

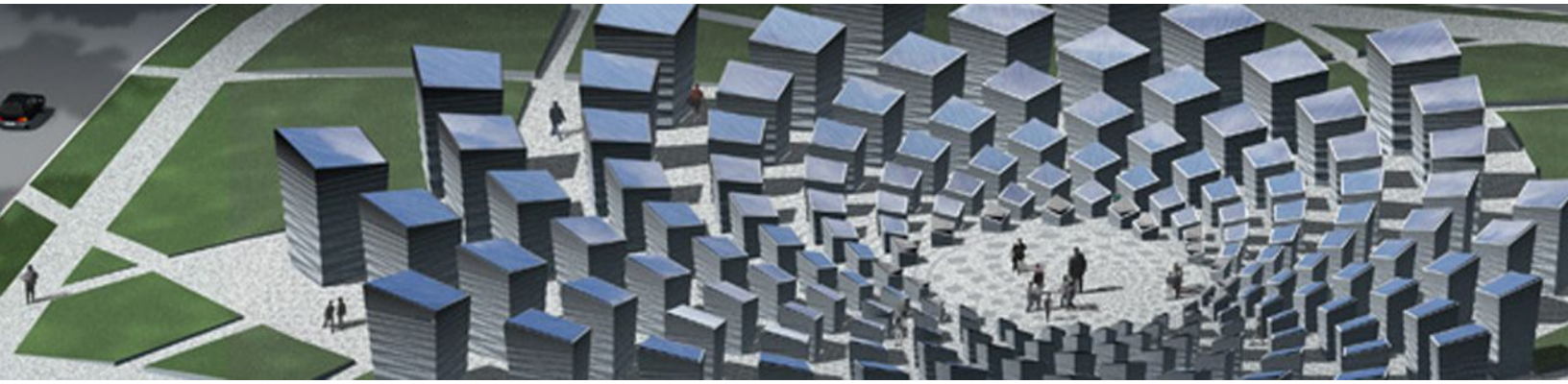
# HOW TO THINK LIKE A SCHOLAR

## ICONIC “INTERVENTIONS” SCHOLARS MAKE TO MAKE THEIR ARGUMENTS MATTER

To make your argument matter, you need to move *beyond* saying why your subject matters and move toward demonstrating why *your interpretation* of that subject is novel, unexpected, or otherwise new.

Scholars do this by establishing the intellectual stakes of their arguments by highlighting that what they have to say matters. Here’s a list of iconic intellectual moves scholars make to make their arguments matter:

1. The **truth** about a text, issue, or topic **is not what one would expect** or what it would appear to be **on a first reading**.
2. The **standard view** or a **published view** about a text, issue, or topic **needs challenging** or **qualifying**.
3. *The text, issue, or topic* has: an **interesting wrinkle** or **complexity** that **requires an explanation**; an **inconsistency** or **contradiction** that requires a **resolution**; a gap or mystery that requires a **solution**; an ambiguity or obscurity—something that has two or more possible meanings—that **needs** an interpretation.



4. A simple, common, or apparently obvious approach to a text, issue, or topic has more complex, unexpected, or unobvious implications—and perhaps explains more—than it may initially seem.
5. A critical debate exists on this text, issue, or topic, about which scholars hold conflicting views.
6. The analysis of this smaller text, issue, or topic explains something of significance about a larger text, issue, or topic.
7. A seemingly tangential or insignificant matter is actually central or essential.
8. The critical knowledge thus far accumulated about a text, issue, or idea remains limited or blinded in some significant way.
9. A feature or element of a text, issue, or topic that everyone accepts as unproblematic actually has significant problems.

