just not cost effective, and it shouldn't be implemented in the our 38 states.

## Capital Punishment In America: Are We For or Against the Death Penalty?

Capital punishment has been a popular debate topic for a couple of decades. Capital punishment has been a topic that has been discussed at dinner tables all the way up to the halls of Congress. Many people have questioned whether or not this form of punishment is really necessary. The same people who questioned capital punishment had the death penalty abolished in 1972. The majority of the United States was in favor of the method shortly after. To choose capital punishment as a legal form of punishing takes a lot of time and a lot of thought to investigate every avenue of our current situation. To have a country as advanced as ours still use this bloody form is very questionable and favor can go both ways. We're the last Western and only Western country to still incorporate capital punishment into our legal system. We need to assess the situation and maybe get rid of capital punishment and join the rest of the Western countries and alleviate all the controversy that surrounds such a heated debate.

Capital punishment has been a part of our current society for a number of years, 29 years to be exact (Erskine 289). The United States, all but 12 states anyways, has always incorporated capital punishment into its judicial system, ever since the early founding of this nation to the present, with only a few years of hibernation. From 1950 to 1976 the general opinion of the public did not favor the death penalty. The method of capital punishment and was steadily decreasing the favor of this system from 62% to 42%, overall decreasing by 20% in a short couple decades (Erskine 289). The percentage rose again in 1967 to 51%, and gained a majority

vote to reenact forms of capital punishment. This brings to mind a very important point, the United States should not continue with such a primitive form of ultimate punishment. This country can do just fine without it. Porter argues this was proven with the other 12 states that don't practice capital punishment in their legal system. With the current situation of our crime, the death penalty isn't absolutely necessary. And ultimately, should we do away with capital punishment all together once again.

There are many main disputes that occur when the death penalty is involved. An example of one of the disputes is the question, what is the purpose of capital punishment? The supporters of capital punishment often view the death penalty as revenge to take a wrong and make it right or more commonly referred to as the phrase "a life for a life". Death penalty supporters commonly used capital punishment to make an example out of someone to deter other in the future from making the same mistake. But hopefully it extends much further than that. Luckily there are people out there that think otherwise. According to Hugo Bedau, people should take into consideration that human life has infinite value and must be respected and protected so accordingly (Bedau, Killing As Punishment 160). For the most part, pro capital punishment supporters view the death penalty as the only major deterrent for heinous crimes such as murder and homicide, according to Lowe. Lowe states that the removal of capital punishment would be no more effective than the removal of prisons as well, mainly because the deterrence rate of prisons is no better than the deterrence rate of the death penalty. The legal definition of deterrence of to deter is to "discourage or to stop by fear". Deterrence rates can't entirely be accurate when it comes to murder and things of that nature; crimes like murder are usually committed in the heat of the moment or through emotion (Goyke). Chief Marshall John Goyke of the Oakesdale Police Department agrees with the views of Wesley Lowe. He believes that some

people are just not redeemable for the things that they've done, and that most murders are done in the heat of passion.

The point that is most often overlooked is that people in general lack the ability to understand risk. According to Wolf Middelendorff, renowned criminologist and teacher at the State Police School in Freiburg, Germany, the efficacy of preventions varies due to different personalities (14). Personalities can be affected by a number of many things. These things include mental disturbances or illnesses. The people who have run-ins with the law plan their lives irrationally and are succumbed by temptation (Hart 14). This point makes the theory of general deterrence void because it doesn't apply to everyone. Also the effectiveness of any form of deterrence is closely related to the size and structure of the society (Hart 15). The foundation of deterrence is based on group intimidation. The smaller the group the more effective deterrence can get. This works because the individual isn't distant from the governing structure. In a society like ours that is considerably big compared to other nations, deterrence doesn't work as well as some would like. There is no clear empirical evidence to support the contention that capital punishment has any deterrent effect in the commission of the crime of murder (Porter). But let's say that deterrence wasn't an issue, and that it did do a good job in deterring people from crimes such as murder, and let us say that the death penalty was in full effect in all 50 states. We don't know for sure that the lives we're going to convict for the death penalty is the life that should be taken. We can't necessarily trust the jurors and prosecutors when the potential preservation of a life is at stake.

Bedau and his colleagues have gone through and published more than four hundred cases where people were wrongfully accused and convicted in capital or potentially capital cases since 1973 (Bedau, Killing As Punishment 34, 35). So far the total count for people who were

exonerated of a capital crime and released from death row is 119 as of February 28, 2005, according to the editors at [www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org).

Scott Turrow a lawyer in Illinois that worked with many capital punishment cases both defending and prosecuting people convicted of capital crimes explains in his book Ultimate Punishment that the state of Illinois was displeased with its current judicial system and it's overall incompetence and the scandal involved legal system (17). The legal system of Illinois has been plagued with blunders by the prosecuting team. And that the population of the state described the court process for trying a person for the death penalty was lengthy, confusing, and overall worthless, and that the prosecutors were worthless as well.

Undoubtedly there are people who more than worthy than other criminals to be punished for their crimes to the fullest reach of our law. Timothy McVeigh and Ted Bundy are two clear-cut cases of criminals that should not go unpunished (Bedau, Killing As Punishment 158).

Timothy McVeigh was found guilty for the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City and the murder of everyone in it, and Bundy was found guilty for serial murder and rape of women across America. These two are perfect examples of why a man should be made an example of and be put to death. But cases get more difficult than these two. If every case were similar to McVeigh's and Bundy's, there would be no debate on whether or not the death penalty should be stay inactive in our legal system. In my opinion I think that these two cases would be the easiest to try in a court of law, but the fact of the matter is that no two cases are identical, and there can't be this many cases that easy to convict. The real truth is that convicting and sentencing a person to death can be very easy, but making sure that the person that is being convicted and sentenced to death is in all actuality the person responsible for the crime is much more difficult than people would like think.

*is this the nature of the argument?*

This brings to mind the people that are doing the prosecuting and convicting. Are these people doing their jobs accurately? That 119 could have easily been overlooked and 119 innocent people could have lost their lives because of a law that may not be morally just. Do juries and prosecutors take into consideration the families and lives that they affect when a person is wrongfully accused or even the families of the victims?

Contrary to the belief of Wesley Lowe and the other pro death penalty supporters, death is not answer. Not only are philosophers in Harold H. Hart's book Punishment: For and Against, such as H. Acton, and criminologists like Wolf Middelendorff against the pertinence of capital punishment in our society, but also so are the families of the victims of capital crimes. According to Rachel King, death isn't the correct form of punishment. In her book Don't Kill in Our Names she explores the thoughts of the victim's families. To my surprise the victim's families weren't eager for revenge. They didn't believe in "an eye for an eye" or "a life for a life". More so they believe in the value of life, and that life is priceless (Bedau, Killing As Punishment 160). These families in King's entire book express that the "murder" of another person's life would not help the grieving process in any way and that two wrongs don't make a right. It may seem now that the people who feel this way are few and far between, and are only stated in Rachel King's book. Respectively there are more people than King lets us believe. There is a movement that is anti death penalty called Murder Victim Families for Reconciliation, or MVFR. This organization is dedicated to the abolishment of capital punishment. This organizations sole purpose is to repeal and prevent expansion of the death penalty state by state. Yes, punishment is required in capital cases, but to what extent? Do we sink to the level of murder and find ourselves in the same position as the persons convicted? There has been controversy on labeling the death penalty as murder, and that in no way is the death sentence murder. The definition of murder can easily be

viewed as “the willful killing of any subject”. Is that not what the death penalty is put into place to deter? But beyond this question, we’re faced with more questions that affect the rest of the nation, well 32 of our 50 states anyways.

