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### The Role of the Writing Center

- The transactions between tutor and writer support the Writing Center's central goal of helping the student achieve autonomy in his or her learning and writing.



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### The Role of the Writing Center



- As peer tutors, you should see yourselves as reflective and intelligent readers who ask questions and report your reading reactions in order to help students discover what they have said, what they might want to say, and how their readers are likely to understand them.

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### The Role of the Writing Center

- Though “writing” is the reason students seek us out, we work by engaging students in dialogue about their assignment and how best to solve the intellectual problems it sets forth for them.
- Some of our time is indeed spent with the mechanical dimensions of writing, but the largest part of our time is spent either working with students to parse conceptual demands of the assignment itself or developing with them a research learning plan.



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### What is an Academic Paper?

- Audience: The project involves scholars writing for other scholars.
- Significance: The project explores a topic or question of interest to the academic community.
- The paper should set forth an informed argument.



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### Some Academic Writing Conventions

- **Argument**
  - Claim vs. Thesis Statement
  - Stakes / So what?
- **Evidence**
  - Source integration
- **Organization/Structure**
  - The line of inquiry
  - Topic sentences / concluding sentences
  - Introductions / Conclusions



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### Claim vs. Thesis Statement

- Many students entering college are most familiar with descriptive thesis statements.
- Many high school English classes, including AP English, encourage descriptive thesis statements.



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### Claim vs. Thesis Statement



- In 100-level English classes at UW, instructors use the word “claim” to mean an arguable thesis statement.
- A claim must be...
  - Arguable or contestable
  - Specific
  - Significant (meaning that it engages the “So what?” element)

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### Claim vs. Thesis Statement

- Students enter the UW with a range of definitions for these terms, so instructors often try to simplify like this:

CLAIM = ARGUABLE ✓

THESIS = DESCRIPTIVE ✓

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Now you try: claim or thesis?

To be a writer, one must have an elite understanding of diction, syntax and tone. These literary devices are utilized by writers, including Eudora Welty, as a method for expressing the message that they wish to convey to readers.

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Now you try: claim or thesis?

The governor has continually done the community a disservice by mishandling money, focusing on frivolous causes, and failing to listen to his constituents.

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Now you try: claim or thesis?

In the excerpt from *One Writer's Beginnings*, Eudora Welty conveys a positive tone toward her childhood experience. She accomplishes this through the use of descriptive diction, impressionable images, and unusual syntax.

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### Now you try: claim or thesis?

The two passages given describe the swamp in very different lights. Although they are in some ways familiar, the styles of the authors of these paragraphs are very different.

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### Sample English 131 Claim

□ "Despite the mystery surrounding this famous speech, its contents can be understood in terms of what Mary Louise Pratt calls a 'contact zone.' In Pratt's article "Arts of the Contact Zone," she introduces this zone as the chaotic space in which cultures collide. Essential features of the contact zone include autoethnography, the representation of one's own culture that responds to representations made by others, and transculturation, the selective absorption of the dominant culture by a marginal group. These features of autoethnography and transculturation emerge prominently in Chief Seattle's speech, shedding more insight on the interactions between the Native Americans and the Euro-Americans; however, in the context of the unique circumstances surrounding the text, Seattle's speech ultimately demonstrates the inherent dangers of representation and misrepresentation in the contact zone."

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### Not-so-effective arguable claims...

- Arguable claims are less effective when...
  - They rely on opinion that can't be supported by evidence.
  - Their language is opinionated or judgmental.
  - They make use of sweeping generalizations.
- For example...
  - James Joyce is a better writer than Virginia Woolf.
  - The media's exploitation of the Watergate scandal showed how biased it was already.
    - Suggested Revision: The media's coverage of the Watergate scandal suggests that the media had already determined Nixon's guilt.

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### How can you help a student generate an arguable claim?

- In groups of 3-4, brainstorm some steps for helping a student generate an arguable claim.
  - ▣ You can assume the student has chosen a topic and has made some observations about this topic.
  - ▣ Perhaps the student has even developed a descriptive thesis statement. How could you help this student develop their thesis into a claim?
  
- Be prepared to share your ideas with the rest of the group!

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### the six-step claim formation method

- 1. Name your focus topic
  - EXAMPLE: The Beverly Hills Diet
- 2. Ask a question (make sure it's not obvious!) about your focused topic
  - EXAMPLE: Is the Beverly Hills Diet advisable for the typical college student?
- 3. Revise the question into a declarative statement
  - EXAMPLE: The Beverly Hills Diet is inadvisable for the typical college student.

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### Six-step cont.

- 4. Add a group of words summarizing your key ideas
  - EXAMPLE: Because it is inconvenient, unhealthy, and provides only temporary weight loss.
- 5. Recognize the opposition
  - EXAMPLE: Although it does provide quick weight loss.
- 6. Use revision to put it all together
  - EXAMPLE: Although it does provide quick weight loss, the Beverly Hills Diet is inadvisable for the typical college student because it is inconvenient, unhealthy, and provides only temporary weight loss.

