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Synthesis   <small>(partially adapted from Diehl, Warhrer, and McGuire)</small>

What is synthesis?

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the general definition of synthesis is "the putting together of parts or elements so as to make up a complex whole; the combination of immaterial or abstract things, or of elements into an ideal or abstract whole." Essentially, it means that you're taking multiple things and combining them into something new, which is often greater than its parts.

In terms that are more specific to writing, synthesis implies your ability to support a point or argument with information from a variety of sources. The term also refers to your ability to examine several sources and identify how they're related and how their points overlap in regards to your thesis statement. The important thing here, however, is still that you'll take multiple sources and combine them into a greater whole by showing the links between them.

What type of synthesis do I need to produce in GSW 1120?

This course asks you to work with synthesis in a very specific way. The most frequent definition of synthesis in GSW 1120 is that it is the combination of two quotes through the identification of the relationship between them. A more concrete way to think of this might be that you're trying to put the two quotes in conversation with each other, so you're showing the connection between them, and then linking that conversation back to your own ideas.

What are some tips for effective synthesis?

- Strong synthesis relies on an effective thesis statement. For a good conversation to happen, it needs to be about one clear central topic…and that topic will come from your thesis.
- Become familiar enough with your sources that you don't simply reiterate them within your essay; discuss them in relation to your points and arguments.
- Choose strong verbs of attribution that clearly show the relationship between the quotes you work with.
- After quoting two sources, be sure to explain how the quotes not only relate to your main ideas but also how the quotes relate to each other.

What are some ways in which two sources can get into conversation?

There are some common ways that the relationship between two sources can be seen, which are shown below. However, make sure that you've carefully defined the connection between any two sources before putting them together in synthesis. If you're saying that they agree, it should be clear to the reader that they do so. Again, to use the conversation metaphor, make sure that you're clearly defining the type of conversation happening between these two quotes.

> **Similarity: shows how two sources corroborate (agree) with one another.** Atwood, like Cohen, argues that popular culture plays an important role in the composition classroom.
> **Contrast: shows how two sources support a point in different ways. "**Unlike Cohen, Atwood argues that…"
> **Accumulation: shows how one source builds on the idea of the other.** "Building on Cohen's point, Atwood proposes…" or "Atwood adds to Cohen's point by noting…"
> **Causation: shows how one source discusses the effects of another source's ideas. "**Though Cohen identifies the importance of popular culture in the composition classroom, Atwood posits an effect..."