In-Class/Homework #2

1) In the passages below, first outline the conclusion and reasons for the argument, then identify any ambiguous words or phrases that hurt your understanding of the conclusion or reasons. Explain why there is ambiguity in each case. (Most of the examples from this section are from the Browne website: http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_browne_askingquest_9/107/27418/7019243.cw/index.html). Attach additional sheets if necessary.

a) We should let our aunt die with dignity. We should give the doctor permission to shut off the feeding tube so that she can die in peace.

Conclusion:

Reasons:

Ambiguous words/phrases:

b) The Carnegie Foundation reports that 51 percent of teachers have been verbally abused, 16 percent have been threatened with injury, and students have actually physically attacked seven percent. In schools, the primary goal is the education of students, and that goal cannot be met with the threat of violence always present in the classroom. Schools must invest in stricter security measures — like armed guards and security cameras — if they want to safeguard the learning process and produce effective students.

Conclusion:

Reasons:

Ambiguous words/phrases:
c) I am sick of people talking about the availability of equal opportunity for all in the United States. Even the most cursory examination of the facts reveals that there is no such thing as an "equal chance" for everyone to make it. For example, look at life expectancies: the white population of people over 65 is enormously higher than that of blacks: there were 29 million white people over 65 and only 2.6 million equivalent blacks in that age group. If all races are not given an equal lifespan in which to achieve, they can certainly not be said to have an equal opportunity for success.

Conclusion:

Reasons:

Ambiguous words/phrases:

2) Identify the types of language used in the examples below, and explain how you reached your conclusions. (Note: there may be more than one type per example.)

a) I hesitate to call what is currently going on in the economy a “recession,” as a decline in jobs is merely an indication that producers are getting rid of excess waste in production and tightening their operations. At worst, the economy is undergoing a period of slower growth than in previous years.

Type(s) of language used:

b) The overwhelming majority of workers at this firm are happy about their ability to advance in this company. We cannot help the fact that a few disgruntled workers feel compelled to protest the lack of diversity in management.

Type(s) of language used:
c) We can’t have ROTC on this campus – it’s as good as signing a death warrant for the students we should be educating about peaceful solutions to international problems.

Type(s) of language used:

3) After you identify the conclusion and outline the reasons for each example below, identify the descriptive assumptions that support the reasons. (Examples are from http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_browne_askingquest_9/107/27418/7019259.cw/index.html.)

a) We should not make condoms available in the schools. Such use will only serve to increase the promiscuity that is already taking place among our young children.

Conclusion:

Reasons:

Assumptions:

b) Does it still make sense for Supreme Court Justices to be granted lifetime tenure? Justices seem to be increasingly influential in our society, and at the same time they are spending more and more years on the bench. It is scary to think how important each choice for the Supreme Court is, because each nominee can have such an enduring effect. For example, justices who have retired since 1970 have served on the court an average of 26 years, which is close to twice as long as justices who served prior to 1970. Do we really want justices to have so much influence?

Related to this trend is the fact that the average retirement age has increased from 68 to 80. These changes create fewer vacancies, which then causes more conflict to occur because neither side knows when it's going to get another opportunity to change the court. Another scary feature of such long terms is the fact that judges who will be making extremely important decisions may be doing so at a time when their mental faculties are not as sharp as they once were.

The solution to these concerns is fixed terms of say 15 to 20 years, which could be scheduled such that each president would be able to make at least one court appointment, and usually more than one.
3) b) Conclusion:

Reasons:

Assumptions:

4) After identifying the conclusion and reasons for each example, identify the *value assumptions* in each, and any *value conflicts* that may exist. Attach additional sheets if necessary. (Examples are from the Browne website at http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_browne_askingquest_8/48/12535/3208987.cw/index.html).

a) Conscientious objectors are traitors to their country and should be either arrested or deported to somewhere that will tolerate them. When one's country is in danger of foreign domination, there is no time for cowardice or reflection. The freedom of every citizen is in danger when a war is on, and it is every citizen's duty to contribute to that freedom's defense. Conscientious objectors put everyone at risk, and they must not be allowed to do so with impunity.

Conclusion:

Reasons:

Value Assumptions:
b) Each year in the United States, hundreds of thousands of animals are slaughtered each year to please the palates of Americans. Before their death — usually by electrocution or blunt force head trauma — most of these livestock are kept in deplorable conditions. Cattle feed lots are packed so tightly that animals can scarcely move; chickens are held in cages too small for them to turn around in; veal calves are denied any motion at all to keep their flesh tender. For what? So that people who can afford the privilege can enjoy tasty meat products.

These methods are not necessarily bound to eating meat. People can raise animals the old-fashioned way — on farms with ample pasture and free-ranging animals — and still produce enough meat for America. Mass production methods of raising animals, like those described above, must change if we are to think of ourselves as ethical people; as long as we tolerate such tremendous and pointless suffering, we cannot.

Conclusion:

Reasons:

Value Assumptions:

Values in Conflict: