Principal Assumption

Most scholarly writing is responsive in nature. Writers respond directly to their objects of study (a work of art, a text, a set of data, etc.), and they almost always compare their responses to those of other analysts. Most academic writing, then, makes use of and responds to the work of other commentators, critics, and researchers. This accounts for its highly intertextual and citational nature. The constituent question for a scholar is "What have others had to say about X, and how do I respond?" Members of disciplinary communities prefer various ways of responding both to their objects of study and to others' findings. These forms of response show up in examples of writing in the field. These forms are exemplified below.

Commentary about a Subject Exists as a Field of Disagreements

Since scholars bring various perspectives, commitments, and interests to their objects of study, disagreements are to be expected. In fact, in scholarly communities, disagreements are welcomed as a way to constantly test the quality of collective knowledge about any matter in the humanities.. By commenting on, calling into question, or taking issue with previous findings, scholars move disciplinary knowledge forward. Before a scholar begins her written work, she develops a map of the vast territory of disagreements (with its traditions of commentary, new perspectives, novel arguments, and breakthrough findings) about her object of study. Eventually, the writer locates herself in this territory, triangulating her position in relation to what others have said.

Critical and Creative Functions

Knowledge of the scholarly modes of response will help you organize your research and help you determine how positions, perspectives, and arguments are interrelated. These modes will help you to identify a particular scholar's agenda. Because a mode of response is typically articulated early in a discourse, that mode can guide your understanding of what a scholar wants to accomplish in her piece, what sort of intellectual work she wants to get done. In addition to this critical function, the modes of response will help you create your own argument since you will likely be employing one or another mode in order to launch your own essay. The modes will help you decide what you have to say and how you will add your own voice to the conversation you've been monitoring throughout your research process.

■ Topoi | Typical Modes of Response

What are topoi?

Classical teachers of argument knew that writers needed a set of strategies for initiating and entering into disagreements. These strategies were recorded onto the papyrus scrolls, which acted as guides for writers. A strategy was described at a certain place on the scroll; therefore the strategies became known as *topoi* (in Greek, plural for *topos*, which literally means "place"). With the *topoi* at hand, a speaker or writer could be reminded of available strategies for initiating disagreements. Consider the opening section of an essay about free speech on campus:

Many U.S. colleges and universities are experiencing a rise in tensions between those students advocating free speech and students urging their administrators curtail public speech, especially when it is offensive to particular groups. **When Americans think of free speech on campus**, they envision an unfettered public arena, open to accommodating any forms of discourse, an arena necessary to carrying out robust intellectual inquiry. **But, as many legal and political theorists remind us**, public speech is never absolutely *free*. Instead, the degree of freedom is weighed against speech's ability to harm and constrain others, a calculation that is specific to the context of a speech's delivery.

Here, a writer responds to a commonly-held belief that others (including the writer) find mistaken. As she continues her discourse, the writer will demonstrate the prevalence and costs of the mistaken belief about ideal free speech, and will then—in the heart of her argument—show readers why the notion of contextual free speech is a better view, bolstered by scholarly support. The approach of contrasting a mistaken view with a preferred view is a version of the *surface/depth topos,* described below.

Six Topoi Used in Humanities Arguments

surface/depth appearance/reality	The writer points out a perception of two entities: one more immediate, the other deep; one obvious, the other the object of a careful search; one explicit, the other implicit; one the result of a surface glance, the other the result of careful inspection.
ubiquity	The writer points out a form (a theme, an image, an important pattern, a recurring assumption, a particular approach) repeated throughout a work of art. Either a typical manifestation of a repetition in noted, or one idea is noted in its many forms.
paradox	The writer points out the unification of apparently irreconcilable opposites (in a work of art or another scholar's argument) in a single dualism.
paradigm	The writer fits a kind of template over the details of a work of art (or over scholarly discourses) in order to endow them with a formative structure not visible at first glance.
mistaken critic	The writer locates flaws or errors in a scholar's work, points out the costs and consequences of such flaws, and offers a better analysis in its place.
worldly context	The writer situates the work of art (or argument) under consideration within a historical, cultural, social, political, economic, psychological, or aesthetic context.

Each of the enactments of particular *topoi*, below, are taken from the field of Art History, but these forms of response apply to other humanities disciplines as well.

surface/depth

The following example demonstrates the use of the *surface/depth topos (*most people see X, when in fact they should also notice Y), but also touches on the *mistaken critic topos* insofar as "most people" are, in this case, critics who have ignored the "reality." These are the introductory paragraphs to Donal Cooper's "Redefining the Altarpiece in Renaissance Italy: Giotto's *Stigmatization of Saint Francis* and its Pisan Context," *Art History* 35.4 (September 2013): 686-713.