The one aspect of capital punishment that should affect the United States is the price of capital punishment. The literal price, not the theoretical question. As compared to life imprisonment, the death penalty is much more expensive. The cost of executions yearly varies depending on what state the execution is taking place in. A study done by Philip J. Cook Ph.D. and Donna B. Slawson M.A.,J.D. at Duke University found that in North Carolina the average cost of an execution is \$2.16 million more than life imprisonment. Other states such as Florida and California can spend anywhere as high as \$90 million on executions in a year. In 1988, according to the Miami Herald, the state of Florida spent \$57 million on 18 executions from 1973 to 1988, making each execution about \$3.2 million per person executed (Cook 79). Conversely if you gave a man a life sentence from the age of 25 for 50 years, the cost of keeping that man imprisoned would cost only \$805,000, assuming that the average lifespan of a man is roughly 75 years. That would give or take \$16,000 for every year that man outlived or was short of the average male life expectancy (Porter).

Ironically it isn’t the death part that’s costing states so much money, it’s the procedure *good pt.* that leads to the conviction that’s so expensive. Death by chair or lethal injection doesn’t cost much at all but it’s estimated that in California, more than 85% of the cost to convict someone of a crime that can result death occurs in the trial levels. This is an accumulation of lawyer fees, jury fees, and all the evidence processing that goes on in the background of the trial. To think that all the money that is saved on trying someone for gas chamber could go towards other things that can benefit this great country of ours.

Another main point to abolish the death penalty is the question of does this count as cruel and unusual punishment. Bedau explains that the term “cruel and unusual punishment” can be interchanged with the term “cruel and unusual ritual/insult” (Bedau, Death is Different 96). Bedau explains more about the courts not interpreting “cruel and unusual” as “cruel and unusual” it’s more along the lines of “tolerably cruel punishment” and practically ignores the text in the eighth amendment. To me there is not anything crueler than death, short of mutilation and torture. But that’s what the death penalty is, torture. Nothing can be more frightening then to face a cruel and unusual way to die and be completely helpless to change that.

Currently the United States is the only western country to who still uses capital punishment. Ever since the reenactment of the death penalty in 1976, over 40 western countries have abolished capital punishment. According to the Murder Victim Families for Reconciliation’s website, the abolishing of capital punishment is a condition for entrance into the Council of Europe, an organization that is motivated by the ideals of Winston Churchill vision of a democratic “European family”. This website also states that the death penalty has been a source for tension between the US and many other countries. For example, Mexico claims that the United States has violated the Vienna Convention, which was determined by the World Court in 2003. The accusation was that the United States never informed their Mexican citizens on their right to contact a national consultant upon their arrest. Now, according to Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation, Inc., Mexico is investigating all the 51 cases of Mexicans that are on death row. Also countries such as Canada, South Africa, Germany, and France abolished the policy that allowed their countries to extradite persons who were sentenced to death to the United States. It’s almost as if we’re the last ones to realize that the death penalty has to go. For



the most part the only countries that still implement the death penalty are third world or developing countries, all with a few exceptions like China and Russia.

The rest of Europe caught on to the fact that the death penalty is not a practical form of punishment. When is the United States going to come to the same realization? Not only is the death penalty morally wrong, it can be considered murder. When is this country going to realize that we can't afford to keep "punishing" people the way we do? The money spent to support capital punishment in 38 states and the military is outrageous. The money spent on ending lives should be more appropriately spent on other things that enhance life and make this country a little better such as education or homeland security. Putting that money towards anything positive is a step in the correct direction for this country.

After reviewing the alternatives, the death penalty is not the best route to go when punishing someone. Prisons almost have the same deterrence percentage than the death penalty. Life imprisonment preserves a life and at the same time sends the same message to future offenders that they won't go unpunished, and it is extremely cheaper.

When one takes the time to evaluate whether or not the death penalty is worth all the time effort and money that gets dumped into it, one would realize that it is not worth any of it. It costs way too much money and can be construed as cruel and unusual punishment. The death penalty should be abolished once again and put away for a long time. Until there are changes with the trial process that make it more cost effective and more accurate, this process will never work. Until that day comes the death penalty should be left alone.

