Writing Prompt: According to the US Supreme Court and the US Constitution, capital punishment (death penalty) is acceptable when the severity of the sentence has been deemed to be appropriate to the severity of the crime. The death penalty is most commonly used for first degree murder. As of January 2008, 37 states permit capital punishment. On the other hand, some people believe the death penalty is unjust because it violates the Eighth Amendment of the US Constitution, which forbids “cruel and unusual punishment.”

**Writing Task: Write a letter to your state legislator in which you explain whether or not you believe the death penalty is a just form of capital punishment to be permitted in Kentucky. You may use the following information, your own experiences, observations, and/or readings.**

Arguments in favor of the death penalty: • The death penalty prevents future murders • A just society requires the death penalty for the taking of a life • Death penalty is more humane than life imprisonment • Death penalty can be more economical than life imprisonment • The death penalty is usually applied fairly • executing the innocent is a rare but acceptable risk of the death penalty

“How come life in prison doesn't mean life? Until it does, we're not ready to do away with the death penalty. Stop thinking in terms of "punishment" for a minute and think in terms of safeguarding innocent people from incorrigible murderers.” -Jesse Ventura, Former Governor of Minnesota

Arguments against the death penalty: • The death penalty is not a proven deterrent to future murders • The death penalty is not a just response for the taking of a life • Death penalty precludes the chance for guilty person to reform and “pay-back” society • The death penalty is sometimes applied unfairly • There is a risk of executing people who are actually innocent

“If a punishment is unusually severe, if there is a strong probability that it is inflicted arbitrarily, if it is substantially rejected by contemporary society, and if there is no reason to believe that it serves any penal purpose more effectively than some less severe punishment, then the continued infliction of that punishment violates the command of the Clause that the State may not inflict inhuman and uncivilized punishments upon those convicted of crimes. Under these principles and this test, death is today a ‘cruel and unusual’ punishment.” -US Supreme Court Justice William Brennan

“In the last 30 years, 124 inmates were found to be innocent and released from death row.” -American Civil Liberties Union website

Sample outline:

Paragraph 1: Introduction

-Explain the topic

-Thesis: your view on the issue

Paragraph 2: Body Paragraph

-Give one supporting reason for your thesis and explain in a well develop paragraph

Paragraph 3: Body Paragraph

-Give one supporting reason for your thesis and explain in a well develop paragraph

Paragraph 4: Body Paragraph

-Give one supporting reason for your thesis and explain in a well develop paragraph

Paragraph 5: Conclusion

-Summarize your main points and thesis

***\*\*\*Remember to make a well-developed argument for or against something it is good practice to address counter claims from the opposing side of the argument***

**THIS IS A TEST GRADE, TAKE IT SERIOUSLY, THIS SHOULD BE SOME OF YOUR BEST WORK**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Formatting | -Paper has significant errors in formatting structure  -Paper is significantly shorter than required  -Paper has significant “typo issues” and shows little evidence of proofreading  \*0 points | -Paper has some errors if formatting structure  -Paper is shorter or longer than required  -Paper has some “typo issues” and shows some evidence of proofreading  \*1 to 10 points | -Paper has no or minor error errors in formatting structure  -Paper is required length  -Paper has no or few “typo issues” and shows evidence of proofreading  \*11 to 15 points |
| On Time | -Papers may not be turned in more than one week late in most circumstances  \*Zero for the assignment | -Papers may be turned in up to one week late in most circumstances  \*Late papers will **automatically lose 30 points** | -Paper is typed and printed out or neatly handwritten and ready to turn in at the **start** of class  *or*  -Paper is typed and e-mailed to Mr. Riley before the **start** of class  \*10 points |
| Thesis/Argument | -Paper lacks a clear and meaningful thesis/ argument  \*0 points | -Paper attempts to develop a clear and meaningful thesis/ argument  \*1 to 14 points | -Paper has a clear and meaningful thesis/ argument  \*15 points |
| Organization/Focus | -Paper lacks focus on the thesis  -Paper’s organization distracts from the purpose  -Paper fails to develop thoughts and ideas  \*1-9 points | -Paper occasionally lacks focus on the thesis  -Paper’s organization occasionally distracts from the purpose  -Paper sometimes fails to fully develop thoughts and ideas  \*10-25 points | -Paper rarely or never lacks focus on the thesis  - Paper’s organization rarely or never distracts from the purpose  -Paper rarely or never fails to fully develop thought and ideas  \*25-30 points |
| Persuasiveness | -Paper largely fails to provide logical arguments as support  -Paper largely fails to grab a reader’s attention  -Paper largely fails to clarify the issue for the reader  \*1-9 points | -Paper sometimes fails to provide logical arguments as support  -Paper sometimes fails to grab a reader’s attention  -Paper sometimes fails to clarify the issue for the reader  \*10-25 points | -Paper mostly or always provides logical arguments as support  -Paper mostly or always grabs the reader’s attention  -Paper mostly or always clarifies the issue for the reader  \*25-30 points |

Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/100 points

Comments: