

The Big 4 for Writing for Context: Situation, Audience, Purpose, Claim

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Situation:

- What rhetorical situation are you responding to?
- What current cultural/social/environmental/educational/political/etc. circumstances are you engaging with?
- What “conversation” are you participating in?
- What are the various positions, stances, and roles?

Audience:

- Who is your target audience?
- What do you share (values, beliefs, goals) with them?
- What are potential differences or gaps?
- What do you think that they know already and what do they need help from you to know?

Purpose:

- What is your particular goal?
- What would you like to achieve with your position?
- What would you like to elicit from your audience? Raising awareness? Shifting a definition or perspective? Taking action?

Claim:

- What is the argument you are making?
- What is your stance? Why?
- And why does this arguable issue and your stance matter?

Tips for Organization:

Structure your paper as an “imagined dialogue” in conversation with and in anticipation of inquiries, responses, and questions from your audience. What background information might they need? What terms will require “unpacking”? What points will be more impactful through example? Where will outside sourcework be most useful? Make sure all of your content aligns with your argument, continue revising your claim as your content evolves.