*Some very sophisticated ideas  
being and good use of sources. Issues  
w/ academic tone & conventions  
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vote to reenact forms of capital punishment. This brings to mind the question, should the United States continue with such a primitive form of ultimate punishment? This country can do just fine without it. Porter argues this was proven with the other 12 states that don't practice capital punishment in their legal system. With the current situation of our crime, is the death penalty absolutely necessary? And ultimately, should we do away with capital punishment all together once again.

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the Oakesdale Police Department agrees with the views of Wesley Lowe. He believes that some people are just not redeemable for the things that they've done. <sup>✓ EXPLAIN A BIT MORE</sup>

The point that is most often overlooked is that people in general lack the ability to understand risk. According to Wolf Middelendorff, renowned criminologist and teacher at the State Police School in Frieberg, Germany, the efficacy of preventions varies due to different personalities <sup>EXPAND ON DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES</sup> (14). And that people who have run-ins with the law plan their lives irrationally and are succumbed by temptation. This point makes the theory of general deterrence void because it doesn't apply to everyone. Also the effectiveness of any form of deterrence is closely related to the size and structure of the society (Hart 15). The foundation of deterrence is based on group intimidation. The smaller the group the more effective deterrence can get. This works because the individual isn't distant from the governing structure. In a society like ours that is considerably big compared to other nations, deterrence doesn't work as well as some would like. There is no clear empirical evidence to support the contention that capital punishment has any deterrent effect in the commission of the crime of murder (Porter). But let's say that deterrence wasn't an issue, and that it did do a good job in deterring people from crimes such as murder, and let us say that the death penalty was in full effect in all 50 states. Do we know for sure that the lives we're going to convict for the death penalty is the life that should be taken? Or are we just going to trust the jurors and prosecutors. <sup>REPHRASE INTO STATEMENT</sup>

Scott Turrow a lawyer in Illinois that worked with many capital punishment cases both defending and prosecuting people convicted of capital crimes explains in his book Ultimate Punishment that the state of Illinois was displeased with its current judicial system and it's overall incompetence and the scandal involved legal system (17). <sup>✓ EXPAND & USE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES</sup> And that the population of the

state described the court process for trying a person for the death penalty was lengthy, confusing, and overall worthless, and that the prosecutors were worthless as well.

Undoubtedly there are people who more than worthy than other criminals to be punished for their crimes to the fullest reach of our law. Timothy McVeigh and Ted Bundy are two clear-cut cases of criminals that should not go unpunished (Bedau, Killing As Punishment 158). Timothy McVeigh was found guilty for the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City and the murder of everyone in it, and Bundy was found guilty for serial murder and rape of women across America. These two are perfect examples of why a man should be made an example of and be put to death. But cases get more difficult than these two. If every case were similar to McVeigh's and Bundy's, there would be no debate on whether or not the death penalty should be stay inactive in our legal system. In my opinion I think that these two cases would be the easiest to try in a court of law, but the fact of the matter is that no two cases are identical, and there can't be this many cases that easy to convict. The real truth is that convicting and sentencing a person to death can be very easy, but making sure that the person that is being convicted and sentenced to death is in all actuality the person responsible for the crime is much more difficult than people would like think.

Bedau and his colleagues have gone through and published more than four hundred cases where people were wrongfully accused and convicted in capital or potentially capital cases since 1973 (Bedau, Killing As Punishment 34, 35). So far the total count for people who were exonerated of a capital crime and released from death row is 119 as of February 28, 2005, according to the editors at [www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org). This brings to mind the people that are doing the prosecuting and convicting. Are these people doing their jobs accurately? That 119 could have easily been overlooked and 119 innocent people could have lost their lives because of

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a law that may not be morally just. Do juries and prosecutors take into consideration the families and lives that they affect when a person is wrongfully accused or even the families of the victims?