In the vast literature on Giotto surprisingly little has been written on the gabled panel depicting the *Stigmatization of Saint Francis* now in the Louvre. The relative neglect of the Paris painting is all the more astonishing given that it is one of only three signed works by the Florentine master: the frame's lower border bears the legend 'Opus locti Florentini.' Over three metres high, it is one of the artist's larger works on panel, signed or unsigned. If the picture's scale and autograph status were not enough, the fact that its Franciscan stories relate so closely to the corresponding scenes in the Saint Francis cycle at Assisi should have ensured a pivotal place for the Louvre *Stigmatization* in the ongoing debates on the artist's early career and his activity in the Upper Church. Instead, the painting is granted a walk-on role, if it is cited at all.

The low level of academic interest has various causes, but a key problem has been the lack of a convincing context for the Louvre panel. Remarkably, given its size, the *Stigmatization* enters the historical record as late as 1568, over two and a half centuries after it was painted. In the absence of contemporary documentation for the original commission, we have to wait until the second edition of Vasari's *Lives* for confirmation that Giotto's *Stigmatization* was in San Francesco, Pisa. Vasari saw the painting itself and scholars agree that this cannot have been the picture's original location. Any attempt to recover the *Stigmatization*'s earlier setting hits a series of obstacles: San Francesco has been transformed several times since the church was constructed in the second half of the thirteenth century and little survives of the convent's archive prior to c. 1580, when San Francesco passed to the Augustinians who transferred the panel to their own church of San Nicola. Earmarked for the projected Musée de Napoléon, it was finally shipped to France in the winter of 1812-13. The panel's modern home has contributed to its marginalization. The painting is now too large, too heavy, and too fragile to be moved, ensuring its exclusion from all major Giotto exhibitions before this year's *Giotto e campagni* at the Louvre.

This article recovers the original Pisan context for Giotto's *Stigmatization*. By context is meant the panel's physical setting and terms of display in San Franceso, which in turn conditioned the artwork's intended function and audience. This exercise has implications far beyond the specific interpretation of the Louvre panel. It impinges on the fundamental disagreements regarding two of the most significant genres in late medieval Italian painting: the monumental gables panel and the altarpiece.

Most scholars consider the *Stigmatization* an altarpiece commissioned for one of the family side chapels in San Francesco. Many also regard the Louvre panel as a development of Duecento *vita* panels depicting Saint Frances and scenes of his life and miracles, although the function of these earlier images is not altogether clear. The Franciscans at Pisa possessed one such panel depicting. . .

This next example is another variant of the *surface/depth topos*. Here, the writer attempts to make visible what has previously gone unattended, and explains the reasons for the prior invisibility. These are the opening remarks of Bill Anthes's "Ethics in a World of Strangers: Edgar Heap of Birds at Home and Abroad," *Art Journal* 71.3 (Fall 2012): 58-77.

Coinciding with the reemergence of a global contemporary art world, critical attention and not a little commercial energy have been expended on a cohort of contemporary artists who, as described by the editors of a roundtable published in *Art Journal* in 1998, "travel widely to create and exhibit their work, much of which derives from their experience of homeland, displacement, migration, and exile." Artists of Native American (or indigenous) background certainly fit this description, and they have, to an extent, engaged with the new institutions of the transnational art market, exhibiting in venues including the Venice Biennale and pursuing careers as what Miwon Kwon describes as "itinerant artists." Since the late 1990s, new support structures and Native critical and curatorial efforts have been launched to advocate for Native artists on the global stage. Yet, with few exceptions, Native artists are absent from most accounts of global contemporary art. In *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture*, Shari M. Huhndorf identifies a similar lack of attention to Native American cultural studies in the larger period of "post-national" American studies. Huhndorf argues that this invisibility has the effect of "extending the colonial erasure of indigenous peoples" even as the historical experience of Native peoples of North America might otherwise be seen as a key example and implicit critique of imperialism.

A possible explanation for this lack of visibility is the importance of a conception of sovereignty in the work of Native artists. While the work of many global contemporary artists engages issues of homeland, displacement, migration, and exile, the discourse of sovereignty as employed by Native Americans is unique. Perhaps the most misunderstood notion in Native politics and culture generally, sovereignty in the context of Native people speaks to the claims to political autonomy of indigenous nations five centuries after the European conquest and colonization of the Americas. This abiding autonomy is grounded in the specific, bounded place in which a people reside (or once resided) and which is the basis for a shared cultural inheritance. Native sovereignty has often been cast as a relationship to a territory or homeland, usually arrived at in primordial or legendary times after a protracted period of migration. Homeland is important, even for those peoples whose historical experience has been one of involuntary displacement and relocation; many nations experience emplacement in new lands, even as they maintain profound attachments to other, ancestral places. The Salish-Kootenai artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith writes, "Euro-Americans often wonder why the American Indian is so attached to the land. Even after Indians have lived in an urban environment for two generations, they still refer to tribal land as home. . . .Each tribe's total culture is immersed in a specific area. Traditional foods, ceremonies, and art come from the indigenous plants and animals as well as the land itself. The anthropomorphism of the land spawns the stories and myths. These things are the stuff of the culture which keeps identity intact." . . .

However, sovereignty as an abiding claim to autonomy—territorial, political, or aesthetic—remains mostly misunderstood by critics and audiences from outside a narrow circle of those initiated into, committed to, or otherwise interested in Native American cultural studies and contemporary art. While various recent critical projects have foregrounded sovereignty—and while Native critics have argued for the importance of decolonizing methodologies, ground in local knowledge and Native epistemologies—as a critical, explanatory frame, sovereignty lacks currency in the contemporary art world. . . .

ubiquity

Notice how the scholar builds a case for reconsidering a painting as a commentary on the resemblance between displaying art and displaying advertising in the capitalist culture in early twentieth-century New York. The example is from Michael Lobel's "John Sloan: Figuring the Painter in the Crowd," *The Art Bulletin,* 93.3 (September 2011): 345-68.

According to a record in Sloan's diary, the inspiration for *Hairdresser's Window* came from a scene he encountered during one of his walks in the city. On June 5, 1907, he wrote "Walked up to Henri's studio. On the way say a humorous sight of interest. A window, low, second story, bleached blond hair dresser bleaching the hair of a client. A small interested crowd about." To begin, it is significant that Sloan implicates Robert Henri in his account of the origin of the picture, for his entry underscores that the motif occurred to him on his way to visit another painter's studio. . . .*Hairdresser's Window* presents us with the flat façade of a building that is parallel to (one might almost say coincident with) the picture plane. That façade is studded with hand-lettered advertising signs. Through a window we spy the hairdresser of the title, who with the help of an assistant is treating a client's long, flowing locks. On the sidewalk below, a crowd has assembled to gawk at this sight, which in bringing an otherwise private aspect of a woman's toilette into public view may very well have challenged the bounds of propriety at the time. A host of small, seemingly insignificant details contributes to the vividness and ostensibly reportorial character of the scene: the gloves worn by the hairdresser; the brightly colored flowers on the woman's hat at right; the mannequin heads in a glass display case; and the woman in profile at the far left, who passes by without acknowledging the scene that draws our attention as well as that of the rest of the assembled onlookers.

If these accumulated details suggest a realist recording of an observed scene, the organization of the picture shows how much Sloan was attuned to issues of composition, carefully and self-consciously attending to the picture's formal structure. His attunement to formal concerns is evident in the complex ways that the painting plays off surface and depth. One might initially take the building as presenting a totally flat façade, almost like a stage set, with the three figures in the window directly behind it and the sidewalk viewers in front. A second look, though, reveals numerous elements that introduce additional indications of depth, although they are decidedly ambiguous. In the upper left corner is an object that looks to be a sign hanging perpendicular to the building façade, onto which it casts a long, diagonal shadow. There is also an architectural feature, something like a projecting display window, or false front, visible at the lower right. (It is capped by a sign reading "cow," which one takes as an advertising sign for a store selling gowns, although the cropping leaves this identification ultimately unclear). This feature presents us with noticeable spatial ambiguities: Are we supposed to read that standing female figure, left hand on hip, as a mannequin in a store window, or is this, rather, a flat poster or painted bulletin affixed to the building front?. . .

The signs, taken together, also introduce types of spatial ambiguity—a loss of the distinction between surface and depth—similar to what we have already seen occurring elsewhere in the picture. Although the bulk of these hand-lettered placards ae hung flush on the façade, several, specifically the "cow" at the lower right and "MANICURE," below to the left of center, are not in the same plane as the building front. The letters, particularly in the "CURLINE" sign, have been rendered in the loose, looping paint strokes that reassert the facticity of the canvas surface. There's a correlation here of the canvas and the hand-lettered sign—a correlation between what Sloan is doing and what a sign painter does. That is to say, while this is ostensibly a picture of a building façade studded with signs, the overall arrangement of rectangular elements arrayed on a wall also resembles the crowded salon-style hanging that would have been familiar to turn-of-the-century art viewers.

paradigm

In the following example, Lucy R. Lippard questions the wisdom of blithely applying what she finds to be a "weak" version of feminism to the study of art. She attempts to replace the weak paradigm with a more robust one. These are the first paragraphs of "Sweeping Exchanges: The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 1970s" *Art Journal* Fall/Winter 1980: 362-365.

