

Worksheet 1.2.1: Claims Example

engl 111 / sec. M / winter quarter 2006-07 / chang

The following worksheet is designed to help you generate a complex, arguable, academic claim. Begin simply. Identify what you see, understand, wonder about. Then begin to build critical analysis, complexity, stake. Keep in mind what an argumentative claim requires. Keep in mind the assumptions (warrants) you are making. Then attempt to flesh out the claim with direct references to your object of critique or to your readings and research.

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Texts:	The Matrix

Descriptive Thesis (one sentence):	In <i>The Matrix</i> , cyberspace is an illusion. The film says that cyberspace is a fiction of the real world. The definition of cyberspace in <i>The Matrix</i> is a wholly imagined place of pure data.
What is important about your texts? How do they fit your main idea or question? What are your texts about?	<i>The Matrix</i> argues that the real world is a matter of perception. It also argues that humanity can change the world. The film also depicts cyberspace as streams and lines of data. Furthermore, <i>The Matrix</i> argues a particular racialised and gendered vision of the future, of cyberspace, and of the real world. These ideas are important because they offer a way for us to think about the relationships and ideologies in our current, present world.
What is significant about your texts? What do your texts argue? What main ideas are important to you?	Cyberspace in <i>The Matrix</i> is an imagined place of pure data, a complex and interacting program designed to keep humanity in a fantasy world. It is the ultimate vision of William Gibson's idea of the "consensus-hallucination" ("Burning Chrome" par. 13).
Elaborate Thesis (draw from above and from your texts to complicate your descriptive thesis):	<i>The Matrix</i> portrays cyberspace as an imagined place of pure data, a complex and interacting program designed to keep humanity in a fantasy world. The film, through its visual effects and filmic choices, shows that cyberspace <i>is</i> the real world; it is the ultimate vision of William Gibson's idea of the "consensus-hallucination" ("Burning Chrome" par. 13).
What argumentative verbs (e.g. 'argues', 'claims', 'defines') can you use instead descriptive verbs (e.g. 'is', 'describes', 'portrays')?	defines, argues, reveals, articulates, pushes, critiques
Argumentative Claim (now make an argument about your texts using your argumentative verbs):	<i>The Matrix</i> defines cyberspace as an imagined place of pure data, a complex and interacting program designed to keep humanity in a fantasy world. The film, through its visual effects and filmic choices, argues that cyberspace <i>is</i> the real world; it is the ultimate vision of William Gibson's idea of the "consensus-hallucination" (par. 13).
What are the stakes of your argument? How do you answer the "so what?" question?	My argument is important because the film is trying to collapse the distinction between the real world and the virtual world, between reality and cyberspace. Cyberspace is real. What do I do with that? There is something about Gibson's idea about the "consensus-hallucination" that seems important. Like ideology, everyone in the film agrees and participates in the "matrix" and the only way out, the only freedom is to realize not only that they are in the matrix but that they can change it.
Complex Claim (incorporate a telling quote or piece of evidence and argue how your stakes fit in):	<i>The Matrix</i> defines cyberspace as an imagined place of pure data, a complex and interacting program designed to keep humanity in a fantasy world. The film argues that cyberspace <i>is</i> the real world; it is the ultimate vision of William Gibson's idea of the "consensus-hallucination" (par. 13). By collapsing the "desert of the real" and the reality of cyberspace, <i>The Matrix</i> allows for cyberspace to be a place of revelation, cooperation, and ultimately, resistance and revolution.