

Making Arguments in your Political Science writing

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Office Hours in 1730A HW: Mon. 12:15-2pm / Tues. 9:30-11am

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Your Argument(s): Joining Academic Conversations

Questions to ask yourself about the conversation you are joining and arguments you are making

- What is the *empirical and/or interpretative puzzle/problem* you intend to address?
- What *makes* the problem you are working on a *problem*?
- What are the *stakes* in addressing your problem? Why is it significant?

Making arguments

- Remember: arguments are *arguable*!
- Counterarguments and counterexamples
- *Some* basic structures of academic argument (Bean 2011, 32)
 - Many scholars have argued A, but I am going to argue B
 - Scholars have frequently asked questions A, B, and C about case/issue X. However, they have not adequately asked or investigated question D. I pose, explore, and seek to answer question D.
 - Scholars are confident in their understandings of A and B. However, because they have failed to analyze X and Y, A and/or B is not comprehensively evaluated.
- *Some* important argumentative moves and examples (Graff and Birkenstein 2014)
 - They say / I say
 - In discussions of X, one controversial issue has been _____. While scholars have proposed _____, _____, and _____, this paper instead argues _____
 - Respond to another scholar's/position's/theory's view
 - Accept and extend it
 - Disagree and reject it
 - Complicate it
 - Planting a naysayer / Responding to counterarguments
 - Some might object that _____. Although I concede _____, I argue that _____
 - So what?
 - This argument has significant implications for broader question of _____, namely _____.

For more information and examples, see Graff and Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*

Using sources (when you're making your own argument...)

What roles do sources play?

- Background information on case, context, etc.
- Evidence and exhibits of your argument
- Method and/or Theory
- Scholarly work to be in conversation with
- Material to question, interrogate
- Counter-arguments to engage in your own writing

Possible functions of assembling a conversation of academic sources

- Establish a controversy
- Establish a consensus that you develop or apply elsewhere, that you dissent from
- Establish a gap in knowledge

Using Active Verbs in Your Writing and Argumentation

For making a claim:	For expressing agreement:	For questioning/disagreeing:	For marking recommendations:
argue assert believe claim emphasize insist observe report suggest	acknowledge admire agree corroborate endorse reaffirm support verify	complicate contradict disavow question refute repudiate	advocate demand encourage implore recommend urge

Using Transitions to Connect Sentences, Ideas, and Arguments

Adapted from Graff and Birkenstein 2014, 109-10

<i>Addition</i>	<i>Elaboration</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Comparison</i>
Besides Furthermore In addition Indeed Moreover	By extension In other words That is Actually	After all Consider For instance For example Specifically	Along the same lines In the same way Likewise Similarly
<i>Cause and Effect</i>	<i>Contrast</i>	<i>Concession</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
Accordingly As a result Consequently Hence Thus Therefore So	Although But By contrast Conversely Despite Even though However In contrast Nevertheless Nonetheless On the other hand Whereas	Admittedly Although Granted To be sure Of course	As a result Consequently Hence In short In sum Therefore Thus In conclusion

Portions of this handout adapted from:

- Anderson, Steph M. 2012. "Elements of Successful Argumentation and the Drafting Process," Hunter WAC Program.
- Bean, John C. 2011. *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. 2014. *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. 3rd ed. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company