By now most people—not just feminist people—will acknowledge that feminism has made a contribution to the avant-garde and/or modernist arts of the 1970s. What exactly that contribution is and how important it is has been is not easily established. This is a difficult subject for a feminist to tackle because it seems unavoidably entangled in the art world's linear I-did-it-firstism, which radical feminists have rejected (not to mention our own, necessarily biased inside view). If one says—and one can—that around 1970 women artists introduced an element of real emotion and autobiographical content to performance, body art, video, and artists' books; or that they have brought over into high art the use of "low" traditional art forms such as embroidery, sewing, and china painting; or that they have changed the face of central imagery and pattern painting, or layering, of fragmentation, and collage—someone will inevitably and perhaps justifiably holler the names of various male artists. But these are simply *surface* phenomena. Feminism's major contribution has been too complex, subversive, and fundamentally *political* to lend itself to such internecine, hand-to-hand stylistic combat. I am, therefore, not going to mention names, but shall try instead to make my claims sweeping enough to clear the decks.

Feminism's great contribution to the future of art has probably been precisely its *lack* of contribution to modernism. Feminist methods and theories have instead offered a socially concerned alternative to the increasingly mechanical "evolution" of art about art. The 1970s might not have been "pluralist" at all if women artists had not emerged during that decade to introduce the multicolored threads of female experience into the male fabric of modern art. Or, to collage my metaphors—the feminist insistence that the personal (and thereby art itself) is political has, like a serious flood, interrupted the mainstream's flow, sending it off in hundreds of tributaries.

It is useless to try to pin down a specific formal contribution made by feminism because feminist and/or women's art is neither a style nor a movement, much as this may distress those who would like to see it safely ensconced in the categories and chronology of the past. It consists of many styles and individual expressions and for the most part succeeds in bypassing the star system. At its most provocative and constructive, feminism questions all the precepts of art as we know it. (It is no accident that "revisionist" art his-tory also emerged around 1970, with feminists sharing its front line). In this sense, then focusing on feminism's contribution to 1970s art is a red herring. The goal of feminism is *to change the character of art*. "What has prevented women from being really great artists is the fact that we have been unable to transform our circumstances into our subject matter. . .to use them to reveal the whole nature of the human condition." Thus, if our only contribution is to be the incorporation on a broader scale of women's traditions of crafts, autobiography, narrative, overall collage, or any other technical or stylistic innovation—then we shall have failed.

Feminism is an ideology, a value system, a revolutionary strategy, a way of live. (And for me it is inseparable from socialism, although neither Marxists nor all feminists agree on this). Therefore, feminist *art* is, of necessity, already a hybrid. It is far from fully realized, but we envision for it the same intensity that characterizes the women's movement at its best. Here, for instance, are some descriptions of feminist art:. . .

worldly context

In the following example, Linda Stone-Ferrier argues that historical context should be taken differently into account when interpreting seventeenth-century Dutch marketplace paintings. The example is taken from her "Market Scenes as Viewed by an Art Historian," David Freedberg and Jan de Vris, Eds. *Art in History/History in Art*. Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities, 1991.

A large group of marketplace paintings appeared rather suddenly after the mid-seventeenth century, and they raise a number of provocative questions about the role of certain kinds of historical information in our understanding of the meaning and function of these images and of seventeenth-century Dutch paintings in general. Specific paintings in the group have previously been discussed by art historians who have attempted to understand individual marketplace paintings in one of two ways: either the work was felt to contain a moral based on a biblical or emblematic text, or it was of interest because of the particular stage that it represented in an artist's stylistic development. Although both types of inquiry into individual marketplace paintings are undoubtedly relevant, they are limited. The relationship of the individual work to the whole group is at least as important to consider. Furthermore, the relationship of the paintings to the specific historical circumstances or contexts in which they were produced must be examined in order to understand fully their meaning and function.

Historians of Dutch art have too often defined that historical context in terms of the world of contemporary literature, and they have, as a result, only searched for sources of meaning in texts. Economic and social circumstances should be vigorously investigated by students of marketplace paintings, in particular, and of seventeenth-century Dutch art in general. Careful visual analysis of an image or group of images—including their stylistic and iconographic characteristics—must, however, precede the determination of the aspects of history that may be relevant to interpretation.

The large group of Dutch marketplace paintings in question may be subdivided according to the type of market depicted. This paper examines exclusively images of vegetable markets because the interpretative questions that they raise are distinct from those pertinent to other market painting types (for example, fish market paintings). The differences result not only from the various ways in which each market type is depicted but also from their respective historical circumstances. The characteristics shared by the vegetable market images are unprecedented. These paintings show vendors and customers in front of contemporary buildings, as in Henri Martesz Sorgh's painting *The View of the Grote Market with Vegetable Stall*, 1642. The foodstuffs are very carefully described and prominently displayed in the foreground, as they are in a mid-seventeenth century painting by Nicolas MAs and his studio, *Vegetable Market*.

mistaken critic

Perhaps the strategy that appears with greatest frequency, the *mistaken critic* (or *mistaken critics*) *topos* takes aim at what the writer finds to be an inaccurate, inappropriate, or wrong-headed finding and corrects the mistaken view, offering an alternative that is shown to be better, more workable, more apt, more insightful, etc. Here is an excerpt from Daniel Sydell's "Contemporary Art Criticism and the Legacy of Clement Greenberg: Or, How Artwriting Earned Its Good Name," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 36.4 (Winter 2002): 15-31.

There is little doubt that Clement Greenberg is the most influential art critic of the twentieth century. And although his colossal reputation was achieved decades ago, his death in 1994 produced a spate of intellectual eulogies that demonstrated his continued

powerful presence in the contemporary art world. Combined with Florence Rubenfield's biography of the critic, the publication of his "early" letters and "late" seminars, and the hefty review literature that has ensued, the last five years have witnessed a revival in interest in Greenberg and have shed new light on why the critic exerted the influence he did during his lifetime as well as why his art criticism continues to dominate critical dis-course, despite his penchant for attracting as many detractors as admirers and his attachment to a passé modernism. The present essay uses three books to explore Greenberg's legacy: Thierry de Duve's thoughtful rereading of the art critic, entitled *Clement Green-berg, Between the Lines,* Amy Newman's fascinating oral history of *Artforum*, entitled *Challenging Art:* Artforum *1962-1974*, and finally, the publication of Michael Fried's influential but anachronistic art criticism, entitled *Art and Objecthood.*

This essay sketches out the reasons for Greenberg's influence and the relationship between his reception as a critic and the emergence of art criticism as a "discipline," a phe-nomenon that corresponds, as Newman observes, with the early history of *Artforum*. But it is much more than mere "correspondence." This essay also suggests, without diminishing the integrity of his critical voice, that Greenberg's influence was not due to the superiority of his "eye," his critical intelligence, or the otherwise inherent quality of his art criticism. And perhaps this is the historical irony of Greenberg's reputation. For an art critic who put such considerable weight on the experience and judgment of the art object itself, Greenberg's influence in contemporary artworld discourses is due to the historical vagaries and accidents of psychology, sociology, institutional and professional behavior, and other "messy" forms of cultural politics and human behavior that the critic believed to be irrelevant in art and artwriting.

Despite his canonical status, commentators have recently argued that Greenberg has still been misunderstood, unjustly caricatured, and that his texts remain largely un-read or misread. In the introductory paragraph of a review essay focusing on Greenberg's legacy and the artwriting of de Duve, Stephen Melville writes:

> We may be coming at last the end of the artworld demonization of Clement Greenberg and so may be able to reconsider the terms and limits of his achievement relatively free of thick miasma of nonreadings that have so long obscured his views.

Melville echoes the view of de Duve, who wishes that Greenberg can be read by the "younger generation" with an "unprejudiced eye." Unlike Melville and de Duve, I suggest that the sum of Greenberg's influence and significance is far greater than the parts of his individual texts, whether or not they have been "read," with or without a prejudiced eye. Moreover, this review essay argues that the "artworld demonization" of Greenberg that Melville observes is itself a product and a function of the mythic status that the critic came to possess by the early sixties, a status that was used to rewrite his own influence through-out the previous two decades. If Greenberg's texts remain by and large unread by the broader artworld, they are also too closely read by his more scholarly admirers and de-tractors. Like his admirers, Greenberg's detractors have lined up "for" and "against" him because of certain specific aesthetic judgments. However, many of his alleged "detractors" have been (and continue to be) critical of him in order to carve out discursive space *within* or *beside* Greenberg's authoritative voice regarding his philosophy of art criticism.

Greenberg's authoritative voice has little to do with his judgments on or experience of specific artists. These judgments are important but nonetheless secondary influences. His deeper influence, and it is deeper because it has rarely been acknowledged, is that Greenberg succeeded, with considerable institutional support, in defining what constitutes quality art criticism and how it should function within the artworld. Greenberg's has become the standard against which subsequent (and previous) critics' texts are measured.

Ways to locate a critic's mistakes (a taxonomy of contradictions)

contradictions of kind. A source says something is one kind of thing, but it's another.

