**Anne McGrail Lane Community College**

**Writing 122: Lesson #2: Entering Academic Conversations by Effectively Listening, Engaging With, and Quoting the Ideas of Others.**

**College Now Faculty: If you just want to find templates/resources from *They Say, I Say*, here are the links. These are also embedded in my lesson notes below, which uses *They Say, I Say.* I received permission from Gerald Graff to include these templates in my course outline.**

Click here to link to a site that has a number of different kinds of templates that you can use in your writing:[**http://www.csub.edu/eap-riap/theysay.pdf**](http://www.csub.edu/eap-riap/theysay.pdf)

Other templates are available on the web, such as this one here. <http://www.iupui.edu/~uwc/pdf/They%20Say-I%20Say.pdf>

Words and phrases to help students summarize:  
<http://www.iupui.edu/~uwc/pdf/Academic%20Conversation%20Templates%20Worksheet.pdf>

Click here for a good explanation of the quotation sandwich. <http://www.csun.edu/~hflrc006/quote.html>

In this lesson, we will talk in detail about key concepts that you will need to understand in order to learn how to best enter conversations about serious subjects such as those in college. To get the most out of this lesson, you should read the articles assigned in Weeks 1 and 2.

**Learning the Moves that Writers Use**

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein write eloquently and elegantly about the "moves" that seasoned writers make in their writing. Their innovation is to show young students of writing that there are certain conventions and formulas to entering academic conversations, and we can learn these formulas almost the way we learn any vocabulary. Whether you are taking this writing class at the beginning or end of your college career, these moves will serve you well if you learn how to incorporate even a few of them into your writing.  Getting comfortable with these moves will give you a "leg up" in all classes that expect you to grapple with ideas.  Beyond that, in life, these moves will help you to listen and converse with members of your community and empower you to make yourself heard and your ideas respected.

**Present Your Ideas as a Response**

One of the best shorthand "tricks" we can learn from Graph and Berkenstein is the way that their formulas facilitate presenting ideas "as a response to some other person or group" (*They Say, I Say,* 3).  If you are not careful, you can get through high school or even college smugly satisfied with your own "opinions" while at the same time feeling that no one hears you.

A cliché of early life is that "I have the right to my own opinion."  Sure, this is true.  But we want more than just a right to a privately held idea--we want to enter a conversation, hear and be heard. And make a difference. Learning how to listen to others helps you to influence your readers rather than sitting back with arms folded, wrapped up in an opinion that is ill-informed or hermetically sealed off from others' ideas.

**Structure Your Opinion by Giving it the Force of Reason**

If you remember that arguments are always a response to others, you will develop the discipline of a strong writer. *TSIS* shows you how to extend your opinion into a rational argument.  By recognizing that you are always entering a conversation that is always already ongoing, you can structure your opinion, give it the force of reason, and make an impact on the ideas, policies, problems and actions of the world around you.

**The Rhetorical Situation**

Last week, we looked at the five aspects of the *rhetorical situation:* text, reader, author, constraints, exigence (TRACE).  These five characteristics of any argument help you to see that arguments occur in a context: whether you agree or disagree, support or challenge an idea, your opinion must be framed within the rhetorical situation or else it will have little impact.

As you have read the articles assigned in this class, you have entered a rhetorical situation: you are the READER or audience for these TEXTS, and you have come to know four AUTHORS' work. So far the EXIGENCE is shaping up to be "Something's amiss with our mediated world." Of course, there are many constraints operating in each of the articles--

Think about one of the articles that you have read so far in this class, and see if you can place your summary and ideas within this template:

**X claims that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I have mixed feelings about it.  On the one hand, I agree that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  On the other hand, I still insist that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**Steps to Take**

Whenever you enter an academic, civic, or even personal conversation, and you sense exigence, it's important to take the steps inspired by Graph and Berkenstein in *They Say, I Say* (p. 9):

* Identify the issue.
* Map out some of the voices out there.
* Introduce a quote from each of the voices you are focusing on and explain it.
* State your own argument.
* Qualify your own argument if necessary in order to appeal to your target audience.
* Support your argument with evidence.

**Master these basic steps and you will have an impact on any issue you care about.**

**"Plant a naysayer in your text" (*TSIS* 10)**

Graff and Birkenstein suggest that "one of the crucial moves in argumentative writing" is to anticipate your reader's objections to what you are arguing. I rarely use sports analogies, but one comes to mind here: when a football team is preparing to play a rival, one of the things they do is to watch their opponents' other games on video—to study the moves that their rivals make. This isn't because they are going to copy them; rather, it is so that they can *anticipate and respond to any moves their rival makes.* You can take a "page from the playbook" of football teams when you write an argumentative or persuasive essay: If you don't "watch the game tapes" of your rival, you might find yourself ambushed.

