

Thesis Statements

HMXP 102, Section 014

A *thesis statement* is essential for all of the major papers you will write in HMXP 102. Almost all essays you will write in college will need thesis statements. A good thesis statement tells the reader what you will present and how the ideas you present relate to each other. For all writing assignments in HMXP 102, the thesis statement must be the last sentence of your first paragraph; after you introduce the general topic but before you start using specific topics to support your arguments.

Since the theme of all HMXP 102 major papers is argumentative, your thesis statement must clearly state of what you are trying to convince your reader (your **focus**). It should also state the specific **topic** of your essay. The *topic* is not the same as the *focus*. If I were trying to convince you that cats make better pets than dogs (my *focus*), I could use any number of specific *topics* (e.g., cleanliness, amount of required interaction, space requirements, etc.). All topics you intend to address should be included in your thesis statement.

The required form of thesis statements for HMXP 102, section 014 is:

I will discuss _____ (*topic(s)*) and argue that _____ (*focus*).

For my dog versus cat example below, my thesis statement might be (*topic in italics, focus underlined*):

I will discuss the eating, sleeping, sanitary and exercise behavior of dogs and cats and argue that cats are better pets for people who are not very active.

Because this is a general form, the sentence structure is a bit stilted. Later, you might want to alter the sentence structure so that it matches *your* writing style, but for HMXP, this is the form your thesis statement must take. The highest score you can receive on a major paper without a thesis statement in this course is a “D”.

The thesis statement also helps to structure the paper. Each sub-topic in the thesis statement should be the topic of at least one paragraph in your paper. For the dogs and cats example, my essay would include four main arguments, one for each sub-topic. Your topic sentence for each paragraph should refer back to the thesis statement, e.g.,

“Cats spend more time sleeping than dogs, and thus do not require as much time from their owner.”

The paragraph that would follow this topic statement should contrast the amount of time cats and dogs are active during the day and explain why this would be important to relatively inactive owners.

If you change your mind about your topic and/or focus, be sure to change your thesis statement to reflect your new topic and/or focus. It is not unusual to change your mind several times while writing a paper. A thesis statement should be a guide – not a set of handcuffs!