Assignment:
Data Opportunity/Challenge Essay
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Course: *BUS 312*
Title: Data Literacy for Business (3 units)

"The five functions of management are 1), setting objectives and planning, 2), organizing the group, 3), motivating and communicating, 4), measuring performance, and 5), developing people."
---Peter Drucker (1909-2005)

Goal:
I want you to reflect briefly on a substantive issue germane to this class, and I want to capture a small writing sample from each of you. This assignment is straightforward.

Objective:
In narrative essay format, I want you to describe the most engaging data-related opportunity or most intractable data-related challenge that you have ever encountered as an employee. The data issue can be an opportunity that is just waiting to be exploited (leveraged), or perhaps it was indeed leveraged successfully. Similarly, the data issue can be a challenge that is just waiting to be addressed (resolved), or perhaps it was indeed addressed successfully. You can describe the issue itself, the issue and the approach (successful or not), or the issue and what approach you would take if you could.

Business data or Business information is related to quantitative material (numbers or words) that impact decisions in a business. These decisions can be operational, tactical, or strategic. Raw data is turned into meaningful information through data analysis. An analysis can include simple visualizations (e.g., graphs and charts), descriptive statistics (e.g., tables of summary means or proportions/percentages), inferential statistics (e.g., hypothesis testing such as a t-test), or predictive statistics (e.g., linear regression).

I am less interested in which issue you select; I am more interested in your attention to detail, your critical reasoning, and your due diligence with respect to language use and grammar. More to the point, since professionals, managers, and executives make decisions, they are concerned with *all* data-related issues in organizations. The challenge for us, therefore, is to apply the theory and practice of data analytics to address, and possibly resolve, the issue (opportunity or challenge) to deliver persistent and consistent value in the organization, especially in the face of competition.

If you have little or no work experience, you may describe a data-related issue that you have encountered as a customer. If this is your situation, at the top of the essay simply state "I have little or no work experience". Finally, only choose an issue from the University if you are employed at the University.

As to critical thinking, the "VALUE" critical thinking rubric on page 3 of this document can be used a general guide. Beyond that minimal requirement, students should employ typical expository, composition, and communication techniques in this brief essay.

Length:
This essay is to be no less than one and one-half (1½) pages in length and no more than two (2) full pages in length. Other relevant formatting requirements ("style guide") are linked from the course web page. Recall also that for all written assignments in this course, 10% is deducted from the content score for each type of error in language use. This essay must have at least three (3) paragraphs; 50% is deducted automatically if not.

Performance Measurement:
The maximum number of points for content is 10.

Textbook Tips:
Students should read and comprehend the details in the Manzo textbook. These chapters contain key ideas that can improve the rigor of your critical thinking essay.

Other Tips:
Students should read and comprehend the Library readings, Lecture presentations, and other materials that complement the textbook. These materials contain key ideas that can improve the relevance of your critical thinking essay.

Some key ideas from Week 1 readings are as follows:
- Are there any principles of lower- or upper-division courses that apply?
- Are there any theories or models from General Education courses that apply?

Some key ideas from Week 2 readings are as follows:
- There are a few Wall Street Journal articles assigned for reading in Week 2. Can you draw an analogy from an element in *your* strategic opportunity/challenge to an element in *one or more* of those articles?

"VALUE" Critical Thinking rubric:
When writing a college-level essay—even a short one—it is helpful to review the basic elements of "critical thinking". The following critical thinking "rubric" is excerpted and adapted from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU):

https://assessment.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/92/2017/02/CriticalThinking.pdf

Before final submission, endeavor to see if your essay would be considered "relatively strong" on all or most of the following elements as applicable to your unique essay.

Element	*Relatively Strong*	*Relatively Weak*
Explanation of issues	Issue/Problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/Problem to be considered is stated without clarification or description
Evidence	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
Influence of context and assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)	Specific position is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position.	Specific position is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.
Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)	Conclusions and related outcomes are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspective discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes are oversimplified.