> *Smith says that certain kinds of religious groups are "cults" because of their strange beliefs, but those beliefs are no different in kind from standard religions.*

- Source claims that_____is a kind of_____, but it's not.
- Source claims that_____always has_____as one of its features or qualities, but it doesn't.
- Source claims that_____is normal/good/significant/useful/interesting, but it's not.
- Though a source says_____is <u>not</u> a kind of_____you can show it is.

part-whole contradictions. You can show that a source mistakes how the parts of something are related.

> *Smith has argued that sports are crucial to an educated person, but in fact athletics have no place in college.*

- Source claims that_____is a part of _____but it's not.
- Source claims that every_____has_____as one of its parts, but it doesn't.

developmental or historical contradictions. You can show that a source mistakes the origin or development of a topic.

> *Smith argues that the world population will rise, but it won't.*

- Source claims that_____is changing, but it isn't.
- Source claims that_____originated in_____, but it didn't.
- Source claims that_____develops in a certain way, but it doesn't.

external cause-effect contradictions. You can show that a source mistakes a causal relationship.

> *Smith claims that juveniles can be stopped from becoming criminals by "boot camps," but evidence shows that they don't.*

- Source claims that_____causes_____, but it doesn't/they are both caused by_____.
- Source claims that_____is sufficient to cause_____but it's not.
- Source claims that_____develops in a certain way, but it doesn't.

contradictions of perspective. Most contradictions don't change a conceptual framework, but when you contradict a standard view of things, you urge others to think in a new way.

> *Smith assumes that advertising has only an economic function, but it also serves as a laboratory for new art forms.*

- Source discusses_____from the point of view of_____ but a new context/point of view reveals a new truth.
- Source analyzes_____using X theory/value system/approach, but you can analyze it from a another point of view and see it in a new way.

■ Stases | What do we disagree about?

What are the stases?

A *stasis* (pl. *stases*) is an imaginary line below which agreements about an object of study have been secured, and above which disagreements about an object of study begin. A *stasis* is a place of equilibrium: think of the term *homeostasis* from Biology. Classical rhetoricians believed that there was no use arguing over what the parties in a dispute agreed upon, and sought to clarify the typical kinds of

disagreements that citizens (and, by our extension, scholars) engaged in. The stases, then, broadly categorize kinds of arguments, but they also describe the nature of one's thesis or central claim in the context of those arguments.

fact (conjecture)

Which elements make up a work of art? What is known about its production?

Do some people believe that something exists, while others deny its existence? Are there disagreements about the facts of the matter—its history, origin, provenance? Are their multiple or conflicting accounts of what took place? Do descriptions of the facts differ in significant ways? Do eye witnesses describe the event differently? Are there disagreements about data, measurements, or compositional elements?

naming and defining

How shall techniques be classified? What style is the work an example of? How does the work define (or redefine) its subject?

Are there disagreements over what kind of phenomenon it is, or to what larger class of things it belongs? Do people name the event/phenomenon differently? Do people agree on how the event/phenomenon should be named, but disagree about how it shall be defined? Do people stipulate a definition of the term dependent on the context in which it is being considered? Has the definition of an event/phenomenon evolved or changed over time?

value

How has the work been evaluated? How were judgments rendered at its moment of production, and by subsequent viewers? Is this good art?

Is there disagreement about whether this phenomenon is a good or a bad thing? Are there disagreements about the relevance, significance, or severity of the matter? Are there disagreements about the aesthetic, economic, political, cultural, psychological, social or ethical value of the phenomenon in question? Are there disagreements about how virtuous the phenomenon may be? Do some people believe the phenomenon is better or worse than some alternative? Do persons reach differing judgments about the goodness, truthfulness, appropriateness, usefulness, or purpose of the phenomenon?

policy (procedure)

How shall the work be displayed? What are the best ways to view or understand the work? How shall the work be curated?

Do people disagree about what should be done in response to the event/phenomenon? Are there disagreements about what procedure or policy is preferable as a response? Is there disagreement about how proposed actions will change or improve the state of affairs? Are there disagreements about whether the proposed action will make things better or worse—for whom, in what ways? Do some advocate for a new policy, while others advocate for leaving things well enough alone? Are there disagreements about how a policy should be implemented?

As you are scrutinizing others' arguments and getting your bearings for your own argument, it is useful to quickly run through the four stases, which can act as a kind barometer of what's at issue and what's at stake in your own and others' discourses. Sometimes, multiple *stases* are taken up over the course of a single argument. If, for instance, a writer devotes the bulk of her argument to establishing the cultural significance of an artwork that is rarely displayed, she may recommend that a new policy for making the work public be employed. Running through the stases in sequence can help you determine where to launch your disagreement.

■ Writing in response to others' texts

As stated earlier, intellectual work is fundamentally about *response*. Typically, scholarly writers consider how previous researchers and investigators have responded to your object of study and situate their insights within the context of these prior responses. Academic writing requires three interrelated moves:

❶ Familiarize yourself with the traditions of inquiry or history of criticism that surrounds your object of study.