**The more you can anticipate what your reader would say to what you have to say, the more thorough your argument will be and the more impact you will have.**

**"Pet Beliefs" (*TSIS* 13)**

Entering the conversation in a disciplined way, listening to and summarizing what others say *before* stating your case has enormous advantages.  As Graff and Birkenstein put it, doing this helps you to "see beyond [y]our own pet beliefs" (*They Say, I Say*, 13).  What do they mean by this?

A pet belief is an idea that you have fixed in your mind and you have stopped questioning: like a pet, it is something you love and don't ask questions about. If you are an adult, you probably already have established many beliefs, values, habits, attitudes, and opinions. This constellation of knowledge and experiences guides your every decision, and is very valuable.  But to bring in another metaphor here, sometimes we start living in our beliefs like a comfortable old shoe—even if it no longer fits, has holes in it, or is out of style.  Clinging to a "pet belief" fosters an inability to question, challenge, expand or develop our thinking.

**And the purpose of living is to grow, not to cling to old shoes of thought.  And so while you may be comfortable in your opinion, the real test of life is to be open to new ideas: not necessarily to take them on whole or uncritically, but rather to listen to and learn from them.**

**Benefits of Summarizing**

How does summarizing someone else's idea keep you from clinging to "pet beliefs" and "old shoes" of thought? The advantage of thoughtfully summarizing others' writing is that this practice helps you to frame and clarify your own work (*TSIS,* 19).  Think back to those game films, and recall that looking at the strengths of another team helps you to focus your attention on your weaknesses in this area.

**Summarizing well takes the right equipment, and *TSIS* offers some of it.**

**Click here** **to link to a site that has a number of different kinds of templates that you can use in your writing:** [**http://www.csub.edu/eap-riap/theysay.pdf**](http://www.csub.edu/eap-riap/theysay.pdf)

**SELF CHECK: How could you use these templates to talk about Johnson, Stevens, Goldwasser and Turkle?**

**Different Rhetorical Situation, Different Template**

Notice that the templates change depending upon the rhetorical situation: the opening words in the template on "standard views" suggests that the exigence is contrary to the standard view. Let's complete the template with a theme from this course:

Americans tend to believe that everyone can get ahead if they work hard enough.

Why use this template?

Rehearsing the "standard view" for your reader primes your reader for what *you* are going to say. Your reader expects to read something that either challenges or expands this standard view.  This is one advantage of the summary statement: setting the context for your own argument.

**Use Templates to Analyze Others' Arguments as You Summarize**

Notice that the templates show you how to express your analysis of an aspect of an argument.  If you read Steven Johnson's essay (on TV making you smarter), you could use the following template from the list to express a deduction you've make from what he says:

"Although Johnson does not say so directly *he apparently assumes that "24" should be part of students' curriculum.*

Notice that Johnson never says this in his article.  Rather, *you* are "putting your oar in" here—pointing out one implication of a belief in TV making you smarter.

(The exigence, then, shifts as you write: do we really want our students to watch "24" as part of their curriculum?)

**Use Templates to Provide an Overview of Multiple Voices in a Debate**

Notice that there is a basic template for talking about an ongoing debate where there are more than a couple voices engaged.  Try using the following template to talk about the articles you have read so far:

In discussions of the role of media in our lives, one controversial issue has been\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  On the one hand \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_argues that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. On the other hand, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ contends \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. My own view is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Try out this template to do the same thing:**

When it comes to the topic of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_most of us will readily agree that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-.  Whereas some are convinced that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-, others maintain that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Provide Sustained Attention to Others in the Conversation**

Remember that Graph and Berkenstein's book title begins with "*they"*and then adds "I."    Keep this emphasis in mind as you write your forum posts and essays in this class and beyond.  The key to strengthening your own thinking is to trace it against the contours of the thinking of others.  Remember that whatever you are thinking, others have thought about it already.  When you keep in mind what others are saying, you are forced to be more thoughtful, less certain of your own "pet beliefs."  To maintain a supple response to the world, remember to keep listening.

