Thesis Statements

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Elusive Mythical Creatures?
Are they mythical?

Common Mistakes

- Restating the topic/subject
- Mismatch between thesis statement and the rest of the paper
- Regurgitating someone else’s point of view. (Prof. Brown argues that French Revolution provided great opportunities for cats.)
- Stating the obvious facts (Madonna and Michael Jackson are similar yet different.)
- Claiming things that you cannot prove. (I believe that yeti lived in California)
- Claims that does not answer the “so what” question. (Cleopatra killed herself.)
Let’s talk about your writing process

Most Popular Writing Process
Writing Process

1) What are you writing?

- Read the prompt and or instructions carefully.

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/
Example

- Pick a source we discussed in lectures and write a 5-page paper about the core values of the society which created this source. What is the historical context in which this source was created?

What are you writing II

- Determine what kind of paper you are writing:
  - A response paper?
  - A term paper?
  - An honors thesis?
2) Do you have the sources you need?

Do you have sources you need to answer your question?

Back your argument up by providing evidence!
CONSTRUCTING YOUR THESIS STATEMENT

- WHAT IS IT? The thesis explains your central argument, elaborating on “WHY” your claim is significant or “HOW” your claim is supported.
- WHERE? The thesis should be one or two sentences in your introductory paragraph.

Characteristics of thesis Statements

- Be specific.
- MUST ANSWER:
  - What is my claim?
  - How is my claim supported? (can be implicit)
  - So what – why does my claim matter?
3) START WITH A QUESTION
(a given one or not)

- Start with a significant, complex, and original question.
- Your thesis statement may challenge accepted wisdom or complicate a seemingly clear-cut topic.
- Make sure that you have evidence to back your thesis statement.

CONSTRUCTING A THESIS

- Start with a topic. Can be very general.

Example: Mexicans of California and Anglo-American expansion to the West.
CONSTRUCTING A THESIS

- Develop a question around it. This will also help you narrow your topic.
  Example: What was the relationship between Mexicans of California and the newcomer Anglo-Americans after the inclusion of California to United States?

CONSTRUCTING A THESIS

- Develop a unique perspective on your question that answers it.
  - Example: Despite differences in language and perceived differences of race by the Anglo-Americans, the early relationship between Mexican elite and the newcomers was warm due to shared economic aspirations.
APPROACHES TO CONSTRUCTING A THESIS

- **Approach #1** – Challenge a given position. For example first introduce the counterargument and continue with your own argument. You can use “although” or “however” to link your sentences.

- **Approach #2** – Try to convince your reader via answering what, how and so what questions.
Let’s practice

Changes

“The changes that occurred in the wake of World War I were manifested in many aspects of American life.”
What changes?

“The changes that occurred in the wake of World War I were manifested in many aspects of American life, from questioning old beliefs to roles in society, causing an open split between old and new.”

How and so what?

“In the Wake of World War I, tension over changing social ideologies and roles were manifested in political demonstrations that reflected the growing sense of fear and uncertainty about society’s new direction that would continue on well into the 20th century.”
Strong or Weak?

- There are some negative and positive aspects to the Banana Herb Tea Supplement.

- http://www.unm.edu/~caps/caps-handouts/writing-center/thes2.html

Strong or Weak?

- Because Banana Herb Tea Supplement promotes rapid weight loss that results in the loss of muscle and lean body mass, it poses a potential danger to customers.
Strong or Weak?

- World hunger has many causes and effects.

- Hunger persists in Glandelinia because jobs are scarce and farming in the infertile soil is rarely profitable.
Question

This summer there was considerable discussion in the news and social media about Rachel Dolezal, who resigned as chair of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) after her parents revealed that she was not African American, as she had claimed to be. What can this story tell us about the social construction of race in 20th century United States?

An example of an intro paragraph*

When Rachel Dolezal's parents revealed that their daughter, who identified and presented herself as black, was actually born and raised white, the conversation surrounding the existence and validity of transracial identity was suddenly ignited in mainstream America. Some support Dolezal’s choice to disregard social conventions to form her own racial identity and have compared her situation to the plight of transgenders. Others are critical and view Dolezal’s actions as being offensive and insulting. Dolezal’s situation and others like it force us to reflect on our current attitudes about race and realize how much of our current understanding of race is socially constructed and is subject to change. However, while Dolezal's self-identification as a black woman does shatter our preconceived notions of race and self-identity, it is also important to note how Dolezal also reinforces the traditional conventions surrounding race, and that her willingness to disregard her “biological” race is actually not doing away with the importance or presence of race; rather, it is only repackaging and redefining race. Race shifts from being primarily a societal concern to becoming more of an individual issue, but race as a concept is not being erased.
Rest of the paper

- Should work to support your main thesis.
- Prove that your thesis statement is correct (via proper evidence)
- Your conclusion should include a paraphrased version of your thesis statement.

Risky words

- Personal pronouns: I, You etc.
- Uncertainty qualifiers: Perhaps, maybe
- Sweeping generalizations: From the beginning of time...
- Vague formulations: Some, kind of, etc.
4) Editing

- Your topic may change as you write, so you may need to revise your thesis statement to reflect exactly what you have discussed in the paper.
- Remember that writing is a process, it takes time and effort to write a good paper.

Writing Process

READ

EDIT

WRITE

(read, write, edit)

(read, write, edit)
Thank you!