Weak Thesis Statements

There are many kinds of thesis statements, and no one right way to compose one. However, there are several mistakes that students can make when composing their own. Here is some advice on how to spot, and fix, common traps in your own writing. ***Remember, these are general rules.***

# Weak Thesis 1: The thesis makes no claim.

***Example****: In this paper, I will explore William Faulkner's short story, "A Rose for Emily."*

How to Revise: Make generic claims specific. Take a stand on one side of an issue. Show how you will explore your topic, and why.

***Revised****: In "A Rose for Emily," William Faulkner uses non-reproductive sexuality as a metaphor for the stagnation of the Southern Aristocracy of which Emily is a part; by exploring the role of Homer's slyly depicted homosexuality in the narrative progression, the connection between aristocracy and death becomes inarguable.*

# Weak Thesis 2: Statement of Fact (not a debatable claim).

***Example****: Many authors use Shakespeare as a reference in their works.*

How to Revise: Find a question within your original claim? Why is this statement true? Are there scenarios in which this statement is not true?

***Revised****: Although many American Modernist authors peppered their works with allusions to Shakespeare in order to establish their literary pedigree, many contemporary authors are too concerned with the "middlebrow" to engage Shakespeare's work in a similar manner.*

# Weak Thesis 3: Opinion-based theses.

***Example****: Adele's song "Someone Like You" is one of the best wedding-dance songs ever.*

How to Revise: Look for opposing positions. What are their points? What will you have to temper to make your claim something someone could engage using evidence and logic?

***Revised****: Adele's record 21, uses themes of heartbreak and bittersweet reunions to set the stage for a lyrical celebration of love's strength when it is built despite a history of failed relationships. With "Someone Like You," Adele invites the listener to overcome the grief that drove the preceding songs, thus creating a cycle of loss and healing within the record's whole.*

# Weak Thesis 4: Overarching, broad claims

***Example****: Republicans tend to appeal to the working class.*

How to Revise: Convert broad categories and generic (fits anything) claims to more specific, more qualified assertions; find ways to bring out the complexity of your subject.

***Revised****: While President Obama may have come from a lower- to middle-class background, he is currently depicted in many Republican debates as an aloof, intellectual—someone too cerebral to understand the everyday American. By reviewing recent Republican presidential nominee debates, one can see how Republican candidates strive to oppose themselves against this image and appeal to the "everyman."*

If you need further assistance with this or any other writing issue, visit the Academic Writing Center!

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