

***Theorizing Conspiracy:  
An Initiation into Academic Conspiracy Theory Studies***

Complete Draft: April 17

Final Essay: May 3-May 10 (depending on presentation day)

Final Portfolio: May 4-May 11 (depending on presentation day)

Length: 3000-3500 words

**Assignment Goals:** To learn how to read, assess, and synthesize scholarship; to learn how to engage other scholars in the field through original primary research; to learn how secondary research shapes scholars' understanding of primary materials; to develop facility using the advanced research tools of Gelman Library. To engage deeply with other scholars working in Conspiracy Theory Studies; to draw conclusions about conspiracy theorists', conspiracy enthusiasts', and conspiracy debunkers' engagement with society by means of conspiracy theory; to draw original, situated conclusions about the psychological and societal functions of conspiracy belief and debunking.

**Readings:** Everything you've read in the course so far; Michael Barkun, "New World Order Conspiracy Theories I," in *A Culture of Conspiracy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U California P, 2003); Robert Alan Goldberg, "Jewish Devils and the War on Black America," in *Enemies Within: The Culture of Conspiracy in Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); WA Chs. 4, 12-13; whatever primary and secondary sources you need to complete your research project.

**The Tasks:** Synthesize, review, and critique the ideas of other scholars working in Conspiracy Theory Studies in light of the findings of your research report; rethink your research report in light of a deep engagement with the work of other scholars; conduct additional sufficient and varied primary and secondary research; present your work to peer researchers at a conference; write a research essay for a new anthology featuring the first post-9/11 generation of conspiracy theory scholars, thereby making an explicit contribution to the field of conspiracy theory studies.

**Grading Criteria:** The research essay situates original primary research findings in both a societal and a scholarly context; it reflects on the meanings and implications of conspiracy theory as a widespread societal phenomenon, a rhetorical form of writing, and a particular set of ideas; it is conversant with, uses, and engages the work of conspiracy theory studies scholars; secondary sources are made to "speak" (WA, p. 300); secondary sources are used to ask questions not just to answer them (WA, p. 301); sources are put into conversation with one another (WA, p. 303); sources are accurately quoted or paraphrased (WA, p. 307); analysis is integrated into description and paraphrasing of sources (WA, p. 307); ideas are properly and clearly attributed to their author (WA, p. 312); you have found your own role in the conversation among secondary sources (WA, p. 307). The essay includes an accurate, sufficient, and productive representation of the field of contemporary conspiracy theory studies since 1990. It uses significant ideas and passages drawn from work written by at least seven (7) conspiracy theory scholars, at least two (2) pieces of which the student-researcher has found on her/his own. The essay uses ideas from at least two (2) scholars from another field relevant to his/her project.

In addition, the essay accurately and adequately synthesizes a collection of sufficient and varied primary sources into a productive object of study; it describes and interprets a set of conspiracy theory texts, the people and groups who circulate them, and relevant background information about the moment(s) in which the theory circulates; it offers a plausible, productive, well-documented argument about the relationship between the aspects of society this conspiracy theory is explicitly and implicitly theorizing; it situates your research in the field of conspiracy theory studies; it conveys the impression that the author has substantial knowledge of a significant range of expressions of this conspiracy theory and is conversant (WA, p. 111) with the works of other scholars doing relevant work, explaining how it is a contribution to the changing field of conspiracy theory studies.

Further the essay demonstrates that its author has suspended judgment until s/he understood the conspiracy theory under study. Two productive and contestable theses (one about a specific set of conspiracy theories, the other about conspiracy theory as a societal phenomenon) are identifiable, original, interpretive, and productive (see box in WA, p. 164, see also p. 197); the theses evolves (WA Ch. 6). The first instance of each working thesis is underlined; subsequent reformulations of the theses are marked with double-underlines. In support of the theses, an analysis of conspiracy theory texts has been conducted: patterns of repetition and contrast have been noted and discussed; anomalies have been noted and discussed;

indirectly suggested meanings have been made explicit (for more on each of the preceding criteria see *WA Ch. 2*). Specific well-described passages from conspiracy theory texts are analyzed as evidence testing the thesis; specific well-described information about the people who create and circulate these theories are used to develop and complicate your interpretation of the texts. Specific passages from secondary sources in the field of conspiracy theory studies and relevant fields are used to develop and complicate your interpretation of the texts. Specific passages from secondary sources in the field of conspiracy theory studies and relevant fields are used to challenge or develop significant ideas important in the fields. The set up and conclusion function well (*WA Ch. 8*); the writer has developed a serious, engaging and authoritative voice; the essay is effectively organized (see *WA Ch. 6* for more); the essay is free from grammatical and typographical errors; it properly uses in-text page/paragraph references and a works cited list. The essay includes a bibliography of every primary and secondary source consulted for the project, separated into sections labeled “Primary Sources” and “Secondary Sources.”

