Essay #2 Revision Work: Identifying and “Planting” the Naysayer

In their discussion of why it is important to incorporate critical views in an essay, Graff and Birkenstein claim, “no single device more quickly improves a piece of writing than the practice of planting a naysayer in the text” (75). They remind us that identifying possible objections to our claims and arguments—and really hearing these objections—can help enhance our views, bolster our credibility, and even help us figure out and solve problems we might be having with our own ideas.

Today in class, you’ll work on identifying and anticipating the criticisms of the naysayer for your paper. Primarily, you will begin to list some of the central claims you make in your essay and provide “counter-arguments” for these claims. To be sure, this will not be an easy task, especially since many of you are in the process of revising your papers. But, as Graff encourages us to do, summarizing any potential objections ultimately leads to answering or responding to those objections—which in turn can result in persuading your readers to adopt your point of view.

1) Remind yourself: What is my central argument?

2) In order to explore and prove this argument, what are some of the main "points" my paper makes or needs to make? You can use your topic claims and other conclusions you argue as guides here, but you should also think beyond what you have written currently as those ideas may need to change. In other words, if you know a topic sentence isn’t exactly what you want to explore in that paragraph, write below the idea you want to convey instead.

a.

b.

c.

d.
3) Now, use the "voice of the 'skeptic,'" as Graff calls it, and rewrite the above claims from this counter-view. How would the "naysayer" respond to these ideas?

a.  

b.  

c.  

d.  

4) Finally, answer these objections. Be sure that you do not dismiss the objections as irrelevant or attempt to oversimplify them—this may result in alienating your readers. You may find it helpful to review the templates Graff provides on p. 85 as you rewrite your original claim (having taken into consideration possible objections to it).

a.  

b.  

c.  

d.  