**Template for Listening**

Other templates are available on the web, such as this one here. <http://www.iupui.edu/~uwc/pdf/They%20Say-I%20Say.pdf>

Notice that again the writers suggest the use of a template for continuing to listen throughout your essay, even as you are stating your own case:

Their assertion that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_is contradicted by their claim that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Dana Stevens uses this framework: she claims that Steven Johnson's selection of TV shows suggest that, far from making us smarter, TV shows like "24" inculcate racist, xenophobic (i.e., anti-intellectual) tendencies. Remember that when you are listening, it doesn't mean that you're not paying attention or that you have nothing to say. On the contrary!

**The Art of Summarizing**

Graff and Berkenstein also describe what Peter Elbow calls the "believing game."  This is a very useful game to play to help you really listen to what someone else is saying.

Do you ever catch yourself reading something, and before you even finish a paragraph you've already stopped reading and listening, and already decided that you are right and the other is wrong? The urgency to have our own say before we've fully listened to others (30) cripples critical thinking.  Next time you are at a party, observe how many conversations work this way—people so urgent to be heard that they can't listen to anyone but themselves.  You can see how ultimately self-defeating this is to all conversations: with only speakers and no listeners, conversations die under the weight of their own inertia.

Play the believing game with all the articles you read in this class: "enter the world of the other" idea (*TSIS* 29) and you will be better prepared to respond to it.

**The "closest cliché syndrome"**

A really useful term that Graff and Berkenstein share with us is called the "closest cliche syndrome." This syndrome occurs when a writer summarizes impecisely, recounting a "familiar cliché that the writers mistakes for the author's view" (*TSIS* 31).

Do you think that Dana Stevens does this when she "rolls her eyes" on paper to what Johnson is saying about TV?  One could argue that she does. Johnson is pointing out a very specific skill that people are learning by following complex narratives. In an attempt to make her argument stronger, Stevens comes close to the "closest cliché syndrome."

**Focus Your Summaries by Using Strong Verbs to Introduce Others' Ideas**

While you don't want to fall prey to this syndrome, you do want to summarize the work of others in a focused way, so that what you say about their arguments is directly relevant to your own thinking.

So avoid the LIST SUMMARY (*TSIS* 33).  To do this, you need to understand the articles you read well enough to characterize what they are saying rather than simply recounting statements like a stenographer.  That's what the words and phrases you will find if you click here will help you to do. <http://www.iupui.edu/~uwc/pdf/Academic%20Conversation%20Templates%20Worksheet.pdf>

**Use the templates provided in this lesson to quiz yourself on how to summarize Johnson and Stevens' essays:**

 Correctly using these verbs to summarize demonstrates your own critical analysis of the authors you are engaging in conversation—and in a very economical way.  Such demonstration of your own critical reading enhances your *ethos* or authority. Others will take what you say in response more seriously when they trust that you understand the larger context.

**The Art of Quoting**

Just as summarizing the work of others is essential for framing your own ideas, so is quoting a key to lending precision and focus to your arguments. By selecting the right words from an author you are in conversation with, you strengthen your credibility and aid your reader's understanding.

To make these "orphaned" quotes a part of your own argument, you need to do two things: choose relevant quotes and frame them properly.

The best way to choose relevant quotes is to select a lot of useful quotes as you read: take notes, write in the margins, etc. Then when it comes time to choose just the right quote for a point you are trying to make, you'll have different ideas to choose from.

**Avoid the "Hit and Run" Quote**

Remember that framing the quote is one of the hardest and most important aspects of the task of quoting. Read the discussion of "hit and run" quotes by clicking here and try to avoid making this error in your own writing.

**The Quotation Sandwich**

As you work toward your first formal essay, you'll want to find ways of creating "quotation sandwiches." Click here for a good explanation of the quotation sandwich. <http://www.csun.edu/~hflrc006/quote.html> This way of integrating quotes into your own argument keeps the reader at the forefront of the rhetorical situation. Rather than "hit and run" quotes, these "sandwiches" begin by introducing the quote, then put the quote in the middle, and then end with an explanation of the quote and why it is important for your own argument.

**Be sure you read the templates that show you how to create the "sandwich": introduce and explain your quotes. Just as important, remember how NOT to introduce quotations. If you want to know when it's time for a quote rather than a paraphrase or summary, check out this handy worksheet.**

**That concludes Lesson #2 on Entering Academic Conversations by Effectively Listening, Engaging With, and Quoting the Ideas of Others.**

**The next lesson, Lesson #3, introduces you to the correct formatting of summaries, paraphrases and quotes. Next week, be sure to print out the Resources for Lesson #3 and become familiar with this important aspect of using sources to write argumentative essays.**

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