**FIVE KINDS OF WEAK THESES AND HOW TO FIX THEM**

A thesis in an **argumentative** paper makes a **claim** about a topic and justifies this claim with specific evidence. The **claim** can be an opinion, a proposal, an evaluation, a cause-and-effect statement, or an interpretation. The goal of the argumentative paper is to convince the audience that the claim is true based on the evidence provided. **A weak thesis statement either makes no claim or makes a claim that does not need proving.**

**Example of an argumentative thesis statement:**

High school graduates should be required to take a year off to pursue community service projects before entering college.

The paper that follows should present an argument and give evidence to support the claim that students should pursue community projects before entering college.

**Five Kinds of Weak Theses and How to Fix Them**

**Weak Thesis #1: The thesis makes no claim**

Example: This paper will examine the pros and cons of television*.*

Solution: Raise specific issues for the paper to explore.

Example: Children under 16 shouldn’t watch more than one hour of television a day.

**Weak Thesis #2: The thesis is obviously true or is a statement of fact**

Example: Exercise is good for you.

Solution: Find some avenue of inquiry – a question about the facts or an issue raised by them. Make an assertion with which it would be possible for readers to disagree.

Example: Exercise improves more than just physical health. / Exercise for people of older age is better than most medication.

**Weak Thesis #3: The thesis restates conventional wisdom or a cliché**

Example: Love conquers all.

Solution: Seek to complicate your subject and see more than one point of view.

Example: Although they are generally considered secondary needs, love and emotional support can be the decisive factors for survival in situations of utter despondency, both physically and personally.

**Weak Thesis #4: The thesis offers personal conviction as the basis for their claim**

Example: Shopping malls are wonderful places.

Solution: Try on other points of view honestly and dispassionately; treat your ideas as hypothesis to be tested rather than obvious truths.

Example: The American shopping mall is but one of a series of representations of the capitalist dream world of the society it exists in.

**Weak Thesis #5: The thesis makes an overly broad claim**

Example: Violent revolutions like the Arab Spring have had both positive and negative results for humanity.

Solution: Make more specific, more qualified assertions; find ways to bring out the complexity of your subject

Example: Although violent revolutions like the Arab Spring begin to redress long standing social inequalities, they often do so at the cost of long-term economic dysfunction and the suffering that attends it.

Sources:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/>

David Rosenwasser and Jill Steven, *Writing Analytically*, Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006. 265.