General Thesis Templates

Any good thesis will be *focused* on your object of study (as opposed to making a big claim about the world) and will introduce the *key words* guiding your overall argument. Check out the following two basic templates to get an idea of what a good academic thesis looks like:

1. **Challenge a commonplace interpretation (or your own first impressions).**
   
   How are readers likely to interpret your subject or issue?  
   What might intelligent readers think at first glance?  
   Now ask yourself, what does this commonplace interpretation leave out, overlook, or under- emphasize?

   **Template:** Although viewers/audiences/readers often *assume* (commonplace interpretation), *deeper analysis suggests* (your surprising interpretation).

   **Example:** Although viewers often assume the romantic comedy *Sixteen Candles* is merely for entertainment, deeper analysis suggests that its message is political: The film uses the romance between Samantha, a middle class sophomore, and Jake, an affluent senior, to reinforce the fantasy that anyone can become wealthy and successful with enough cunning and persistence.

2. **If your assignment asks you to do research, piggyback off another scholar’s research.**

   Summarize for your reader another scholar’s argument about your topic, primary source, or case study and tell your reader why this claim is interesting.
   
   Now explain how you will extend this scholar’s argument to explore an issue or case study that the scholar doesn’t address fully.

   **Template:** While (scholar) is *correct in suggesting* (that scholar’s claim), it is also *important to note that* (your extension of that scholar’s claim).

   **Example:** While John Doe is correct in suggesting that the film *Sixteen Candles* undermines high school stereotypes in important ways, it is also important to note that this undermining positively affects viewers’ conceptions of normalcy, even outside the film.