Conclusions

You need to conclude your essay with more than a brief summary of what you have said. Generally speaking, your essays will be short enough that they do not warrant an extensive review of what you have argued.

First, remind your reader about what you have said in about 2-3 sentences and then offer something worthwhile.

Second, once you have briefly summarized your argument, choose **one** of the following strategies:

I. Justify Your Work

Explain why your argument is significant or relevant. Your goal is to help your reader see the larger implications of what you are arguing without committing yourself to proving it in this particular paper. In other words, you're anticipating the question, "So what?" without making the answer to that question the point of your essay.

II. Lay Groundwork for Future Research

Explain what now needs to be done. In other words, you're trying to say, "Look. This is what I've done, but I've just revealed the tip of the iceberg." Or "Look. This is what I've done, and this is where we need to go from here (based on my research). For example…

> In sum, literature courses contribute to the larger goals of a liberal arts education. That is, studying written narratives not only increases one's ability to enjoy what one reads, but an understanding of how language works helps us make sense of and act upon other elements of our life. Such courses should help us respond not only to narratives we read and watch, but we can also understand and respond more critically to the culture which produces it. **But there is certainly more work to be done. While we have looked closely at** the value of literature, **we need to pay more attention to** other courses that have come under excessive scrutiny. Fine arts, music, and history have all been put aside in the name of a "cost effective" education, but these are not disciplines that we can do without, and **this is where we should now turn our attention.**

III. Appeal to Authority

Explain that what you have done is significant and valuable, etc. and then end with a short quote by the person whose work you've built on or by someone whom you are certain your audience will respect and listen to. For example...

> It seems clear that literature courses contribute to the larger goals of a liberal arts education. That is, studying written narratives not only increases one's ability to enjoy what one reads, but an understanding of how language works helps us make sense of and act upon other elements of our life. Such a course should help us respond not only to narratives we read and watch, but we can also understand and respond more critically to the culture which produces it. As Adrianne Rich proclaims, "The difference is that between acting and being

acted-upon" (77). It is up to us to decide whether we want to be pawns in the system or be active participants.

IV. Apply Insights Elsewhere

Explain how your insights can be applied to other subjects or issues. For example, if your paper explores why figures of speech are essential to conveying meaning in literary texts, go on to suggest that we could apply what you to pop culture as well, including broadcasting, sports, and education .The point of such a move is to tell your reader that you are dealing with a larger process, not just an isolated event. For example...

> As we have seen, when we watch MTV we can identify how our identity is being constructed for us, how roles are prepared for us, how we are constantly being shaped. With an ability to read critically, we can consciously take on these roles or reject them, replacing them with creations of our own. **But MTV is only one problem that we need to examine closely.** Narratives surface in news broadcasts, course curriculum, and certainly every film. Studying narrative structure, then, not only increases one's ability to enjoy what one reads, **but an understanding of how language works helps us make sense of and act upon other elements of our life**.

V. Read Against the Grain

Explain that while your conclusions make sense and that the methodology you have based your argument on is helpful, we, as readers, might want to notice some potential problems. In other words, you are reinforcing the gains of your work and methodology, but acknowledging the limitations. You convey a need for caution. You hint at limitations. i.e. "These TV shows surely appeal to a white audience's fears and fantasies, but they probably would not receive much of a response from an African American audience because...." Or "Roland Barthes' approach helps us see blah blah, but on the other hand, there are some serious limitations in his approach that we should be aware of. For example...." "X's vision helps us see what would otherwise be invisible, but we still need to remind ourselves that ..." "This idea of X helps us to ... but I wonder about ..." For example...

> In short, we are often unaware of our own way of seeing until it (inevitably) clashes with other conceptual metaphors. This conflict has occurred on a grand scale in my own classrooms here and elsewhere. As noted, I refuse to see education as a commodity, and as a result, my "production system" is perceived as inefficient and chaotic. **On the other hand**, many students thrive in the environment I provide as they grow intellectually. **It's not news that** we cannot please all students all the time, but seeing the source of this conflict as the result of conflicting conceptual metaphors may help us become less combative and more compassionate with each other. **However, I don't want to imply that** all conceptual metaphors are equally appealing or helpful, particularly in a college environment. While my students may "grow" and find ways to enrich their lives, they may not be prepared for a capitalist economy that privileges the bottom line. My best teaching may be the most limiting.