

Solstrand, 7.-8. oktober 2010:

Reading to write: How to use authentic academic texts in order to improve student writing



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Academic writing presented by a student

I have chosen the second text in the compendium, "New listening habits" by Per Dahl. The excerpt is taken from the book "Applied music aesthetics," which was released in 2008. Dahl is an associate professor at the University of Stavanger, Department of Music and Dance. My thesis contains a summary of the text, before I make an argumentation analysis and a rhetoric analysis. Finally, I will comment upon the genre and place the text in a context.



Reading to write: How to use authentic academic texts in order to improve student writing

- Our view of a good writing course – writing as a craft
- Some consequences for the development of writing courses
- Examples of criteria based commenting practice
- How students evaluate Academic Writing



[...] the kind of knowledge we are looking for, is **too subtle to be suitable as writing advices**. To formulate measurable criteria for text quality has proven to be very difficult, and if the criteria were to be expressed as advices, the problem will be even greater (Hertzberg 1995: 203)



... writing is mainly learned and perfected subconsciously, **through reading** and socializing into a writing community (Hertzberg 1995: 203).



Three aspects of reading directly associated with writing

- How to read academic texts as models for their own writing
- How to use the texts they read as material in the texts they write
- How to read their own texts as critically as they just have learned to read the texts of other authors

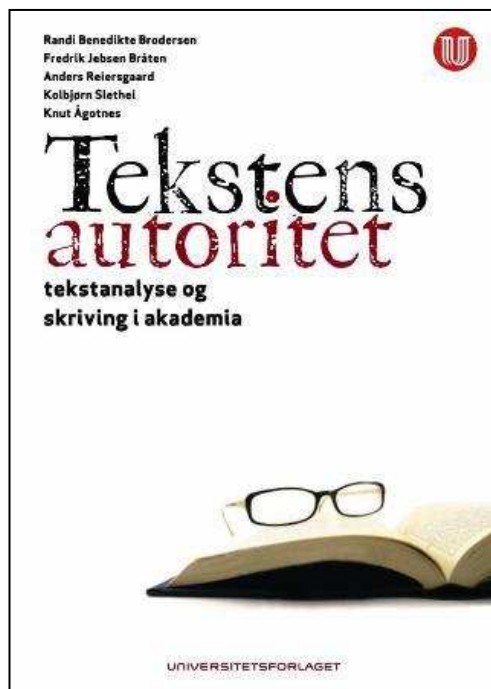


Some consequences for the development of writing courses

- A writing course should focus on the connection between reading and writing
- Both teaching, reading and writing should be based on a definite set of criteria



The criteria



Argumentation analysis:

- Main claim
- Grounds / data / evidence
- Warrants
- Qualifiers
- Etc.

Rhetorical analysis

- Ethos
- Pathos
- Logos

Genre analysis

- Genre purpose: Presentation of established knowledge to a wider audience, presentation of new research results to peers and colleagues, etc.

Context analysis

- Historical context / context of the author
- Context related to reception and readings
- Context related to the current research questions



Examples of criteria based commenting practice

Rhetorical analysis

Ethos: I read this text without knowing anything whatsoever about the author, so I started out with a neutral attitude and Dahl convinces me that what he writes is true. He controls himself, this means he does not passionately advocate one specific view on the matter. He writes in such a way that makes it difficult to contradict him or disagree with what he says, in other words, I consider what he writes as credible.



