

## Thesis Statement Workshop

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This is the gist of the assignment that students receive:

**Design a topic for yourself using the homework assignments and class discussions as guides. The papers will include at least one journal entry and at least two texts we have read for class. I would expect that most papers will have a strong thesis and argument. Before you begin your paper, I would like you to email me your thesis statement and argument by Friday so that we can discuss them in Monday's class.**

This is the example of a good thesis statement and argument that I have on the assignment sheet for them to model.

For instance:

Thesis and argument: "Despite apparently strict divisions between categories of class, race, gender, and the modern culture of individualism described by someone like Charles Taylor, experiences can in fact be shared across subject positions. In what follows I will use Charlotte Charke's famous 18<sup>th</sup> century memoir and an episode from my own experience to suggest how the experience of gender has never been clear cut."

I then put all the thesis statements on a page and hand them out at the beginning of class.

Here are some thesis statements that we workshopped

- 1) "Writing about grief is a technology of the self that helps us to deal with the tragedy and enables us to understand who we are and Nina Holzer's book A Walk Between Heaven and Earth does this."
- 2) "Giorgio Agamben would make the claim that photography gives us an 'experience outside ourselves.' In what follows, I am going to refute Agamben's argument by using the Holocaust, Susan Sontag's On Photography, and George Campbell's The Philosophy of Rhetoric to prove that photography gives us the truth of an experience and rather than being expropriated, experience can be relived."
- 3) "Most religious texts were written thousands of years ago, so other texts explaining religion and incorporating its importance to the world today is necessary necessary to grasp your faith. In this paper I intend to interpret philosophical texts to explain experience and reasoning in the light of religion."

\*\* Because I encourage my students to highlight which texts they will be discussing, I call these sentences "thesis statement and argument," giving them permission to have a thesis statement/argument that is more than one sentence. I'd be curious to hear how others deal with teaching what I would call the "thesis statement and argument" or what others have called "thesis statement and preview statement."