Essay Assignment #2--The Writing Process

Conceptual analysis does not account for all forms of philosophical thinking, but is only one aspect of philosophical practice. In order to engage in this form of analysis, you must first understand the distinction between general definitions and specific examples. Part of that work entails that you identify an argument's stated and unstated premises, that you distinguish between an argument's premises and conclusions, and that you understand how a philosopher takes her conclusion to follow from her premises. Re-read your *Writer's Handbook* chapter "Analyzing Philosophical Texts" to make sure that you understand these terms.

In turning to *The Prince*, begin by outlining how Machiavelli defines the concept that your instructor has assigned (you may turn to any part of the text to support this initial definition). Consider the premises (both stated and unstated) that underpin his definition of the concept. What arguments about maintaining power lead Machiavelli to define the concept in this way?

Once you have a preliminary sense of the concept and its purpose in Machiavelli's argument, re-read the passage assigned by your section leader and ask yourself how the example in the passage elaborates Machiavelli's definition of the concept. Which parts reinforce his initial definition? Which revise or challenge it? Does the example force the reader to reconsider Machiavelli's premises? If the example straightforwardly illustrates Machiavelli's definition of the concept, how does it contribute to his argument?

Keep in mind that the purpose of your writing is to determine the cogency of Machiavelli's conceptual definition, to account for the consistency of Machiavelli's reasoning. This means that the contexts you provide in your introduction, the focus of your claims, and your conclusion will be driven by the reasoning Machiavelli has developed. As such, your reader will require an introduction that helps contextualize your assigned passage within the structure of Machiavelli's arguments.