Instructor: Jenna Alexander

ENGL 3100

Section 06

**Unit 2: Argument Synthesis Essay**

**Introduction**

Experienced academic writers display knowledge on their subjects by using evidence to support their positions. For this essay, you will use outside texts to support, develop, and/or refute your own argument about academic writing. This essay will require you to synthesize – to pull together – ideas from multiple texts into an original argument; simple summary will not suffice. This essay will help you position yourself as a fellow scholar within theoretical and academic conversations.

**Brainstorming, Research, and Analysis**

1. Start by looking through the course readings. Select **three articles** that relate to one another in some way, even if they disagree or take different perspectives on an issue.
2. Then, **read your texts *closely* and analyze them *rhetorically***. Here are some questions you might consider when you analyze:

* What are the authors’ goals and purposes? How do these differ?
* Who were the intended audiences, and how did those audiences shape the texts?
* How do the authors’ backgrounds shape the texts?
* What strategies do the different authors use? What forms of evidence do the authors use?
* Where and why do the authors agree? Where and why do the authors disagree?

1. Next, think about **how your texts relate to the overarching themes or questions** of the class. Here are some questions you might consider:

* How can English education be improved? What challenges do students and teachers face, and how can we address those challenges?
* Why do teachers use writing as punishment? How does this influence students’ attitudes toward writing?
* How is academic writing personal? How do our past experiences shape our writing?
* How can academic writing help students heal?
* How, if at all, does academic writing differ from other types of writing? How can we distinguish academic writing from non-academic writing?
* How do students “invent the university” when writing a paper? How do different disciplines ask students to “invent the university” in different ways?
* On what qualities should we evaluate academic writing? In other words, how should we define “good” academic writing?
* How do other rhetorical arts (silence, listening, and voice) intersect with writing? Why are these concepts significant to writers?
* How can we understand and describe the writing process(es) that students use? In other words, how do people conceive of the writing process in different ways?
* How do issues of power and authority shape academic writing?
* To what extent should teachers focus on grammar in school? How can teachers help students learn about grammar in more effective ways?
* Other? (See Stuart Greene’s “Argument as Conversation” for more information on framing a good question.)

1. Using your analysis notes and research question, provide a 4-6 page answer to one of these research questions. In other words, you’ll **formulate an argument about writing in academic situations by using three texts as evidence**. This argument may support, refute, develop and/or challenge the ideas that you’ve encountered in the assigned readings. Regardless, you should contribute in a significant way to the scholarly conversations you’ve encountered in the assigned articles.

**Goals**

The goals of this assignment are (1) to synthesize ideas from multiple texts into an original argument and (2) to become conversant with several theoretical issues that concern composition scholars and teachers.

**The Process and Writing Calendar**

**Tuesday, March 17 – Thursday, March 19** – Conferences (first draft or evidence of pre-writing due at your conference)

**Wednesday, April 1 –** Second draft due (bring two copies of your draft to class)

**Monday, April 6** – Portfolio 2 due (along with the final draft of Paper 2)

Rubric/Requirements

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| **Structure/Organization:**   * Follow prompt, use approved topic * Clear, focused purpose * Well-written thesis, represents essay in entirety * Brief summary of the scholarly sources to help the reader(s) understand the debate * Introduction is attention-getting * Sets context, motive and criteria for analysis * Introduces the sources by providing relevant background information (author, title) * Clear organization that emphasizes content and strategies for development * Each paragraph clearly fits with purpose of essay * Paragraphs are structured clearly with topic sentences (MEAL Plan) * Utilizes effective transitions between main ideas and paragraphs (flows well) * Resolution/conclusion |
| **Development/Detail:**   * Analysis is clear and fully explained * Analysis demonstrates depth of thought and complexity * Each main point (paragraph) provides specific details, examples, and/or quotations to illustrate the main idea * The voice is engaging, yet formal * Quotations have signal phrases; they are not dropped in * Quotations and other forms of evidence are fully explained in connection to thesis * Essay demonstrates a certain level of maturity, professionalism and appropriateness * Makes significant revisions from draft to draft, not just sentence-level changes |
| **Polish:**   * Grammar * Active verbs, present tense * Clarity * Sentence structure and variety * Punctuation—commas, colons, dashes and semi-colons * Bibliography |