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Lesson Plan: 10/15/2012 - Citation as Conversation
Pair with: RtW p. 632: Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing

Have students get out journals. Write up on the board:

"Because the two activities have similar mortality rates, texting while driving should have the same penalties as drunk driving." - Aaron

(I like to pause a minute to let them read and react to it before I sign my name to it.)

Have students write a response to this statement for three-four minutes. Then ask for a volunteer to respond to your opinion. Let the volunteer know that this is an academic situation and that all of these opinions are being posited in academic journals published across the land, so she needs to quote the original opinion before she can add to it.

Put this next opinion up on the board. If it’s short, I like to put it in quotes; if it rambles, I will paraphrase it. Either way I put the author’s name next to it.

I usually get three responses to the original quote before having the students go back to their journals and free write about any new ideas they might have formed in response to the new opinions put up on the board. Then I open up the class again for more opinions, and every time a student starts speaking, they need to summarize the academic conversation that has taken place before they entered it and quote or paraphrase some specific sources they want to respond to. To prevent things from getting too bogged down, I guide them using the “minimum number of sources” requirement you’ll see on a lot of academic paper assignments. So before they can add an opinion they have to “cite” three sources already up on the board.

The whole of a fifty minute class can be used this way, because the teaching moments tend to happen naturally and the students want to keep talking about this, but apart from the best time to quote, paraphrase, or summarize, I keep my eye out for three things in particular:

1. Repeat opinions - make sure each author is adding something new to the conversation
2. Repeat authors - I like to refer to these students as distinguished authorities in the field with multiple publications. These students don’t have to cite any further back than their own most recent published opinion.
3. Conversation reset - Usually after about twenty to thirty minutes, the conversation will get stuck in one small corner of the issue and leave out others (focusing on just the current penalties for texting and driving, for instance). At this point I will say that the conversation has gotten so specific that it has now become a new discipline, a sub-genre in the field of Drunk/Text Studies. But now, one of the founding members (me) would like to refocus the conversation, because it has failed to address *blank* which was one of his primary concerns in making the original argument.