**Analytical Synthesis Exercise**

In academic writing, analytical synthesis is a complex process in which students first analyze (break down and question how the parts work together) individual texts and then bring together several texts to reflect on the connections between them (whether those connections be agreement, disagreement, complication—in which one writer doesn’t necessarily agree or disagree but instead demonstrates more of a “gray area” or a more complicated representation of a point, extension—in which one writer makes a similar point as another writer but delves deeper or goes further into it, or some other kind of relationship between ideas).

There are multiple steps to the process of analytical synthesis. In preparation for our second major assignment, please complete the exercise below.

**Step 1:** Choose **two** texts from our assigned mass incarceration readings (by Grover Norquist, Rich Benjamin, Adam Foss, Jennifer Gonnerman, and Kai Wright) that interest you and that seem to have a specific connection you want to explore (again, that connection may be *disagreement, complication, agreement, extension*, etc.). Try to find a connection that is DIFFERENT from the ones we already discussed in our group exercises. Answer the following questions for each text:

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|  | **Text 1** | **Text 2** |
| **Title (abbreviated)** | “Trump’s Prison-Reform Push Has Divided Washington On A Rare Bipartisan Issue” | “A prosecutor’s vision for a better justice system” |
| **Author name, expertise, background, credibility** | Rich Benjamin. He is an author, cultural critic, and is focused on politics and modern society. Benjamin studied at Stanford University and Wesleyan University. His work has also been shown in a plethora of newspapers/news stations. Benjamin also wrote a book. | Adam Foss is the founder and executive director of Prosecutor Impact. He used to be an assistant district attorney in Boston and advocates for criminal justice reform and the importance of the role of prosecutors in ending mass incarceration. He spent nine years as a prosecutor. |
| **Publication? (e.g. *NY Times*, *The New Yorker, TED.com, etc. )*** | NY Times, The New Yorker, The Guardian, CNN, NPR, PBS, MSNBC, NY Times Sunday Book Review. | Ted.com |
| **Text genre? What is this text?** | Informative news article in a magazine. The New Yorker is known for its in-depth reporting, and political/cultural commentary. | Articulating a personal anecdote and statistics in a conference. TED talks are meant to spread ideas worth spreading. |
| **Intended audience?** | People with interest in prison-reforms or people that are unaware of prison issues. | People that watch TED talks, and people who are swayed by talks about prison. |
| **Author’s purpose/aims** | To inform people about the prison issues such as population, and the responses to that. Trump is wanting to give non-violent “good-time credits” but that doesn’t respond to the overpopulation in prisons. Benjamin is also informing readers about the corrupt court systems when it comes to sentencing people and the potential solutions. | To inform people about how much power a prosecutor has and how they can utilize that power for the better. |
| **Author’s methods and materials (remember: methods are what they do in their writing—narrating, comparing, contrasting, arguing, etc. and materials are what they use—anecdotes, statistics, logical reasoning, emotional appeals, etc.)** | Benjamin compares the two solutions (front end and back end). The front-end solution attacks the main issue of overpopulation through sentencing reform which reduces mandatory-minimum sentences, ending three-strike rule, and restore judges’ discretion regarding sentencing. The back-end solution is giving inmates a “second chance” by allowing them to earn good-time credits to serve the final days in halfway houses or home confinement. It also seems as if Benjamin is arguing for the front-end solution as he mentions it a lot more. Some materials he uses is statistics (such as prison population and spending increased by 600% each) and is subtly swaying ones emotion by providing all negative sides to this issue. |  |

**Step 2:** Write out some of the **specific** quotations and ideas that these writers articulate about a single concept or point of contention in the conversation about mass incarceration. These points must connect to each other in some way! Please type the quotations word-for-word or describe the ideas very specifically; do NOT paraphrase inaccurately or overgeneralize. We are focusing on *accuracy* here. I would like you to do some careful, close reading and understanding of what the authors’ say about that particular point:

Text 1:

Text 2:

**Step 3: Articulate the connection in as specific description and explanation as possible, using the quotations from step 2 to help you. How are the ideas or writers’ points related to each other?**

For example: “While Barbara Reynolds criticizes the lack of central leadership in the Black Lives Matter movement, Frederick Harris views that as a strength because single leaders can be targeted by opposition groups, corrupted by outside influences, or they can be assassinated. As a result, the movements then die out.” (*note that this passage articulates the relationship between two different writers’ points of view on one specific aspect of BLM*).

**Step 4: Ask yourself “So what? Why does this matter? What does it mean?” about every connection you choose to discuss. This is when you start synthesizing to *make your own claims*. These claims should address the topic by way of your thinking *about the authors’ arguments.***

**For example:**

“Harris’s arguments make sense, especially because (as he points out) our modern-day technology has made it easier for people to communicate with each other on an equal basis. Why should there be a centralized leader for BLM when strong participation and dialogue works best with many diverse voices? With the inclusion of many different voices, the movement can avoid some of the mistakes of the past that resulted from the exclusion of women.” (these are my claims based on the point of connection I see in Reynolds and Harris’s work).

Now, you try. Write a paragraph that answers the “so what?” question about some connection that you noticed and incorporates your own analytical argument about the issue: