They Say/I Say Templates
Adapted from the book by Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst

Disagreeing

A number of scholars have recently suggested that _____. However, _____.

In their recent work, Y and Z have offered harsh critiques of _____ for _____. Yet _____.

X is mistaken because she overlooks _____.

X's claim that _____ rests on the questionable assumption that _____.

I disagree with X's view that _____, because, as recent research has shown, _____.

X contradicts herself. On the one hand, she argues _____. On the other hand, she also says _____.

By focusing on _____, X overlooks the deeper problem of _____.

Agreeing

I agree that _____, because my experience at _____ confirms it.

X is surely right about _____ because, as she may not be aware, recent studies have shown that _____.

X's theory of _____ is extremely useful because it sheds light on the difficult problem of _____.

I agree that _____, a point that needs emphasizing since so many people still believe _____.

If group X is right that _____, as I think they are, then we need to reassess the popular assumption that _____.

Qualifying an Argument

X argues _____, and I agree. Yet this is not to say that _____.

Although I concede that _____, I still maintain that _____.

Although I agree with X up to a point, I cannot accept his overriding assumption that _____.

Although I disagree with much that X says, I fully endorse his final conclusion that _____.

X is right that _____, but she seems on more dubious ground when she claims that _____. While X is probably wrong when she claims that _____, she is right that _____.

Whereas X provides ample evidence that _____, Y and Z's research on _____ and _____ convinces that _____ instead.

I'm of two minds about X's claim that _____. On the one hand, I agree that _____. On the other hand, I'm not sure if _____.

My feelings on the issue are mixed. I do not support X's position that _____, but I find Y's argument about _____ and Z's research on _____ to be equally persuasive.

Standard Views as "They Say"
A way to introduce a view that has become so standard it's a conventional way of thinking about a topic.

It has become common today to dismiss _____.
Americans have always believed that _____.
Conventional wisdom has it that _____.
Common sense seems to dictate that _____.
The standard way of thinking about X has it that _____.
It is often said that _____.
My whole life I have heard it said that _____.
You would that that _____.
Many people assume that _____.

Making "They Say" Something "You Used to Say"
Another way to introduce the views you're responding to is to present them as your own—either something you used to believe or something you're ambivalent about.

I've always believed that _____.
When I was a child, I used to think that _____.
Although I should know better by now, I cannot help thinking that _____.
At the same time I believe _____, I also believe _____.

Introducing Something Implied or Assumed
Another sophisticated move a writer can make is to summarize a point that is not directly stated in what "they say" but is implied or assumed.

Although none of them has ever said so directly, my teachers have often given me the impression that _____.
One implication of X's treatment of _____ is that _____.
X apparently assumes that _____.
While they rarely admit as much, _____ often take for granted that _____.

Introducing an Ongoing Debate

In discussions of X, one controversial issue has been _____. On one hand, Y argues _____. On the other hand, Z contends _____. Others even maintain _____. My own view is _____.

When it comes to the topic of _____, most of us will readily agree that _____. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of _____. Whereas some as convinced that _____, others maintain that _____, and I _____.