# UW20 : CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The George Washington University: Spring 2007

Dr. Eric Drown

## “Theorizing Conspiracy” (Research Essay) Assessment Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

The introduction functions well.

Quality Pts. Earned: [ ]

- |  |                              |                                   |                             |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Positions the essay as a response to some topic of current debate in CT scholarship: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Establishes the topic of the essay:  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Develops the topic of the essay:   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Meets/challenges readers’ needs and expectations:                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Proposes initial hypotheses/research questions:                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Describes the research parameters of the project:                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

The primary thesis (about the meaning(s) of your specific CT set) is identifiable, original, interpretive, and productive.

Quality Pts. Earned: [ ]

- |               |                              |                                   |                             |
|---------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Identifiable: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Original:     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Interpretive: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Productive:   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

The secondary (about CT and CT studies more generally) thesis is identifiable, original, interpretive, and productive.

Quality Pts. Earned: [ ]

- |               |                              |                                   |                             |
|---------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Identifiable: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Original:     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Interpretive: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Productive:   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

In order to test, support, and complicate/enrich your theses, your essay noted and discussed the meaning or effects of significant patterns of repeated and contrasting elements (ideas, images, terms, binaries, uses of evidence, or rhetorical strategies) found in your CT set.

Quality Pts. Earned: [ ]

- |            |                              |                                   |                             |
|------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Noted:     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Discussed: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Implicit meanings found in your CT set have been made explicit and discussed in order to test, support, and complicate/enrich your theses.

Quality Pts. Earned: [ ]

- |                |                              |                                   |                             |
|----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Made explicit: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Discussed:     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Specific, well-chosen, well-described examples from the motifs, themes, characters, plots, settings and other elements of the CT are analyzed as evidence relevant to the thesis. They are set up and paid off.

Quality Pts. Earned: [ ]

- |              |                              |                                   |                             |
|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Well-chosen: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Set up:      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Described:   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Analyzed:    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Paid off:    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Specific, well-chosen, passages from relevant secondary sources in conspiracy theory studies and other relevant fields are used to develop and complicate your interpretation of the conspiracy theories. They are set up and paid off.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

|              |                              |                                   |                             |
|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Well-chosen: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Set up:      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Described:   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Analyzed:    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Paid off:    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

The evidence you offered persuasively tests, supports or complicates/enriches your theses.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

*Primary thesis: The evidence offered*

|                       |                              |                                   |                             |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Tests thesis:         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Supports thesis:      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Complicates/enriches: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

*Secondary thesis: The evidence offered*

|                       |                              |                                   |                             |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Tests thesis:         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Supports thesis:      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Complicates/enriches: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

The primary thesis evolves (questions, explanations, and interpretations are reformulated as your analysis develops).

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

Yes       Some       A little       Not at All

The secondary thesis evolves (questions, explanations, and interpretations are reformulated as your analysis develops).

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

Yes       Some       A little       Not at All

The essay accurately and sufficiently synthesizes a coherent collection of varied and sufficient primary sources into a productive object of study.

*Your collection of primary sources (as evidenced by an annotated bibliography) is*

|              |                              |                                   |                                   |                                     |
|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Varied:      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| Coherent:    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> No         |
| Sufficient : | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No       |                                   |                                     |

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

*Individually, your primary sources are handled*

|               |                              |                                   |                                   |                                     |
|---------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Accurately:   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| Sufficiently: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| Productively: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

*Your synthesis of sources accurately, sufficiently and productively represents your collection of sources and sets up the key themes of your essay*

|                 |                              |                                   |                                   |                                     |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Accurately:     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| Sufficiently:   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| Productively:   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| Sets up themes: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

Use of primary sources conveys the impression that the author has substantial knowledge of a significant range of expressions of this CT.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All

The essay situates original primary research findings in a lived context.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All

The essay situates original primary research findings in a scholarly context

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All

The essay is conversant with, uses, and engages a varied and sufficient sample of the work of contemporary scholars in conspiracy theory and any other necessary fields.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

*CT:*

Conversant:  Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All  
 Uses:  Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All  
 Engages:  Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All

*Other fields:*

Conversant:  Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All  
 Uses:  Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All  
 Engages:  Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All

Uses secondary sources accurately and sufficiently with clear and proper attribution

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

*They are accurately and sufficiently represented (paraphrased, quoted, and/or described)*

Accur.:  Yes       Mostly       Somewhat       Hardly       Not at All  
 Suff.:  Yes       Mostly       Somewhat       Hardly       Not at All

