SOME “THEY SAY/ I SAY” TEMPLATES FOR ARGUMENTATION

In *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein claim that “Academic writing in particular calls upon writers not simply to express their own ideas, but to do so as a response to what others have said” (ix). In other words, think of your argument in terms of what the authorities or conventional wisdom maintains about a given topic (*They say*) and how what *you* think differs or diverges (*I say*).

Here are some templates to get you started on incorporating and integrating these two parts.

**Introducing “standard views”**
1. Americans today tend to believe that _______.
2. The standard way of thinking about topic X has it 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/explicitly, she apparently assumes that _______.

**Disagreeing, with reasons**
1. I think X is mistaken because she overlooks _______.
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 today’s concern over _______.
2. Ultimately, what is at stake here is _______.
3. My discussion of X is in fact addressing the larger matter of _______.
4. Although X may seem of concern to only a small group of _______, it should in fact concern anyone who cares about _______.

**Entertaining objections**
1. Of course, many will probably disagree with this claim that _______. (Note: When possible, try to provide more information about whom “many” refers to. Does it refer to many people in general? Most Westerners? Most men? Many white people? Many feminists? Most bourgeois apologists?)
2. Yet is it always true that _______? Is it always the case, as I have been suggesting, that _______?
3. Some readers might challenge my view that _______. After all, many believe that _______. Indeed, my own argument that _______ seems to ignore _______ and _______.

**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 his final conclusion that _______.
3. X is right that _______, but she seems to be on more dubious ground when she claims that _______.
4. Whereas X provides ample evidence that _______, 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 _______.

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