Developing Arguments:

Objective: Having practiced skillful explication of texts in the first assignment, andcritical analysis of arguments in the second assignment, you will now practice how todevelop your own arguments relevant to bioethics topics.

Background: The Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues wasrecently asked to address the ethical dimensions of developing an anthrax vaccine forchildren. The purpose of developing the vaccine is to prepare for the possibility of aterrorist attack in which the public is exposed to anthrax. Such an attack is purelyhypothetical—no attack has occurred, nor is one known to be imminent. Thus, exposingthe research subjects to an actual risk of harm or death (the vaccine) is justified byreference to a hypothetical risk (terrorist attack), albeit one that would potentially lead tofar greater loss of life than if there were no vaccine available at the time of an attack.

The Commission addressed the following question: Is it ethically appropriate to test ananthrax vaccine on young (age 0-4) children in order to assess its safety and efficacyfor young children in the absence of an actual or imminent terrorist attack, where anattack may never come to pass, and thus with the possibility that the vaccine maynever be used? Note: the medical question of whether the vaccine is safe and effectivefor young children cannot be answered without conducting clinical trials involving youngchildren.

Assignment:

This assignment has three parts. The length of each section is specified below.

Altogether it should add up to two pages (approximately 600 words)

(Don’t screw this up. Read this over carefully.)

Part 1: (300 words, approximately one page) Drawing on the assigned readings andwhat you have learned in this course – there is NO NEED to conduct any outsideresearch – build an argument in favor of ONE of the following normative conclusions:

A. “It is ethically obligatory (i.e. must be done on ethical grounds) to test an anthraxvaccine on young children in order to prepare for the possibility of a terroristattack.”

B. “It is ethically acceptable to test an anthrax vaccine on young children in order toprepare for the possibility of a terrorist attack, so long as they are financiallycompensated.”

C. “It is ethically acceptable to test an anthrax vaccine on young children in order toprepare for the possibility of a terrorist attack, but only if the children are\_\_\_\_\_.”

(Fill in the blank: e.g. orphans; on Medicaid; drawn from a lottery; poorlybehaved; drawn from high-density population centers; or make up your own.)

D. “It is ethically unacceptable to test an anthrax vaccine on young children in orderto prepare for the possibility of a terrorist attack.”

Write an essay approximately one page in length in which you formulate an argument insupport of your selected conclusion. Note that you DO NOT have to actually agree withthe conclusion in order to argue it. It is fine to choose and argue for a position that youpersonally disagree with.

Be sure to be systematic in laying out your argument, offering clear premises, justifyingyour assumptions, and showing how they build to support your conclusion.

Part 2: In no more than three sentences, give a possible, plausible objection to yourargument.

Part 3: Write an additional 150-200 words rebuttal to the objection from Part 2.

Refer to papers or lectures from class if needed, and cite these sources in a standardreference format.

Papers should be in standard format: Times or equivalent, 12 point, 1 inch margins,double spaced.

Evaluation: Assessment will be based on

1- Quality of critical analysis and

2- Clarity ofexpression.

CRIT (Quality of critical analysis): Quality of reasoning judged by how strong theconnections are between the reasons provided and the conclusions drawn.

EXP (Expression): Clarity of expression, reflecting your ability to express ideasclearly and effectively. This category includes evaluation of your use of proper

English (including word choice, grammar, and spelling), your ability to organizeideas in a clear order, and your ability to cite sources appropriately.