*Ideas and passages are properly and clearly attributed to their authors*

Yes       Mostly       Somewhat       Not at All

Secondary sources are well synthesized and handled

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

*Sources are put into conversation with other sources*

Yes       Mostly       Somewhat       Not at All

*Analysis is integrated into description and presentation of sources*

Yes       Mostly       Somewhat       Not at All

*Sources are used to ask questions, not just answer them*

Yes       Mostly       Somewhat       Not at All

*Sources are made to “speak”\* in the essay*

Yes       Mostly       Somewhat       Not at All

Use of secondary sources conveys the impression that the author has substantial knowledge of a significant range of scholarship in relevant fields.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All

The author found a role for him- or herself in the conversation among secondary sources

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

*CT:*  Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All  
*Other fields:*  Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All

The body of the essay is effectively organized.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

Yes       Somewhat       A little       Not at All

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\* By “speak,” I mean that sources are not treated merely as facts or information the meaning of which is imagined to be transparent and therefore not in need of set up, description, analysis, synthesis and pay off.

The conclusion functions well.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

- |   |                              |                             |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Makes an effective transition from the body of the essay  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Offers more complex, nuanced and productive versions of the arguments of the essay                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Connects specific conclusions to more abstract or general concerns relevant to our study of CT and/or the world | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Acknowledges limits of the current study  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Pays off readers' effort with a significant, productive, and insightful walk-away point                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Offers a persuasive and productive reflection on the meanings and implications of conspiracy theory as a widespread societal phenomenon.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

Societal phen.:  Yes  Somewhat  A little  Not at All

The essay offers a plausible and productive argument about what this particular set of CTs is explicitly and implicitly theorizing.\*

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

|             |                              |                                   |                                   |                                     |
|-------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Plausible:  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| Productive: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |

The essay demonstrates that you have suspended judgment about the conspiracy theories about which you're writing until you understood them in a lived context.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

|                        |                              |                                   |                                   |                                     |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Suspended judgment:    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| Understood in context: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> A little | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |

The writer has developed a serious, engaging, and authoritative voice.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

|                |                              |                                   |                             |
|----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Serious:       | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Engaging:      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Authoritative: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

The essay is free from grammatical and typographical errors.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

Yes  Mostly  Somewhat  Not at All

The essay properly uses an academic citation system.

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

|                          |                              |                             |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| In-text Page References: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Works Cited:             | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

The essay offers readers an annotated bibliography of the entire collection of primary and secondary sources separated into sections labeled "Primary Sources" and "Secondary Sources."

**Quality Pts. Earned:** [ ]

Yes  No

**Total Quality Points:** /120 **Percentage:** **Grade:**

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\* By theorizing I mean revealing (and perhaps challenging) the enabling assumptions of a societal system and the organizations, institutions, and groups that constitute (or are excluded by it), or of a system of belief, thought, knowledge, or communications and the organizations, institutions, and groups that use (or marginalized) by it. I also mean revealing (and maybe challenging) the blind spots of those systems, ways of knowing, and institutions.

***Sample Formulations of Key Moves in Academic Writing\****  
***Eric Drown and Rachel Riedner***  
***Assistant Professors of University Writing***

**SET UP**

**Arguing for an Approach to your material and Setting up an Argument  
(that will emerge in the paper)**

**These sentences could be worked into an introductory section of a research paper, helping you set up what the paper is doing, what your approach adds to existing knowledge on your subject, and why your approach is important.**

**Topic/Research project description:** I am studying \_\_\_\_\_, in order to learn/explain \_\_\_\_\_, which is significant because \_\_\_\_\_. **NOT:** I'm "doing" X.

**Research Essay Working Thesis/Evolving an Argument:** \_\_[Specific theories]\_\_ do \_\_ [some specific kind of work] \_\_ for \_\_ [the specific people and kinds of people who produce, circulate and/or believe them ] \_\_, who have \_\_ [specific personal and social imperatives] \_\_ as they \_\_ [active verb] \_\_ [some puzzling, irritating, compelling] aspect of the places and times in which they live.

**Complex Argument:** A strong argument makes a claim that requires analysis to support and evolve and offers some point about the significance of your evidence. It promotes thinking, prompts further questions and draws attention to specifics. It often tends to "push back" against a different view of the topic. I approach my material\_\_\_\_\_[X]\_\_\_\_\_[in this specific way] \_\_\_\_\_ to support and expand points about the significance of \_\_\_\_\_. My approach allows us to see evidence \_\_\_\_\_, prompting further questions about \_\_\_\_\_ and drawing attention to \_\_\_\_\_. As a result, my work expands/challenges/argues against \_\_\_\_\_ view of evidence, and allows us to see \_\_\_\_\_ [that may have not been considered or understood before].

