

Thinking About College Writing: Ranking Claims

Imagine that you are in a college general education class in U.S. society. As an example, the goals of such classes are similar to the following:

Students will

- Access and analyze historical, analytical, and cultural materials
- Develop observations and conclusions about selected themes in U.S. society and culture
- Construct interpretations using evidence and critical analysis
- Communicate and defend interpretations
- Analyze the ways difference and diversity have shaped the culture and society of the United States

Imagine that it's very early in the semester and your teacher gave you a writing assignment to analyze an ad from 1910. The ad can be found on Handout 8.2. The professor gave you the assignment to see what kind of thinkers she has in class. You really want to get off on the right foot by impressing her.

Rank the following claims from the one that would most likely result in a paper that would make a favorable impression to the one that would be least likely to result in a good paper. Remember, good claims have to be clear, defensible, and controversial.

1. ____ Automobiles have long been very important in American life.
2. ____ A close examination of an automobile ad from 1910 reveals interesting differences between what car buyers cared about then and what they care about now.
3. ____ Automobiles are very different now from what they were in 1910.
4. ____ Times have changed substantially since 1910.
5. ____ An examination of an ad from 1910 reveals that what consumers care about has not dramatically changed in the last century.

Now, write a paragraph in which you explain why you ranked the claims in the order that you did. Justify your choice for the best claim and then explain why each of the other claims is not as good a choice as the one you ranked as #1.