Violation of the
objectivity norm

Write errors /
grammatical
errors

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Poor content

Too little evidence

Inaccurate

Nothing is written about the text's What,
How and Why



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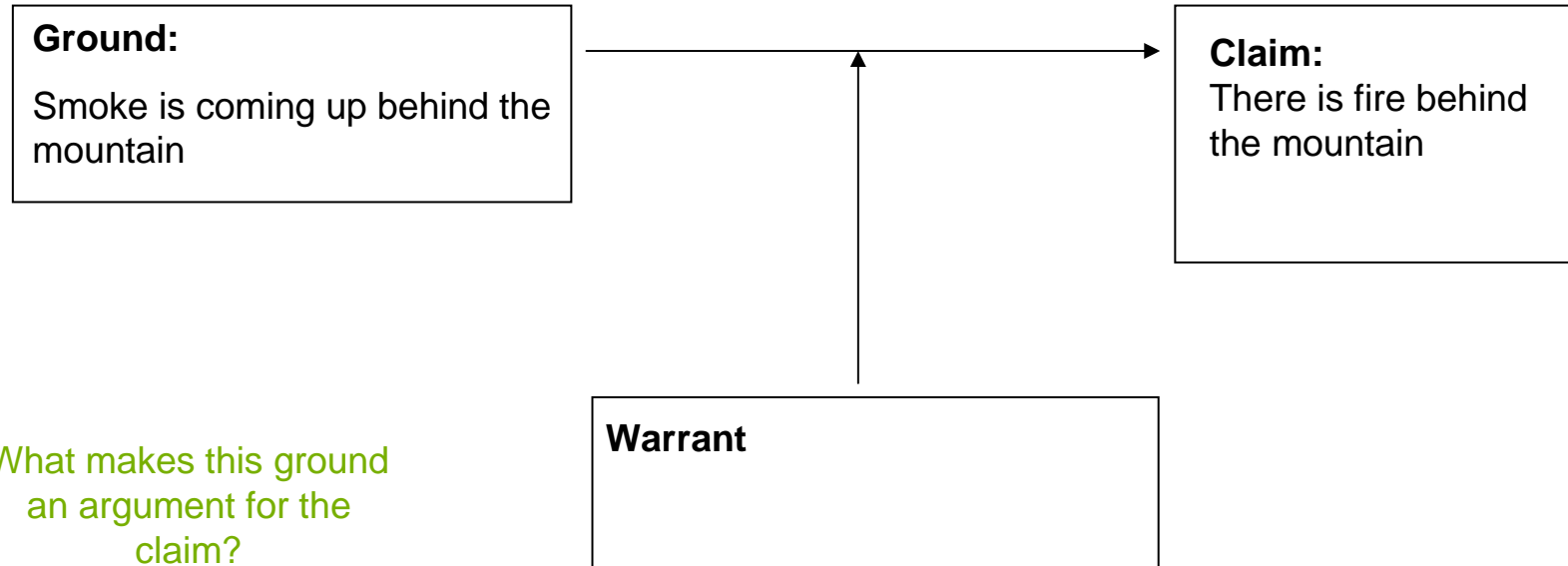
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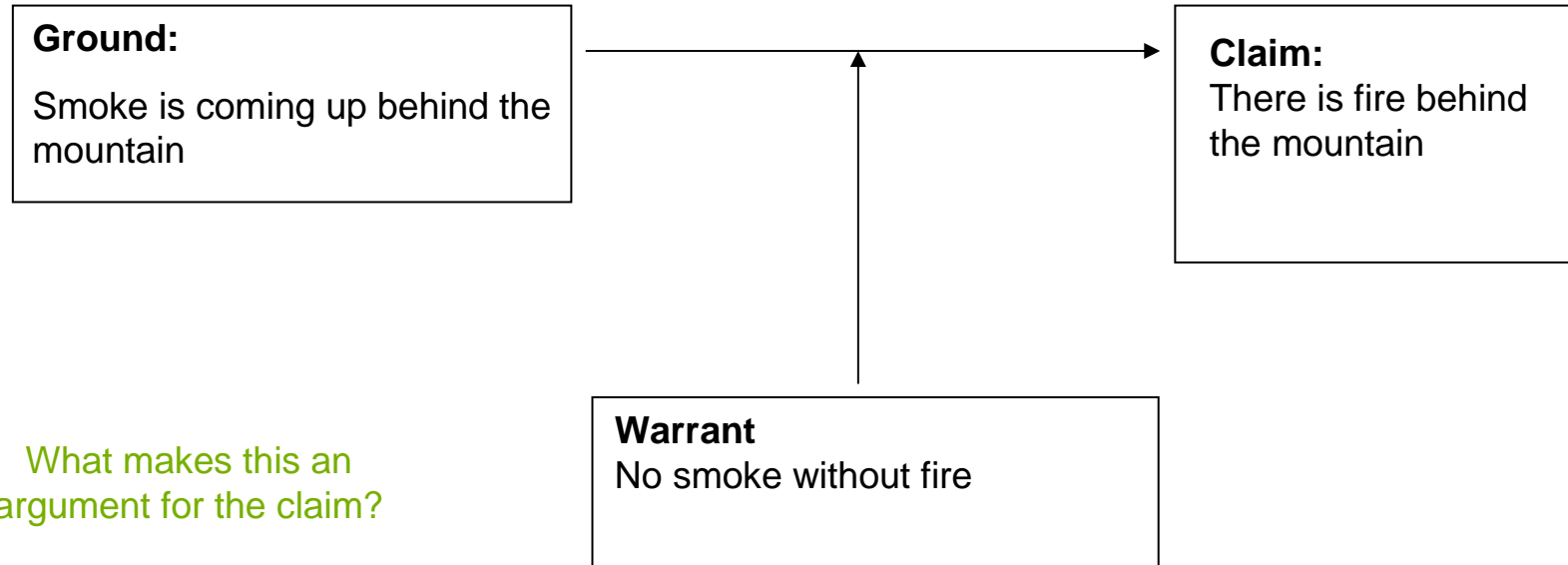
What do you base this claim on?



