



## Assignment Sheet: Navigating Sources That Disagree

Adapted from Wardle and Downs' *Writing About Writing*, 165–67.

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### 1. BACKGROUND

In your last paper (Analysis of Science Accommodation), you examined multiple sources that reported on the same information. You found different explanations, but no disagreement. This time, your task is to find multiple sources writing about a single arguable issue, but taking different sides. Your sources need to disagree. We will be examining how authors position themselves and their writing, and how they use writing to achieve a goal (see Haas and Flower, WAW p. 125, ¶ 12.).

The articles you found for your previous paper had similar basic goals—to inform their audiences about a discovery. The biggest difference in the presentations was the intended audience and that audience's expectations. To prepare for this paper, you will find articles that intentionally differ in their *purposes*, but the *audiences* may not be so distinct.

For the Science Accommodation paper, the more blatantly different the presentations were, the easier the paper was for you to write. For this assignment, the more *subtle* the differences, the easier your job becomes. You are tasked with answering this question: **How do authors on disagreeing sides of a published issue situate their arguments?** To find the answer, look at the moves made by the authors, not just the points they make. If your authors are simply stating a yes/no or agree/disagree issue, there's little to analyze. But if you find authors who have to carefully justify or explain their stance, you have much more rhetoric to examine.

Because this is your final major paper for the semester, you are expected to demonstrate a good deal of familiarity with concepts discussed throughout the term. Overall, your paper should show that you can do the following:

- Explain how readers and writers use writing as a tool for negotiation.
- Illustrate that meaning is socially constructed.
- Investigate the rhetorical situations in which writing exists.
- Synthesize multiple sources of information into a coherent argument.
- Demonstrate facility with the terms *exigence*, *rhetor*, *construct* (noun and verb), *rhetorical situation*, *claim* vs. *argument*, and *constraint*.

### 2. PROCEDURE

For this assignment, the WAW text has additional details about the assignment (165–67) and a sample student paper (156–164). This time, the sample paper was written by a student in a single semester at UCF in the same ENC1101 course you are in. I recommend reading Talbot's paper for an excellent example of this assignment.

That said, the process of building this paper breaks down into these general steps:

- (1) **Find a topic.** Your topic must have multiple sides to it; there must be disagreement. That disagreement should be murky and subtle; black-and-white or clear cases are harder to analyze. The discussion must take place in a published forum. Written communication is best; if you choose a spoken-word forum, you must have transcripts of the discussion.

- (2) **Find the contestants.** You must have three sources discussing the same issue, and those sources must disagree. The murkier and more subtle that disagreement, the better. Blatant arguing is tough to analyze.
- (3) **Analyze the arguments.** First, identify the rhetors' positions: What is at stake for each? How are they related to the issue? Then, identify what values the rhetors assume their audience holds. (You might have done something similar in your Authority paper.) Finally identify the affordances and constraints faced by the authors. How do those shape the writing?

Next, look at the arguments being made by each rhetor. What points do they make in support of their argument? What claims do they maintain? What assumptions do they start from? (This last question is easier to answer if you aren't personally involved. You might want to ask a friend or roommate to help you think through it.)

- (4) **Answer the research question.** Draw conclusions from what you read, then make a claim. Support that claim using evidence from the texts. Remember: you are proving your answer to the question of *how* the authors argue. Do not justify one side/view over the other. In short, don't take sides; analyze. You are not addressing who is right or wrong; you are identifying how the fight is played out.
- (5) **Draft your paper.** Once again, the structure is up to you. (See Webcourses for a suggestion.) Follow the same formatting requirements that have applied to all other papers.
- (6) **Revise your draft.** Using the rubric below, plus the questions on WAW 166, consider a visit to the UWC for a fresh perspective.

### 3. RUBRIC

In the last two assignments, your goal was to analyze texts—that is, to explore how they worked and why the authors did what they did. You treated the texts in isolation and held them up as separate examples. In this paper, your goal is to *synthesize*—that is, to make connections between the things you identify. As you build your case for this paper, you will analyze multiple sources and navigate your way through the authors' presentations. From there, you can find common threads and reach conclusions that highlight trends within the disagreement you examine.

TABLE 1. Navigating Sources That Disagree Grading Rubric

	TERMS (5 pt)	RHETORICAL SITUATION (20 pts)	SYNTHESIS (15 pts)	TEXTUAL SUPPORT (10 pts)
A	Natural and sophisticated use of terms from the unit.	Confidently and adeptly identifies the rhetorical situations surrounding the disagreeing sources.	Connections btwn. sources & conclusions drawn from analysis are insightful & clearly presented.	Quotes from articles effectively illustrate and support author's claims.
C	Accurate use of terms from this unit.	IDs the rhetorical situations surrounding sources; may not treat them as a conversation; may lack sophistication.	Author draws connections between sources and makes relevant conclusions about rhetoric.	Quotes are used consistently but choppy, or they are too infrequent to sufficiently support claims.
F	Incorrect or absent use of studied terms.	Rhetorical situation not identified or presented as a list, not a discussion.	Paper's conclusion is primarily summary or restatement, or articles are treated in isolation throughout.	Quotes are isolated and not related to the claim, nonexistent, or haltingly presented.