

# HANDOUT: CRITICAL MOVES

## Overview

Below is a short -but by no means exhaustive- list of some critical moves organized into four basic modes. During composition you will make use of these types naturally, but being aware of them as types of “moves” will help you see the structure of your writing more clearly. This will also help organize your research material along lines of how it will be used in your writing. For example, some sources will aid in informing your reader (of the topic, key data, terms, etc.), others will provide claims and concepts with which to reason, and so on.

#. Type of move in argument  
 Q: Guiding question  
 a) Some examples

### 1. Informing

Q: *What does my reader need to be aware of or understand in order to follow and participate critically in my reasoning?*

- a) Giving context - historical or discourse-based (i.e. narrative of arguments/ideas within the field)
- b) Referencing sources - key phrasing, claims, data, examples
- c) Identifying key info - terms, acronyms, dates, names, etc.
- d) Describing or narrating - an important process, event, example, object, person, etc.

### 2. Analyzing / Critiquing

Q: *What details (of ideas, data, etc., especially those found in sources) and interpretations of them show the reader how I arrived at my understanding / am reasoning about the research material?*

- a) Explicating an idea or example from a source
- b) Explaining how an idea was formed, arrived at, defined, or used in a text; its "logic"
- c) Identifying the assumptions, inconsistencies, or possible problems, blindspots, etc. in the source
- d) Highlighting the significance of rhetoric: phrasing, term choice, tone, etc. and its significance

### 3. Relating

Q: *What connections will help demonstrate the rigor and significance of my reasoning?*

- a) Connecting ideas between sources in comparison, contrast, or synthesis
- b) Applying a concept or method drawn from a source
- c) Summarizing a cross-textual theme uncovered by analysis
- d) Re-contextualizing or adapting an idea or example

- see other side -

#### 4. Asserting

Q: What *conclusions* have I drawn from research and reasoning that will orient the readers' thinking and facilitate their own analysis?

\*Q: What is the central insight that follows from my reasoning, and what is its significance?

- a) Making an inference from a moment of analysis in your writing
- b) Identifying the consequences of a sequence of analysis
- c) Summarizing the importance of results (of analysis, summary of data, etc.)
- d) \*Claiming the consequence(s) of thought given your argument

**NOTE:** Most of you are well trained in types 1&4, you would not have been able to get into college were you not able to use textual information to support a theme or idea that can be observed across texts, objects, etc. This kind of writing shows you are competent thematizers and handlers of information that you have been given. However, this does not develop your active thinking, your ability to communicate the complexity of your understanding (its reasons, methods, assumptions, etc.) or your capacity to create new knowledge by challenging and extending what you have been given. This requires 2&3 be engaged and indeed emphasized, and they both have to do with your ability to read critically and see connections across "texts" (also films, news articles, current events, etc.) that you have read critically. The credibility and communicability of your claims (4d) will depend entirely on your ability to engage in 2&3 rigorously.