What makes this ground
an argument for the
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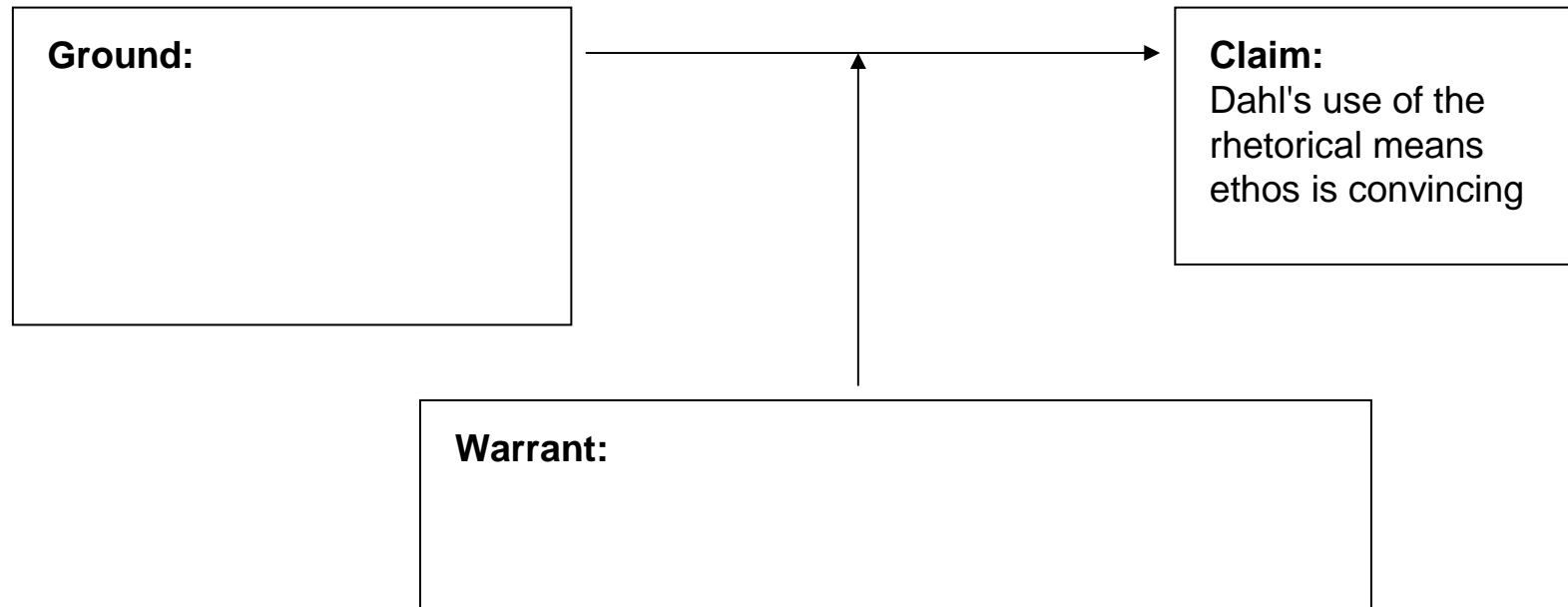
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