

UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

MOTIVE IN THE DISCIPLINES EXERCISE

Match the excerpts below to one or more possible motivating moves. Please note that each writing sample makes more than one motivating move, so there are multiple right answers!

- **Sociology:** *How does one explain the seeming inconsistency between the responses by the Hispanic community to the 1992 poll, on the one hand, and the general pride that most Americans express about their immigrant roots, on the other?*
- **History:** *New York's American Art-Union offers an opportunity to examine, in one significant context, the struggle that defined the social role of art and artists in the antebellum North.*
- **Environmental Science:** *Although the origin of these sources [of oxygenated organic compounds] is still unclear, we suggest that oxygenated species could be formed via the oxidation of hydrocarbons in the atmosphere, the photochemical degradation of organic matter in the oceans, and direct emissions from terrestrial vegetation.*
- **Psychology** (Freud, in fact!): *The play is built on Hamlet's hesitations over fulfilling the task of revenge that is assigned to him; but its text offers no reasons or motivations for these hesitations, and an immense variety of attempts at interpreting them have failed to produce a result.*

Possible Motivating Moves:

1. The truth isn't what one would expect, or what it might appear to be on first reading.
2. There is an interesting wrinkle in the matter, a complexity that appears on closer examination.
3. Something that seems simple or common or obvious has more implications or explains more than it may seem.
4. There is a contradiction, mystery, or tension that needs investigation.
5. There is an ambiguity, something unclear that could mean two or more things.
6. We can learn about a larger phenomenon by studying this smaller one.
7. A seemingly tangential or insignificant matter is actually important or interesting.
8. There is something implicit that needs to be made explicit.
9. The standard opinion of a text or a certain published view needs challenging or qualifying.
10. Published views of the matter conflict.

Credit: University Writing Program, 2020.

The Brandeis University Writing Program, including the Writing Center, First-Year Writing, and Writing in the Majors, offers support for writing throughout the community, including undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff.

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