Contrary to the belief of Wesley Lowe and the other pro death penalty supporters, death is not answer. Not only are philosophers in Harold H. Hart's book Punishment: For and Against, such as H. Acton, and criminologists like Wolf Middelendorff against the pertinence of capital punishment in our society, but also so are the families of the victims of capital crimes. According to Rachel King, death isn't the correct form of punishment. In her book Don't Kill in Our Names she explores the thoughts of the victim's families. To my surprise the victim's families weren't eager for revenge. They didn't believe in "an eye for an eye" or "a life for a life". More so they believe in the value of life, and that life is priceless (Bedau, Killing As Punishment 160). These families in King's entire book express that the "murder" of another person's life would not help the grieving process in any way and that two wrongs don't make a right. It may seem now that the people who feel this way are few and far between, and are only stated in Rachel King's book. <sup>R</sup>respectively there are more people than King lets us believe, <sup>T</sup>there is a movement that is anti death penalty ~~it's~~ <sup>EXPLAIN THE ORGANIZATION</sup> called Murder Victim Families for Reconciliation, or MVFR. Yes, punishment is required in capital cases, but to what extent? Do we sink to the level of murder and find ourselves in the same position as the persons convicted? There has been controversy on labeling the death penalty as murder, and that in no way is the death sentence murder. The definition of murder can easily be viewed as "the willful killing of any subject". Is that not what the death penalty is put into place to deter? But beyond this question, we're faced with more questions that affect the rest of the nation, well 32 of our 50 states anyways.

The one aspect of capital punishment that should affect the United States is the price of capital punishment. The literal price, not the theoretical question. As compared to life imprisonment, the death penalty is much more expensive. The cost of executions yearly varies depending on what state the execution is taking place in. A study done by Philip J. Cook Ph.D. and Donna B. Slawson M.A., J.D. at Duke University found that in North Carolina the average cost of an execution is \$2.16 million more than life imprisonment. Other states such as Florida and California can spend anywhere as high as \$90 million on executions in a year. In 1988, according to the Miami Herald, the state of Florida spent \$57 million on 18 executions from 1973 to 1988, making each execution about \$3.2 million per person executed (Cook 79).

Conversely if you gave a man a life sentence from the age of 25 for 50 years, the cost of keeping that man imprisoned would cost only \$805,000, assuming that the average lifespan of a man is roughly 75 years. That would give or take <sup>CITE STATISTICS</sup> \$16,000 for every year that man outlived or was short of the average male life expectancy.

Ironically it isn't the death part that's costing states so much money, it's the procedure that leads to the conviction that's so expensive. Death by chair or lethal injection doesn't cost much at all but it's estimated that in California, more than 85% of the cost to <sup>REPHRASE & MAKE</sup> convict someone of <sup>NOTE SPECIFIC</sup> death occurs in the trial levels. This is an accumulation of lawyer fees, jury fees, and all the evidence processing that goes on in the background of the trial. To think that all the money that is saved on trying someone for gas chamber could go towards other things that can benefit this great country of ours <sup>OMIT</sup> (But maybe we'll be the last to steer away from this brutal form of punishment.)

Another main point to abolish the death penalty is the question of does this count as cruel and unusual punishment. Bedau explains that the term "cruel and unusual punishment" can be



interchanged with the term “cruel and unusual ritual/insult” (Bedau, Death is Different 96).

Bedau explains more about the courts not interpreting “cruel and unusual” as “cruel and unusual” it’s more along the lines of “tolerably cruel punishment” and practically ignores the text in the eighth amendment. To me there is not anything crueller than death, short of mutilation and torture. But that’s what the death penalty is, torture. Nothing can be more frightening then to face a cruel and unusual way to die and be completely helpless to change that.