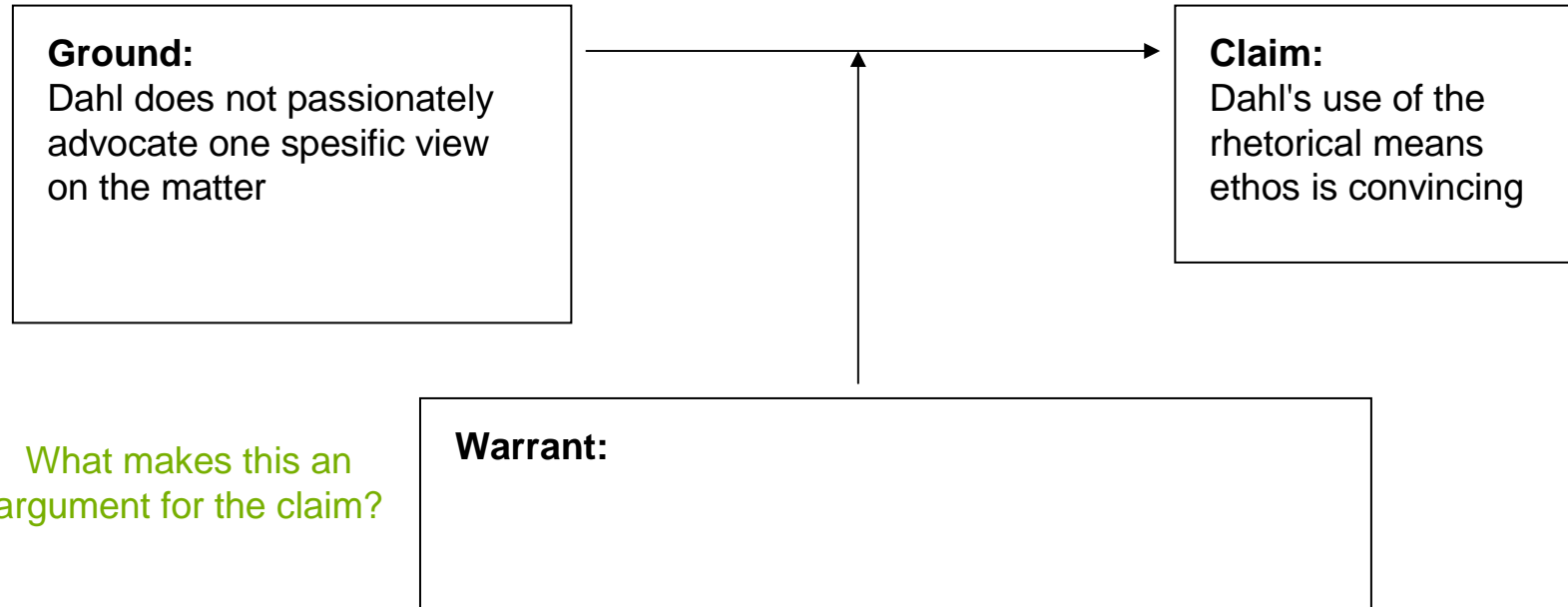
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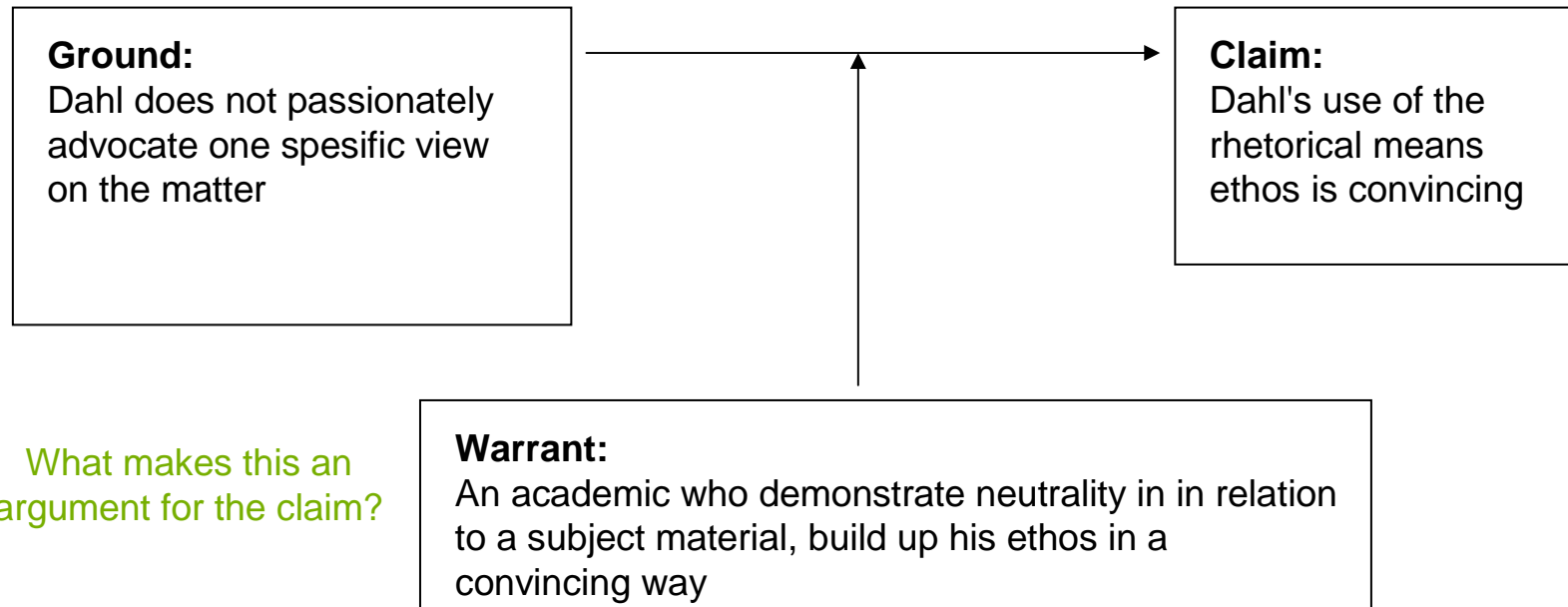
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READING ↔ WRITING