❷ Determine which aspect(s) of previous analyses and arguments you'd like to grapple with.

❸ Determine how you will respond to previous interpretations, analyses, and claims.

Here is a list of eight strategies for writing responses to others' analyses and arguments:

summarize

At first glance, summary may not seem much like a response at all since summary resolutely focuses on what someone else has said rather than commenting on that analysis or argument. But summary can be thought of as a first order of response in at least two ways:

- You summarize in order to familiarize your readers with the gist of another's argument, and by doing so, you are in effect saying: "As a reader, I am interested in presenting another's position in the most fair, non-tendentious way that I can." You imply that you are careful reader, a fair reporter of another's ideas, able to represent another's work scrupulously, without critiquing or judging it.

- Though good summaries represent another's argument fairly, in as objective a way as possible, each summarizer will compose her summary uniquely. By nature, summarizers will structure their syntheses differently, will choose different verbs to indicate how a position is offered (Does X writer *propose,* or *argue for*, or *contend*?), and will highlight certain features over others. If we put two summaries side by side, we may notice that they are constructed quite differently, but recognize that each qualifies as a fair and complete summary.

Original Passage

Intimate experiences lie buried in our innermost being so that not only do we lack the words to give them form, but often we are not even aware of them. When, for some reason, they flash to the surface of our consciousness, they evince a poignancy that the more deliberative acts—the actively sought experiences—cannot match. Intimate experiences are hard to express. A mere smile or touch may signal our consciousness of an important occasion. Insofar as these gestures can be observed they are public. They are also fleeting, however, and their meaning so eludes confident interpretation that they cannot provide the basis for group planning and action. They lack the firmness and objectivity of words and pictures.

Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience

Summary

Yi-Fu Tuan reminds us that personal encounters generate memories that reside within a deep interiority but may be triggered and brought to the surface of consciousness in ephemeral and unpredictable ways.

paraphrase

Paraphrase also counts as response since the paraphraser represents another's point in fresh language not found in the source text. Like a summary, a paraphrase (typically comparable in length to the passage in the source text) translates another's finding so as to demonstrate that the writer has a good understanding of the source text's point. In fact, perhaps the best way to think of composing a paraphrase is to bring to mind the phrase "In other words. . ."

Original Passage

Vietnamese tradition wisely forbade the confiscation of land for the payment of debts, but the French ignored this tradition. A peasant's land was treated like any other real asset that could be seized for the payment of debts. Fearing the confiscation of their land for non-payment of taxes, many peasants turned to wealthy Vietnamese for loans (at interest rates that often exceeded 100% per annum) to meet their tax obligation in a futile attempt to stall off the inevitable. Slowly but surely Vietnam was transformed into a land of huge estates on which approximately seventy percent of the population toiled as sharecroppers. French tax policy was exploitative and shortsighted. Within two generations it created the social and economic conditions for revolution.

K. Quincy, Hmong: History of a People

Paraphrase

Quincy attributes political instability in Vietnam to misguided and harsh French tax policies, by which the peasants forfeited their small landholdings to tax collectors or to greedy money lenders. As the confiscated lands were consolidated into large estates, most of the population ended up sharecropping for wealthy landowners, creating a powder keg of resentment that led to revolution.

positively value

This is a form of approbation regarding another's ideas, method, analysis, theory proposed, evidence brought forward, style of writing, sensibility conveyed, experimentation carried out, etc. Strong readers don't praise one another's work simply because it has been published; instead they offer a reason for their valuing another's work, and often go on to show how another writer's ideas, methods, analysis, or findings can be put to good use as a solution to a new problem or as a model for thinking about a new subject at hand.

Example 1

Refreshingly, Fine and McClelland insist that the population they advocate for (young impoverished women of color damaged by abstinence-only education) be viewed in their total vulnerability. As they put this, "we want to leave the reader with a sense of how we might educate and research with the recognition that young minds, souls, and bodies desire broadly, in areas that are economic, educational, health-minded, and, indeed, sexual" (325). Their approach refuses to disentangle the knot of constraints, interests, and desires that combine to create the whole persons. Surely, this holistic perspective restores a vital status to adolescents who, caught somewhere between childhood and adulthood, suffer the costs of diminished status as unformed citizens.

add to/extend

Here, you positively value some aspect of another's work, and suggest that this aspect (another's theory, analysis, or argument) could be made yet stronger, more effective, more relevant, or more nuanced, and you can propose a way of doing so. You might offer new evidence, gesture toward new applicability of a finding, sharpen a key term, enhance a definition, or offer a new distinction. Your extension of or addition to the source's work is an act of generosity since you are allying yourself with

the essence of what someone else has said, and want to help another's ideas, interpretation, or argument evolve.

Example 1

> Drawing upon Hannah Arendt's characterization of the public sphere as a space of visibility, Judith Butler envisions how the public sphere can be constrained by the state or media's control over the distribution of images and reports of others' suffering. Without such representations, our ability to recognize the humanity of others is limited, thereby excluding such persons from normative status as members of the global community. As Butler puts this, "The public sphere is constituted in part by what can appear, and the regulation of the sphere of appearance is one way to establish what will count as reality, and what will not" (xx). <u>Though Butler's examples of such constraint come from the arena of contemporary global politics, one might well include the historical example of the censorship of images and reports from the Nazi extermination camps during the early years of World War II. Without ready access to such information, the Jews, homosexuals, Romany, and others who were imprisoned and killed became "distant others," and the compassion of U.S. citizens therefore curtailed.</u>

call an aspect into question

Calling into question is more negatively critical than the previous mode of response. You can call any aspect of a source text into question: a key term, an assertion, an analytic method, a form of reasoning, etc. Here, you are not attempting to fully refute or rebut the central claim or entirety of the argument (that's an act of countering). Instead, you single out an important aspect of another's work that you find problematic, inaccurate, unfair, hastily-formulated, or otherwise troubling, and spend some time identifying the difficulty, saying something about what it occludes, disrupts or problematically entails. To call into question you 1) identify what term, phrase, or passage is problematic; and 2) describe the costs or consequences if the problem is left unattended. Calling into question shouldn't be confused with nit-picking. It is fine-grained in approach, but that doesn't make it frivolous or trivializing.

Example 1

> Fine and McClelland's argument in favor of comprehensive sex education for young women of color coalesces in the concept of what they call "thick desire," a young woman's expectations for an open future, free from delimiting constraints (300). <u>But by fashioning this important concept as *desire*, which is typically understood in terms of pleasure, they imply—however inadvertently—that young Black women are promiscuous, thereby implying a racist stereotype.</u>

Example 2

> Fine and McClelland warn us that the Abstinence Only Until Marriage curriculum may seem innocuous, but is in fact dangerous and potentially damaging: "the campaign for abstinence in schools. . .may seem trivial, an ideological nuisance, but at its core it is a further violation of human rights and a betrayal of our next generation" (305). <u>The "violation of human rights" is a serious charge, but the authors fail to spell out exactly what rights are violated, leaving readers to infer harms that may not be pertinent to their case. Do they have in mind traditional human rights such as education, health care, and personal safety? Or, are these rights more closely allied to women's rights and feminist precepts?</u>

counter (refute) the whole

When you counter another's work, you have located a problem that is so systemic, so substantive, or so extensive that you recommend that the central claim, the majority of the argument, or the bulk of another's analysis be rethought or jettisoned in favor of some very different way of thinking, analyzing, or arguing about the issue under consideration. To refute, you need to 1) identify what is problematic; 2) describe the costs or consequences of this line of thinking; 3) offer your alternative; and 4) describe the benefits of this new approach.

Example

In March 1965, the Office of Policy Planning and Research at the United States Department of Labor produced a report entitled "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." Written by an assistant secretary at the Department of Labor with social scientific training but with a short publishing history on race and racism, the document launched a national debate so powerful that it became known as the Moynihan Report, after its author, Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Infamous on the left for his description of black family life as a "tangle of pathology," and celebrated on the right as a (perhaps the first?) victim of "political correctness," Moynihan is more cited than read. Reflecting on the legacy of the report fifty years after it was first published, many commentators seem to agree: Moynihan was right to point out that family structure is central to the perpetuation of poverty among African Americans. Whether from conservatives like the *Wall Street Journal*'s Jason Riley or from liberals like the *New York Time*'s Nicolas Kristof, the adulation of Moynihan centers on the idea that he was a prescient figure who boldly preached a "taboo" subject in order to tell hard truths.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. In recent months, yet another report, this one from the Center for Contemporary Families, shows that his predictions of an increase in juvenile crime and in inequality due to the rise of single-parent families were spectacularly false. Not only was Moynihan wrong, but the controversial thesis of his work gained him unprecedented public attention—indeed, the report made him a household name. As both Ta-Nehisi Coats and Tressie McMillan Cottom point out in recent pieces in the *Atlantic*, the report's condemnation of black family life made its author a celebrated public intellectual and launched his career in politics. Coates sees mass incarceration of African Americans as the "national action" that America chose to undertake to address the problems Moynihan described. Moynihan's framing of poverty as a problem of black families has enabled political leaders for a century to look away from restitution and towards punishment as a way to address social problems.

Sam Klug, "The Moynihan Report Resurrected"