

“Significance” Exercise & Worksheet

MMW requires that you explain the significance of your argument in your final paper. We define the “significance” of your argument as “*the reason for writing this paper,*” or, more specifically, “*how your particular argument modifies or contributes to current thinking on the topic.*” (Note that we are asking you to determine the significance of your argument *not* your overall topic).

In order to find out what you are *contributing* to the academic debate, decide which one of the following *approaches* applies to your question and argument (everyone should be able to find one approach that (at least somewhat) resembles your own).

For your homework assignment, for PART 1, Re-type the approach and fill in and include the information appropriate to your topic (you may need to modify the wording to fit your particular situation). Then answer the questions for **PART 2**.

PART 1 – Types of Research Approaches

1. Omission/Gap

Regarding the question _____, I have observed that current scholarship on the issue of _____ (particular issue you are asking about) is lacking, flawed, or incomplete in the sense that _____. While [scholar’s name] _____ argues that _____, and [scholar’s name] _____ argues that _____, they have both failed to recognize that _____. I think filling in this omission is important because _____, and if, as scholars, we don’t fill this omission we risk _____, thus I will argue that _____.

2. New Outlook

Regarding the question of _____ I have noticed that while some scholars argue _____, and other scholars argue that _____, no scholars (as far as my own research has determined) have argued that _____. I want to provide this new outlook on the question because I think it is important to explore/show that _____. By failing to show _____, scholarship on this issue is lacking or problematic because _____.

3. New Combination Approach

Many scholars have attempted to answer the question of _____, but in this paper I plan to combine pieces of different scholars’ arguments in a new way. In my approach to the question, I am combining [scholar’s name] _____’s theory about _____ with [scholar’s name] _____’s theory about _____. From my research, it appears that the particular combination of _____ theories that I have put together have not been argued before, which is unfortunate because my thesis makes an important contribution to the debate because it _____.

4. Dispels Assumption or Corrects False Info Approach

Regarding the topic of _____, it seems that both [scholar’s name] _____ and [scholar’s name] _____ are both assuming _____ to be true. However, I think this is a problematic assumption because _____, and observe that the implications of continuing to assume _____ is problematic because _____. Thus, I want to ask a question *about* the assumption these scholars are making by asking the following: _____ [you can take this same approach but instead make it so that your argument disagrees with information or historical “facts”].

5. Hybrid Degree Approach

Many scholars have attempted to answer the question _____, but in my research I have noticed that scholars' approaches to this topic are somewhat polarized. While some scholars argue that the answer to the question is _____, other scholars argue that the answer is _____. My research suggests that both of these answers are correct, though one of these answers is slightly more influential/plausible/etc/ than the other. Thus, I am adding to the scholarly debate by combining two sides of the scholarly debate, showing that both sides are plausible, and showing that one side is more significant/influential/etc. than the other. This is important to do because _____.

PART 2: Summarize and Explain

1. What is the *approach* of your question? Are you asking and trying to make an argument about an *omission* in scholarly research? A *new outlook*? *Expanding* on already existing scholarly arguments?, etc. (See above for "Types of Research Approaches").
2. Why is your question important to ask? And what are the costs or implications or not knowing or misunderstanding your question?
3. How does understanding your particular question help us understand more about the problem, culture, conflict, or phenomenon that you are investigating?
4. Why is your particular argument (your answer to the research question) important? That is, what are you *contributing* to the academic debate with your *thesis*?

****NOTE**** - It usually makes sense to allude to the significance portion of your paper in the introduction of your essay (and throughout your paper). This is because the significance portion is your reason for writing the entire paper. In your final paper you may want to put PART I in your introduction and PART II in your conclusion.