

Final Paper: Arguing Your Position in a Conversation

In 1941, the philosopher Kenneth Burke famously compared the ongoing scholarly conversation that takes place in the academy to the conversations that take place at a dinner party:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (110-111)

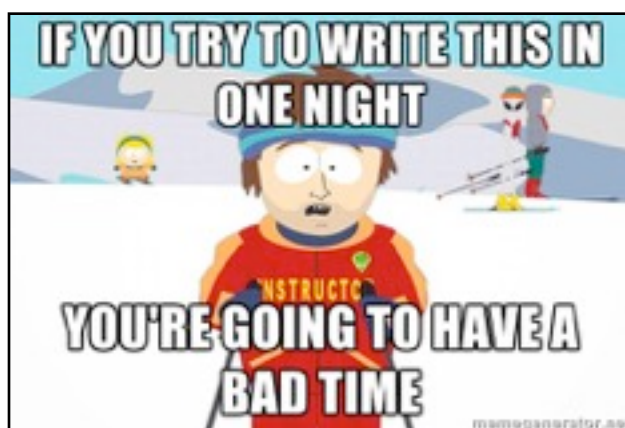
This “parlor metaphor” is a key concept in the field of composition: in order to provide a meaningful contribution, an individual must situate himself or herself within an established conversation.

Over the past few weeks, we’ve looked at a few controversial issues that people have vastly different opinions about: cultural appropriation, the portrayal of women in video games, California voter propositions, etc. Each of these controversies takes place in the form of a conversation: even if a writer is not directly countering another, contributors use a common vocabulary to address these issues.

For your final **5 - 7 page** paper for this class, you will be **researching a current controversy** in order **to establish the conversation surrounding this issue** and ultimately **argue your own position within that conversation**. In order to do this, you will need to identify a particular controversy or divisive issue, establish the various positions within the conversation surrounding that issue by **citing no less than 4 sources**, and, finally, express your own position on the issue. To take our in-class discussion of cultural appropriation, for example: do you agree more with one side than with another? Do you think there is a middleground position that no one has yet considered? I’m not looking for one right or one wrong answer: instead, I’d like you to **argue and support** your own opinion. As long as you can support your position, it’s a valid one.

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DUE DATES:	
Monday, November 24th	Research Topic DUE
Wednesday, November 26th	Revision Partners Assigned
Monday, December 1st	Rough Draft Emailed to Revision Partner by 8pm
Wednesday, December 3rd	Rough Draft DUE; Revision Partner Letter DUE; Peer Review Workshop
Monday, December 8th, 8am	Final Paper and All Supporting Documents DUE



On Finals Day, you should be turning in each of the following (check off each item and staple this sheet to the top of your packet):

Final Draft with Works Cited Page	
Author's Note	
Completed Response Chart	
Revision Partner Letter (the one you received)	
Revision Agenda (optional)	
In-Class Reflection (completed on the 12/8/14)	