Scholarship Contest Guidelines

Context: Imagine you have been asked by your teacher to represent your local community at a congressional hearing concerning an important issue that is confronting the nation. Your audience will be interested in both the local and national consequences of your argument. Keep in mind that your audience will be familiar with the general details of the topic, so your focus should be on the specific arguments and evidence in favor of your position within the debate.

Assignment: Drawing on the knowledge of your chosen area of study as well as your personal experience, you are to select one of the topics from the attached list for analysis and discussion.

Your essay should accomplish the following:

- Introduce the issue at hand and the position that you advocate.
- Provide a brief account of the history of the issue.
- Detail your particular stance on the issue.
- Outline and explain the evidence in favor of your position.
- Acknowledge and explain the opposing view to your claim.
- Refute the opposing view with counter-arguments of your own.
- Persuade the audience as to why your position is the best one to take.

Format: The format of your essay should adhere to the following guidelines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td>1,000-1,500 Words (4.5-5 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Line Format</strong></td>
<td>Double-spaced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Margins</strong></td>
<td>1 inch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Font</strong></td>
<td>Times New Roman, 12 pt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Justification</strong></td>
<td>Full (Body)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>File Type</strong></td>
<td>.PDF or .DOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style Manual</strong></td>
<td>Modern Language Association (MLA) or Chicago</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students are required to use outside sources to provide accurate evidence in support of their position.

All sources that are used should be cited on a separate works cited page, according to the guidelines of the MLA or Chicago Style Manual.

Footnotes or endnotes are recommended.
All students are strongly encouraged to use the Writing Center before submitting their essays.

**Submission:** Essays are to be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. on Friday, September 11, 2015.

All essays must be submitted as a .PDF or .DOC.

Submissions are to be sent via e-mail to one of the following coordinators:

- If you are applying to the General Track, submit your essay to Gina Barnett at barnettg@stjohns.edu.
- If you are applying to the Pharmacy Track, submit your essay to Ivelisse Ramos at ramosi@stjohns.edu.

**Award:**

Essays will be reviewed by the Alumni Insider’s View…U.S. Capital Program Committee. Only participants of the U.S. Capital Program are eligible to win.

The winners of the essay contest will receive either the Joseph P. Addabbo ’46L, ’84HON or the Arthur B. Carton ’25C, ’29L scholarships. More than one winner may be announced for either scholarship at the discretion of the Washington D.C. Alumni Insider’s View… program Committee.

Students are asked to consult with the Office of Financial Aid Services to determine whether or not they are eligible to receive financial assistance through either scholarship before submitting their essay.

All submissions are judged according to the following criteria:

- Presentation
- Writing style
- Grammar and spelling
- Logical structure
- Clarity of argument
- Strength of evidence and data
- Quality of citations
- Personal passion

Recipients will be announced on Thursday, October 15, 2015 at the Student and Alumni Networking Reception.
Essay Questions

For your essay, choose one of the following issues:

1. **Elonis v. United States.** The First Amendment of the United States Constitution broadly protects the freedom of speech and expression. However, the first amendment does not patently allow all types of speech to occur. One major exception is when a threat of bodily harm is made to another person. In Elonis v. United States, Anthony Elonis posted graphic and violent revenge fantasies in the form of rap lyrics on Facebook. These lyrics expressed murdering his estranged wife, employer, co-workers, and even the FBI agent sent to investigate Elonis. In his defense, Elonis claims that posting of his lyrics on Facebook was simply an act of artistic expression. However, the government asserts that Elonis’ claim “disregards the very different contexts in which his own statements were made” in comparison to commercial artists.

   **Given the emergence of social media over the past decade, should the threat exception to free speech be patently extended to personal postings on social media? If not, what standard should be used for social media to draw the line between a threat and artistic expression?**

2. **Obergefell v. Hodges.** The Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution forbids state governments from denying the equal protection of the laws to any person within their jurisdiction. In Obergefell v. Hodges, the Court will decide whether state bans on gay marriages runs afoul of the Equal Protection clause in the Fourteenth Amendment. The defendant (State of Michigan) asserts that preventing a state ban on gay marriages would be an overreach of the Federal court’s power and should be decided by the elected state legislature. The plaintiff frames the issue as whether the individual has the right to choose to marry and with whom to marry.
Should the ban on gay marriages be decided based on a state’s right to govern or an individual’s right to marry? Do you agree with Justice Scalia that intrusion by the Federal government would result in a libertarian judicial activism? Please explain.

3. Glossip v. Gross. The Eighth Amendment prohibits the use of cruel and unusual punishments. Though the death penalty has been upheld by the Supreme Court, new findings have brought death penalty by lethal injection back to the Court’s purview. Namely, Oklahoma’s use of the drug Midazolam to render prisoners unconscious before execution is not supported by medical consensus to be used as “a standalone anesthetic during painful surgeries, because it is inherently incapable of reliably inducing and maintaining deep, coma-like unconsciousness.” Hence, use of Midazolam opens up the possibility that the prisoner may suffer excruciating pain during execution.

Should the lack of medical certainty be used as a standard for determining whether a punishment is cruel and unusual? If so, what amount of certainty or consensus should exist to make such a determination?

4. King v. Burwell. In 2012, the Supreme Court narrowly deemed that Congress could in fact force Americans to obtain health insurance under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). However, another challenge to the PPACA has arisen around the statutory interpretation of the legislation. Specifically, the Court must determine whether “Exchange established by the State” should be interpreted literally or as a term of art. This will determine whether the government illegally implemented PPACA by allowing certain persons who bought health insurance on federally established exchanges (versus state established exchanges) to qualify for federal tax credits. This determination will have serious consequences as 6.4 million people could lose their coverage.

If the Court deems such tax credits for those individuals who bought insurance from federal established exchanges as illegal, what will be the fate of PPACA? Should the Court interpret the text literally or should the Court consider legislative language as a whole? What alternative courses of action exist if the tax subsidies are struck down?
Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution

As soon as we study animals—not in laboratories and museums only, but in the forest and the prairie, in the steppe and the mountains—we at once perceive that though there is an immense amount of warfare and extermination going on amidst various species, and especially amidst various classes of animals, there is, at the same time, as much, or perhaps even more, of mutual support, mutual aid, and mutual defense amidst animals belonging to the same species or, at least, to the same society. Sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle. Of course it would be extremely difficult to estimate, however roughly, the relative numerical importance of both these series of facts. But if we resort to an indirect test, and ask Nature: "Who are the fittest: those who are continually at war with each other, or those who support one another?" we at once see that those animals which acquire habits of mutual aid are undoubtedly the fittest. They have more chances to survive, and they attain, in their respective classes, the highest development of intelligence and bodily organization. If the numberless facts which can be brought forward to support this view are taken into account, we may safely say that mutual aid is as much a law of animal life as mutual struggle, but that, as a factor of evolution, it most probably has a far greater importance, inasmuch as it favors the development of such habits and characters as insure the maintenance and further development of the species, together with the greatest amount of welfare and enjoyment of life for the individual, with the least waste of energy.