Synthesis Analysis
Examples

Stanford University
http://pwr.stanford.edu/instructors/teach_res/brawn_samp.html

Shay Brawn
Assignment Two--Contextual Analysis (5 pages)

The purpose of this assignment is to practice working with multiple texts, placing them in dialogue with each other. You have two options here:

Option 1. We have read two pairs of texts, King/Van Dusen and Kipnis/Schweitzer. Pick one of these pairings, and write an essay in which you place the texts in dialogue with each other. Be sure to provide as accurate and clear a summary of their arguments as you can. How effectively does each address the concerns raised by the other? Are there significant gaps? Are there issues neither of them sees? Are they writing from shared values or world views? What are the implications of the differences in their arguments? Is one of them more right than the other? Is there disagreement a symptom of a larger conflict in this society?

Option 2: Select any one of the texts we have read so far and read it in relationship to some other text or context. For instance, you might use King or Van Dusen to discuss the activities of protesters at the WTO meetings. Or, you might use Kipnis or Schweitzer to discuss the plea bargain in the recent Los Alamos spying case. Or, you might use any of these texts to engage with a film or a story or a poem or a painting that takes up related themes. Whichever path you take, along the way you should be using one text to illuminate the other (or, a more difficult task, demonstrating how they illuminate each other). That is, your goal is to create a dynamic conversation between different texts, not just to place them alongside each other.

Both of these options face you with some challenges in organization and emphasis. Are you subordinating one text to the other? How do you indicate that priority to your reader? Will you be moving back and forth between texts? In the same paragraph or in separate paragraphs or in some combination? Or, will you discuss one text fully and then the other in relation to it? If so, which goes first? Why?

Exploring an Issue

In this assignment, take some time to explore an issue--any matter important to the communities in which you live about which people disagree and on which it is possible to take several positions. This exploration should be in the service of some real purpose. Your assignment involves three activities: 1. Choose your topic carefully: although you are not required to argue for a particular position here (though that is one of the options), your paper could serve well as a prelude to a subsequent argument for a particular position that you might wish to take in a later assignment in the course. 2. Then read widely about the issue in Pattee Library, on the Internet, on listserves, or in other sources. Speak to authorities as necessary. In any event, become well educated on the issue: why do people take the positions on the issue that they hold? 3. Then write your paper.

Your paper could be in the form of a letter. It could be the draft of a talk presented to a group of listeners which includes people with a variety of positions on the issue. Or it could be an article for a magazine or newspaper which presents the intricacies of the issue to its readers. Or imagine it as a lengthy memo to a person--such as a legislator--or to members of a particular group who need to be informed before they take a stand on a particular issue. In short, your paper must respond to an exigence: for some reason, an audience is interested in your exploration of this issue, and you want to provide a service to this audience. In any event, your response to this assignment should consider one of the three types of rhetorical situations described below:

a) You can take up an issue that people disagree about—should your school district build a new high school or renovate the current one? Should the current administration's position on stem cell research be reconsidered? Should SAT testing be continued, discontinued, or modified?—and use your exploration of the issue to support a certain conclusion. Your audience may or may not know much about the issue already; that's for you to assess. But you should present your account of current thinking on the matter in a way that supports a conclusion that you hold.

b) You can enlarge someone's understanding about a controversy without reaching a settled conclusion. Such an audience would already have some knowledge of at least some aspects of the issue. For example people in your community see gun control as necessary to curb violence, but you as a hunter understand it somewhat differently: enlarge your reader's understanding of all

positions on the issue, including that reader's position. Or some people in your community oppose sex education in the public schools because they believe parents are responsible for such teaching; you have a different point of view. Show those opposed to sex education **both** the arguments for their position and the differing points of view available on this issue.

c) You can examine an issue that is unfamiliar to your audience, but which they have some need to understand. For instance, you might explore some aspect of the problems involving old growth forests or clear cutting or clean streams so that a group interested in supporting environmental issues would better understand all the available positions on these issues. Or you might explore the controversy surrounding human cloning for an audience that lacks knowledge about this issue but that has become interested in it. You could provide comprehensive information about the issues raised by charter schools so that people in your community can make more informed decisions about the charter schools being proposed in your school district: think of your paper as an effort to "catch people up" with what has been said on an issue. Or as a Penn State student you might choose an issue that a Collegian audience would read about (such as hate speech or underage drinking or the recent Penn State position on downloading music) and explore the positions available on that issue in order to clarify people's understanding

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Harvard
http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~expos/index.cgi?section=courses#10

Essay 2 builds on the skills of the first essay and adds to them by requiring students to handle more than one source, often adding secondary sources to a central primary source, and often including personal evidence as well as textual evidence. Students learn to build their own argument and come to their own conclusion—their own idea—by taking more than one source into account. Such an assignment generally requires a more complex essay structure as well as the evaluation and documentation of sources. Texts for this assignment may address questions of morality, violence, racism, education, political oppression, personal identity, and may include fiction as well as argumentative essays and other sources.

Rollins

Martha Cheng
Synthesis-Analysis Assignment
(20% of course grade)

Due Dates: Monday, March 21--draft
            Wednesday, March 30—final paper

Assignment:

1. Write a minimum of 4/maximum of 6 pages (typed, doubled-spaced, 12-pt
    font) synthesizing and analyzing an issue addressed by the articles used in
    this class to discuss the topic of crime and punishment.

2. Begin by choosing an issue discussed by the articles. Explain the different
    ways of viewing the issue that you have learned from the articles.

3. Show how the different viewpoints support or contradict one another—show
    how they are related. This will require you to think about the issue in a deeper
    way than we have discussed in class. Your paper should not sound like a
    class discussion written down.

4. Although you should use all the articles in your paper, be careful not to simply
    catalogue in list-fashion the various viewpoints according to each article. The
    goal is to make the *relationships* among the viewpoints central to your paper
    and use the articles as support and evidence.

Use APA format for citations and the bibliography.