They Say/I Say

Why Templates?
Skilled writers have a mastery of basic argumentative moves that they use, often unconsciously, to express their ideas in a logical manner. Less skilled writers, on the other hand, often lack the knowledge of what these basic moves are, and templates can help them learn to use them in their own writing. While good writing and critical thinking go beyond these templates, they can still serve as a stepping stone to learn to master the language for expressing deeper critical inquiry.

They Say/I Say
Good academic writing engages with the existing literature and prevalent thought in a given discipline. In order to write a proper, argumentative paper, then, it is necessary to recognize a paper as the author’s attempt to enter into a larger academic conversation. Learning to find a way to enter this conversation can be accomplished by consistently apply these kinds of templates.

Templates By Category (From Graff and Birkenstein)

Introducing an Ongoing Debate
In discussion of X, one controversial issue has been ____________. On the one hand, _______ argues ______. On the other hand, ______ contends ________.
When it comes to the topic of X, most experts agree that _________. Where this agreement ends, however, is on the question of ____________.

Writing a Summary
X demonstrates that ____________.
X is insisting that ____________.
The essence of X’s argument is that ____________.

Disagreeing, With Reasons
X’s claim that _______ rests upon the questionable assumption that _______.
I disagree with X’s view that ________, because recent research has shown that ________. By focusing on ________, X overlooks the deeper problem of ________.

Agreeing and Disagreeing Simultaneously
Though I concede that ________, I still insist that ____________.
X is right that ______, but she seems on more dubious ground when she claims that ________.

Establishing Why Your Claims Matter
Although X may seem trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of today’s concern over _______. These findings have important consequences for the broader domain of ________.