In this way we continuously switch between a focus on reading and a focus on writing, at every point drawing on the just established knowledge and the just established criteria for reading in commenting the students writing process



Student evaluation – positive judgements

I have got a whole **new understanding of the factors that must be the basis in reading**, understanding, analysing, and not least producing an academic text. This is an effective course which makes the transition from other school institutions easier. **Academic writing has contributed to my "self-confidence" in order to produce texts.**

I think this course served as **an excellent introduction to the academic methods and the academic writing**, partly because we had to analyse an academic text thoroughly. The more I learned, the more interesting became the text which I analysed, although the text itself did not have much to do with my own field. **Also, I think also it was interesting to learn how to write an academic text like this, where you get feedback by the teacher along the way.** When I started this course I had no idea how an academic text should look like, and in any case not how I'd manage to write such. So, for me, this course has been very effective!

I learned a lot about this kind of writing in a very short time, and now I wouldn't be without this course. It was a great help. **I've studied before without having concepts about this kind of critical writing. I have honestly missed this before, and took great advantage of this writing-course.** You learn to analyse texts in a much deeper way than before, and at the same time you develop a larger vocabulary. This way of analysing will probably be useful when I am to write my own texts.

Academic writing has taught me to write better.



Student evaluation – critical judgements

I think we've learned a lot about the academic methods, how to read an academic text, and how even to write scholarly analysis, but I would have liked to be taught a little more exactly how to write an academic text itself. In this regard I have many unanswered questions... On the other hand, I think the book was very good, useful, easy to read and understand, and I think the education has also been very good with good lecturers. The lecturer / seminar leader of group E was very good!

The study should, in my opinion, not be called "Academic Writing". It should be called "analysis of academic writing." We have not at all practiced writing academic texts. We have only been analysing the work of others.

I feel the subject has helped me to think effectively and critically in relation to new material and curriculum texts. But whether it has improved my writing skills, I do not know...



