O’Sullivan Research Assignment

For this assignment, you will write a letter that exercises your right to question authority.

Due dates:

Tuesday, April 7 – Three double-spaced copies brought to class for peer review. You must have sent it to Smart Thinking or made an appointment in the writing center.

Tuesday, April 14 – A double-spaced copy with works cited page submitted to Blackboard, hard copy with works cited page in portfolio along with peer review form and Smart Thinking reply or writing enter slip (both will give you 5 points extra credit).

Tuesday, April 21 – A single draft copy submitted as hard copy and on Blackboard, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope (I will provide the envelopes, but I can’t afford all those stamps).

Research Process:

First, look around and think about an issue you would like changed. This can be something local like the start time of high school or better mass transit, or it can be a larger issue such as climate change or immigration.

Once you have decided on an issue, then you need to figure out where to address your letter: perhaps to a school board member, the mayor or county commissioner, the governor, a state representative or senator, a federal representative or senator, or even the president.

Now, it’s time to do research. Using the online databases at HCC, find statistics, facts, anecdotes, opinions, or whatever else can help to back up your side of the argument. One important component may be finding other places that have implemented this change to show how well it has worked.

Outline of the letter’s body:

Paragraph One – Open with who you are and why you belong in the community (ie: My name is ___, and I am a citizen of Hillsborough County). Define the problem, give some background or an anecdote about the issue, and then move to your thesis. Thesis: What do you want changed and what positive effects will it bring?

Paragraph Two – Explain the reasons for this change and use examples, statistics, and quotes to back them up. You are encouraged to use personal anecdotes since these make the information more interesting and accessible.

Paragraph Three – Solutions! How can we implement the change? What will it cost? How will it be paid for?

Paragraph Four – What does the opposition think? Why do some people think this wouldn’t be a good idea? Back up these refutations with examples, statistics, and quotes. However, always rebut these arguments with your own side of the issue, showing how your side is better in the long run.

Paragraph Five – Conclude and wrap up your ideas as succinctly as possible.

Since this is a letter, you need to state your ideas precisely so that it is not too long. Remember, you can say a lot in a small space if you are concise and watch for wordiness.

MLA Citations:

In the letter, you must say where you found your sources in the text of your writing (ie: In the New York Times on January 6, 2013, David Brooks wrote, “_____.”)

For me, you must also create a works cited page following the MLA format in The Little Brown Book. The works cited page will not be sent with the letter, but it will be part of your grade.
MLA Format of the letter:

Your first and last name (Dora Explorer)

Your street address (123 Cartoon Lane, Apt. A)

City, State, Zip (Los Angeles, California 12345)
(two spaces)

Date (written out formally – January 20, 2015)
(two spaces)

Recipient’s name

Recipient’s street address

Recipient’s city, state and zip code
(two spaces)

Dear __________:

(one space)

Body of the Letter (each paragraph indented with no extra spaces between paragraphs)

Sincerely,

(four spaces, this is where your signature goes)

Your Name typed

On the front of your envelope in the middle:

Recipient’s name

Recipient’s street address

Recipient’s city, state and zip code

In the upper left hand corner of the envelope:

Your first and last name (Dora Explorer)

Your street address (123 Cartoon Lane, Apt. A)

City, State, Zip (Los Angeles, California 12345)

The stamp goes on the upper right hand corner

Do not seal the envelope; I need to look inside first.

You never know how much influence you can have until you try; I look forward to seeing you make a difference. Good luck!