

They Say, I Say

Based on the book *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, this handout will help you determine how to craft your own argument in response to what other scholars have argued and researched. You will want to think about how your own thoughts relate to the thoughts of scholars in the field.

Introducing “standard views”

1. Americans today tend to believe that_____.
2. The standard way of thinking about topic X is that_____.
3. Many people assume that_____.

Introducing something implied or assumed

1. One implication of X’s treatment of_____ is that_____.
2. Although X does not say so directly, she appears to assume that_____.

Reasonably disagreeing

1. I think X is mistaken because they overlook_____.
2. X’s claim that_____ rests upon the questionable assumption that_____.
3. I disagree with X’s view that_____ because, as recent research has shown, _____.

Establishing why your claims matter

1. Although X seems trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of _____.
2. My discussion of X is in fact addressing the larger matter of _____.
3. Although X may seem to concern only a small group of _____, it should actually concern anyone who cares about _____.

Entertaining objections

1. Of course, many will probably disagree with this claim that_____. (You will want to specify who the “many” are in this example.)
2. Is it always true that_____, as X argues? I argue that this is not true in the case of _____.
3. Some readers might challenge my view that_____. My own argument does ignore _____, but that is because _____.

Making concessions while still standing your ground

1. Although I agree with X up to a point, I cannot accept his overall conclusion that_____.
2. Although I disagree with much of what X says, I fully endorse her conclusion that_____.
3. X is right that_____, but he seems to be on more dubious ground when he claims that_____.
4. Whereas X provides ample evidence on_____, Y and Z’s research on _____ and _____ convinces me that _____ instead.
5. Proponents of X are right to argue that_____. But they exaggerate when they claim that_____.
6. While it is true that _____, it does not necessarily follow that_____.