**Argument Development**

**These strategies allow you to produce analysis and develop arguments based on your analysis. These strategies can help you work rigorously with your evidence, help you explain how you're interpreting it, how you're adding to existing analysis, how you're developing key ideas and concepts, how you're contributing to existing scholarship and knowledge on your subject, etc...**

**Complication:** This explanation gets us \_\_ [only so far] \_\_ as we try to explain [whatever it is we're explaining]. \_\_ [Key pieces of evidence] \_\_ don't fit this explanation in \_\_ [this particular way] \_\_. Consequently, [Reformulate the argument in light of this]. *Repeat.*

**Complication:** Unfortunately, what I have just said is not enough to explain \_\_\_\_\_. To adequately understand \_\_\_\_\_, we'll have to consider \_\_\_\_\_. **Or,** The case isn't so simple, rather \_\_\_\_\_.

**Querying key terms:** [These key terms in my argument] \_\_\_ need to be queried because \_\_\_\_\_. Having developed these terms, [reformulate the argument and retest against evidence analyzed in the new terms].

**Considering argument as part of something larger:** While it may appear that \_\_\_\_\_ are insignificant, when understood as \_\_\_\_\_, they [significance of new understanding].

**Reformulate argument by refusing to go along with the conventional wisdom:** Most commentators on \_\_\_\_\_ tend towards [their understanding] \_\_\_\_\_. If we consider it in [different] \_\_\_\_\_ terms, it becomes possible to generate such new insights as \_\_\_\_\_.

**Clarification:** Although it might appear that I am saying \_\_\_\_\_, I really mean \_\_\_\_\_. **Or,** Said another way, \_\_\_\_\_.

**Definition/Redefinition:** Although this term is usually understood in this [simple] way \_\_\_\_\_, in the context of my work it means this [more complex, nuanced, specific, specialized thing] \_\_\_\_\_. This more subtle meaning is important because \_\_\_\_\_.

**Introducing and exiting a quote:** According to X, a scholar of [source of authority], \_\_\_\_\_ [paraphrase of the larger argument of the quoted piece]. In "\_\_\_\_title\_\_\_\_" she writes: \_\_\_\_\_. What she means in the context of this paper is \_\_\_\_\_. If X is right about \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_ [return to your own ideas considered in light of the quote or as a way to redirect the insights of the quote] \_\_\_\_\_.

**Attributing Primary and Secondary Sources: PS:** According to conspiracist X, \_\_\_\_\_. **SS:** In historian X's view, \_\_\_\_\_.

**Revealing an implication:** [Following a discussion of specific details in a writer's piece] These details [e.g., references to the "cancer" of CT in Robert Alan Goldberg] add up to the unstated assumption that \_\_\_\_\_. **Or,** Although X doesn't say so explicitly, she appears to mean that \_\_\_\_\_.

**Revealing a questionable assumption:** X's claim that \_\_\_\_\_ rests on the questionable assumption that \_\_\_\_\_.

**Contextualizing a specific insight:** [This specific thing I'm talking about] is best understood as part of \_\_\_\_\_. **Or,** [This specific thing I'm talking about] is specific

example of \_\_\_[this larger pattern] \_\_\_\_. By seeing this thing in context, we discover that \_\_\_\_\_.

**Specific insights confirm a more general claim:** So as we can see from these aspects of \_\_\_\_\_, that X more generally tends to \_\_\_\_\_.

**Moving from a general claim to a specific piece of support:** [After making the general claim]. For instance, \_\_\_\_\_. To take a case in point, \_\_\_\_\_.

**Representing the state of dialogue in a field:** Such scholars as X and Y have argued recently that \_\_\_\_\_. This view stands as an important correction to that of Z who classically argued that \_\_\_\_\_. This shift has enabled the field to \_\_\_\_\_, producing a better understanding of \_\_\_\_\_. In light of my own research, \_\_\_\_\_.

**Extending and developing a point of agreement:** I agree that \_\_\_\_\_, and would even add \_\_\_\_\_. This extension of this idea is productive because \_\_\_\_\_.

**Using summary of someone else's work to develop a point:** In light of what I've been arguing, it's instructive to consider what X has to say about a similar topic: \_\_\_\_\_. As s/he argues \_\_\_\_\_. If X is right/wrong about \_\_\_\_\_, then my ideas \_\_\_[need to develop; should alter what X thinks...]\_\_.

**Allow a counter-argument to develop your point:** Some people object that \_\_\_\_\_. Although I concede \_\_\_\_\_, I \_\_\_\_\_[reformulate my point to account for the apt criticism]\_\_\_\_\_.

## Conclusion

**Getting at the significance of your work [NOT just summarizing what you've already said]:** At stake in this argument is \_\_\_\_\_. **Or,** While most other scholars have argued \_\_\_\_\_, my work reveals \_\_\_\_\_. This new insight is significant because \_\_\_\_\_.

\*Developed in response to Gerald Graff's and Cathy Birkenstein's work in *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (NY: W. W. Norton, 2006).