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### Stakes / Significance / So what?

- Does the student's paper (implicitly or explicitly) address any of the following questions?
  - Why does this paper need to be written?
  - What risks being lost if this paper isn't written?
  - How does this paper contribute to a larger conversation about this topic?
  - How does this claim respond to existing claims about this topic? How does it respond to other critics or scholars?
  - How might this paper contribute to its "field"?

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### Stakes / Significance / So what?

- Though students sometimes understand the stakes of their claim, they sometimes forget to articulate these in the paper.
- Sometimes, a discussion of the claim's stakes can help the claim itself develop into something more complex and arguable.
- How can you help?




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### Stakes / Significance / So what?

- Models for helping students consider the stakes of their argument:
  - "My argument is important because \_\_\_\_\_."
  - "Discussions of \_\_\_\_\_ are relevant today because \_\_\_\_\_."
  - "Ultimately, what is at stake here is \_\_\_\_\_"
  - \_\_\_\_\_"
  - "My discussion of \_\_\_\_\_ is in fact addressing the larger matter of \_\_\_\_\_."

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### Stakes / Significance / So what?

- In groups of 3-4, take a look at Jane Doe's paper.
  - ▣ Is Jane currently addressing the stakes of her argument? If so, where? Is she doing so effectively? Why/why not?
  - ▣ How could you help Jane expand her discussion of the stakes?
  - ▣ How could you help Jane develop her claim with regard to its significance?
  - ▣ How would you help Jane understand the rhetorical importance of addressing this "So what?" issue?

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### Evidence and Source Integration

#### "The Quotation Sandwich"

1. Introduce the quotation
2. The quotation itself
3. Respond to the quotation:
  - a. Explain
  - b. Evaluate
  - c. Challenge




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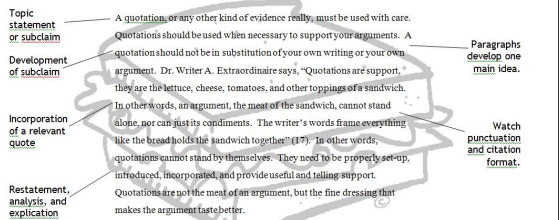
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### Quotation Sandwich




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### Quotation Templates: Introducing

- According to Mrs. Expert, “\_\_\_\_\_” (54).
- In his book, Mr. Scholar maintains that \_\_\_\_\_ (67).
- Mrs. Expert complicates matters further when she writes, “\_\_\_\_\_” (85).

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### Quotation Templates: Responding

- In other words, \_\_\_\_\_.
- Mrs. Expert insists that \_\_\_\_\_.
- In making this comment, Mr. Scholar insists that \_\_\_\_\_.

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### Quotations and Source Integration

1. In groups of 3-4, think about the rhetorical importance of source integration.
  - How would you explain this to a student?
2. With your group, take a look at one of the quotations in the Jane Doe paper.
  - How would you help this student with source integration?
  - How would you explain the rhetorical importance of source integration?

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### Organization / Structure

- The Line of Inquiry
  - ▣ In 100-level English classes, students learn to construct a “line of inquiry” -- that is, a sustained engagement with their claim throughout their entire paper.
  - ▣ From an instructor’s point of view, a student’s line of inquiry is often most evident in the paper’s sub-claims, topic sentences, or concluding sentences in each paragraph.
  - ▣ Example: Shawna’s flower petal visual

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### Organization / Structure: Strategies

When you’re reviewing a student’s paper:

1. Spend some time with the student considering the introduction as a “roadmap” for the rest of the paper. How well does the introduction set up reader expectation for the rest of the paper?
2. Look for “signposts” like topic sentences, concluding sentences, transitions, and metacommentary.

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### Organization / Structure: Strategies

3. Show the student where they do provide signposts for their readers. Use these examples as models, and discuss their rhetorical usefulness.
4. Try reverse-outlining: create an outline from the existing paper, and discuss whether the organization is working.

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### Organization / Structure: Strategies

5. Encourage the student to think about their paper from the reader's point of view. What does the reader need to understand at each stage of the paper?



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### Now you try...

Scenario:

- You begin to read a student's paper, and you quickly realize that the paper is one long string of overly broad generalizations.
- How do you respond?



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### Now you try...

Scenario:

- When meeting with a student, you read the instructor's prompt... To your surprise and the student's frustration, the prompt is unnecessarily vague!
  - A. How do you help the student?
  - B. How do you empathize with the student's frustration without criticizing or overtly judging the instructor?



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### Now you try...

Scenario:

- While helping a student with her paper, you read the instructor's prompt. The instructor, in your opinion, seems to want the students to construct arguable claims, but hasn't articulated this expectation in the prompt.
- How do you respond?



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### Now you try...

Scenario:

- You read a student's paper and discover that the body paragraphs are little more than a long collection of quotations, ineffectively integrated and strung together without much commentary from the student.
- How do you respond?



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### Last but not least ... Q & A

- Do you have any questions for us?
- Do you have any questions for returning tutors?



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