Currently the United States is the only western country to who still uses capital punishment. Ever since the reenactment of the death penalty in 1976, over 40 western countries have abolished capital punishment. According to the Murder Victim Families for Reconciliation’s website, the abolishing of capital punishment is a condition for entrance into the <sup>ABOUT COUNCIL OF EUROPE</sup> Council of Europe. This website also states that the death penalty has been a source for tension between the US and many other countries. For example, Mexico claims that the United States has violated the Vienna Convention. <sup>WHEN</sup> The accusation was that the United States never informed their citizens <sup>MEXICO CITIZENS</sup> on their right to contact their <sup>WAY THEY WERE ARRESTED</sup> (consultant) <sup>WHAT KIND OF CONSULTANT</sup> upon their arrest. Now, according to Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation, Inc., Mexico is investigating all the 51 cases of <sup>EXPLAIN WHY WE DID THAT</sup> Mexicans that are on death row. Also countries such as Canada, South Africa, Germany, and France abolished the policy that allowed their countries to extradite persons who were sentenced to death to the United States. It’s almost as if we’re the last ones to realize that the death penalty has to go. For the most part the only countries that still implement the death penalty are third world or developing countries, all with a few exceptions like China and Russia.

The rest of Europe caught on to the fact that the death penalty is not a practical form of punishment. When is the United States going to come to the same realization? Not only is the death penalty morally wrong, it can be considered murder. When is this country going to realize

that we can't afford to keep "punishing" people the way we do? The money spent to support capital punishment in 38 states and the military is outrageous. The money spent on ending lives should be more appropriately spent on other things that enhance life and make this country a little better such as education or homeland security. Putting that money towards anything positive is a step in the correct direction for this country.

After reviewing the alternatives, the death penalty is not the best route to go when punishing someone. Prisons almost have the same deterrence percentage than the death penalty. Life imprisonment preserves a life and at the same time sends the same message to future offenders that they won't go unpunished, and it is extremely cheaper.

When one takes the time to evaluate whether or not the death penalty is worth all the time effort and money that gets dumped into it, one would realize that it is not worth any of it. It costs way too much money and can be construed as cruel and unusual punishment. The death penalty should be abolished once again and put away for a long time. Until there are changes with the trial process that make it more cost effective and more accurate, this process will never work. Until that day comes the death penalty should be left alone.

## Research Statement

Capital punishment has been an issue that all different types of people have discussed. People often question whether it's right, ethical, or if it's morally just. Capital Punishment may be a useful form of deterrence but ~~I think that~~ the United States would be better off without.

When we think of death penalty we think of the question "is what we're doing right". According to Wesley Lowe, capital punishment is the only form of deterrence that America has, and that prisons don't prove to be any better than the capital punishment methods used in 38 states. But that's just one person's opinion. But for the opinions that should really matter, they say something completely opposite. The MVFR, or Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation, chose to take a very different view of the matter. This organization is comprised of families of murder victims and capital punishment abolitionists. They view capital punishment as institutionalized violence, and that all capital punishment really does is create more murder victims. Not only are the families of murder victims opposed of this brutal form of ultimate punishment, so is the general public. In the state of Illinois, Scott Turrow explains that the general consensus of the state is that they are tired of the lengthy trials and the overall blunders of the prosecution team.

But for the most part the American people are not affected directly. But indirectly capital punishment takes the money right out of our pockets. According to a study done by Professor Philip J. Cook at Duke University, the state of North Carolina spent \$2.6 million more per

execution than they needed to if those executions were life imprisonments. But apparently paying three to six times more for the ending of someone's life is more appealing than resorting to a lifetime sentence. It's funny to think that the chair or noose or injection needle can cost upwards of \$2.16 and higher, but in all actuality, it's the conviction that cost so much. But can a prosecution team honestly say that the person they are convicting is the correct person for the chair.

So far to date from 1973 there have been 119 exonerated people from death row. But to the opinion of Hugo Bedau, this is 119 too many. Bedau and his colleagues have gone through and published more than three hundred cases where persons were wrongfully accused of a capital punishment crime or a potential capital punishment crime. To me this says there is too much error in our judicial system to let them or any jury decide who should and shouldn't die.

To me the death penalty can work, but we have to ask ourselves if this form of punishment is morally just and are we willing to risk the life of another innocent life or wrongfully convicted person. Better yet we have to ask ourselves if we were certain of exactly who did a crime worth dying for. But until the citizens of this country cannot afford to spend more than \$2.16 million per execution to support such a method of punishment. The money that the government spends on executions can easily be allocated somewhere else, somewhere it's absolutely needed. Capital punishment is just not cost effective, and it shouldn't be implemented in the our 38 states.

Be less pesky  
with my opinions

Writing Assignment #1  
January 20, 2005

## Autobiography

During childhood there aren't too many things that one can remember. People always remember the good times like, playing Pop Warner football, going out to the park, and going out to family barbecues. When I think of my childhood I remember all of those, but I never seem to forget the biggest culture shock of my life, the time I moved to the state of Washington from good old San Diego.

At this time my mother and father were going through a rocky time and were contemplating divorce, my older brother was too cool for school to hang out with me, and my two younger brothers were just that, young. I was 12 when this happened. This is a horrible and confusing age for a child to have to pick up and start over on the opposite side of the state. No friends, a family that you could care less to hang out with, and a totally different environment than what I was used too.

As the years finally rolled by I made friends, I made enemies, and most of all I made my way through a very confusing time in my life. Not knowing where I belonged, I bounced from one group of friends to the other. I was clique hopping. Still not fitting anywhere, I finally settled down with a group of people that expressed much interest in me. I fell into the ROTC group. It was the best time I had in high school. I never partied, I never drank, I never really stayed out that late, some would see me and think of me as a nerd or thought that I was lame, but that wasn't the truth. I fit in with everyone, I was everyone's friend. I guess that was one of the

benefits of jumping from clique to clique, you get the best of every group, and it's easy to weed out the bad.

During the semester of my sophomore year, I was doing great. I had a job, a beautiful girlfriend, a car (that's not quite as beautiful as the girlfriend), and friends that would bend over backwards to help me out. There was nothing else I could ask for. There was nothing else I wanted. But when it came to choosing a college that I wanted to attend, I was absolutely clueless. I didn't even know what I wanted to do when I grew up. Then I realized that I wanted to go to WSU and that I wanted to be in the Air Force. I applied to the university and everything was smooth sailing from there, or so I thought.

Right before my freshman year in college, I hit a few bumps that I really wasn't ready for. My girlfriend at the time was going to enlist in the Air Force, which was my influence because she was always fascinated about how I did things in the ROTC. My dad moved to Hawaii after my parents were divorced. My brother was kicked out of the house, and my mom had to work two dead end jobs to help me pay for the college that I so desperately wanted to attend.

This brings me to my first year at WSU. I was your typical lonely freshmen, with a roommate that I couldn't stand. My roommate was a drug dealer and a drug dealer, but they usually go hand in hand. ~~And~~ all my best friends were ~~all~~ back home, working the daily grind. My classes were tough, so tough that I started believing that high schools nowadays give you a diploma just so they can stop babysitting you. Who would have known that so much reading, writing, and math were involved with college. Lonely with no where to go I decided to look at fraternities. I toured a few of the bigger houses, met a lot of people, saw a lot of things, and forgot a lot of names. I ended up settling with the smallest fraternity on campus, But that was

fine, I wasn't looking for 80 men in one house, or the social life, or the biggest party house. I was perfectly content with the great brotherhood that was in the worst looking house. That's when things started looking up. My grades pulled up, I got out more, and I had friends again that would help me out at the drop of a dime. I had brothers.

You might consider explaining this just to give a better idea of what you've been through

The true test that I used to find out if my brothers were really my brothers was when the unthinkable happened. My girlfriend of 2 years who was also my fiancé of 3 months and I decided that we couldn't be together anymore, due to reasons that I don't want to disclose at this time. All my brothers were there at my weakened moment. This is the moment that I found out who were really my friends and who weren't. This was the time that I knew that I was in the right place to be.

It's hard to think that most of my life right now revolves around my fraternity and the Air Force. But in all actuality, that's all that molded my life. I strived to be better at what I did because of the Air Force. Every decision that I made until this point was influenced by the fact that I'll one day be an officer in the Air Force. My friends back home have shaped the way that I think and the way I act. I like to think of my personality as a compilation of everything that is good in all my friends.

But the biggest factor that shapes my life now is my fraternity. This place has taught me such a good work ethic and what friendship and brotherhood was about. Especially when I didn't have a friend in the world, or when my family wasn't within reach.

- I liked the way you wrote the paper on a timeline, it flowed well.
- From reading the paper I understand what things have shaped your personality, but I don't understand exactly how. You might go into more detail on how exactly your past experiences have made you who you are today.
- I thought you did well on what content to include. Obviously your fraternity and the Air Force are big for you and you devoted a lot of space to those two things.
- Paper was organized well, & read like a narrative

English 101  
Cover letter

This class proved to be a lot more difficult than I had anticipated. Being a sophomore and hearing stories from my friends and classmates <sup>RETHINK</sup> put me under the impression that English 101 was going to be a walk in the park. They talked about 2-3 page papers that included absolutely no thought or process. <sup>REPORT</sup> Pretty much just fill up the required amount of pages and turn it in. My experience in this class proved to be much more than that, and soon I realized what being a good writer as a college student consisted of.

Critical thinking was never a problem for me. I understood an assignment as well as I was expected to. I never struggled with understanding what I was to accomplish. The main problem I had was the ability to <sup>"EXPAND"</sup> go above and beyond and examine every outlet of the topic I was to write about. I seemed to answer just the <sup>REPORT</sup> black and white questions. I never took into consideration everything else that could have made my work that much more stronger. In this class I learned how to find effectively worthy sources that would help me advance as a writer; specific scholarly journals. And I learned to summarize the sources rather well and <sup>DETERMINE</sup> determined with information to omit and to include. I now take the time to dig a little deeper and <sup>ASSES</sup> asses which authors are experts in specific fields and examine their bibliography to find out what influenced them. Overall my progression with my critical thinking process has more than advanced after taking this class.

I'm not sure of what my rhetorical awareness level was before this class, but I do know what level <sup>EXPLAIN</sup> I'm at currently. I now know how to establish my focus on one main idea and then branch out to smaller supporting ideas that would incur some thought in my audience. Before hand I was to prone to having either one big idea that would get too repetitive or too many ideas



that were vague never in depth. I understand the tone and voice and rhetoric I would have to use for different audiences. Especially with research papers, I learned that not everyone in going to agree with you from the start, and to impose your opinion early and repeatedly would most likely irritate your audience and make my research paper ineffective. I established the ability to make my writing flexible to cater to the needs of different audiences.

My process of writing was horrible up to this point. I would spend hours on a draft and look at it once and call it a final draft. I realize now that this was not acceptable in college or anywhere for that matter. Writing is a process that lets people understand what you know, and if you don't refine your writing until it's acceptable to the standards you are writing for, it would distort the ability people perceive you to have. Also, by getting feedback from my peers helped me revise my work to the point where it's a strong piece. I learned to make multiple drafts and revise as much as possible and almost take the revision process as a process to start over and rethink many ideas that I didn't incorporate in my original draft. I also developed the ability to be as critical as I can when it came to my own writing. I can now reflect on my entire writing process and go over what work I did and what work I need to do.

My knowledge of conventions was always good, but not great. To me convention was knowing where to put a period and where to put a comma, but now I realize that it goes further than that. When worrying about conventions I have to include my tone and the structure of my writing. This is just as important as knowing what punctuation to use. I had many problems figuring out how to structure my paper so that it flows in a manner where the audience won't get confused or bored. I learned that reading an eight page paper doesn't have to feel like reading an eight page paper.

incorporate my  
difficulties determining  
from opinion paper to research  
paper.