**Helpful Hints for the Term Paper Thesis ☺**

Your thesis statement should be *analytical*; that is, it should select a key aspect of the film (a theme, gender roles, class differences, performance, a specific filming technique, an issue that connects the film to the real world, etc.) and argue for a stance on that topic. Your thesis should be *argumentative*, meaning that someone could disagree with it.

A thesis statement that just summarizes the plot is **not** analytical or argumentative. For example:

* “Bill joins his ex-wife Jo and the storm chasers on an all-day adventure trying to discover the inner workings of a tornado; in the end, Bill and Jo rekindle their love for one another.”

A thesis statement that claims a movie is bad, good, the best, or the worst is argumentative, but it is **not** analytical; it is evaluative. For example:

* “Because of its use of slow motion, diegetic sounds, close-ups, realism, and round characters, *Twister* is one of the best movies of the 90’s.”

Here are some thesis statements that are argumentative and analytical. Note the narrow focus of each.

* “Through the contrast of Melissa and Jo, *Twister* celebrates women who defy the gender stereotype and who possess traits traditionally attributed to men, such as leadership, bravery, and the love of adventure.”
* “*The Hunger Games* attempts to persuade its audience that the reach of American media has gone too far in its idolization of reality shows, which glorify the unlikely struggles of contestants while ignoring actual political problems.”
* “In the figure of Lord Voldemort and his subservient followers, the Death Eaters, *Harry Potter* warns against the mindless acceptance of a persuasive leader, going so far as evoking the Holocaust and Hitler by emphasizing Voldemort’s hatred of mudbloods and muggles.”
* “Leonardo DiCaprio’s performance in *Titanic* and, fifteen years later, *Inception* reveal little growth in his acting abilities but a consistent adherence to verisimilitude.”

Once you have an idea for the direction of your paper, you should take a look at the Interpretive Film List and choose five techniques that help illustrate your point. Don’t choose five terms at random and then try to form a thesis statement out of them. This will give your paper a scattered focus with no over-arching thesis as a guiding principle.

Use those five terms to support your argument, analyzing how each relates to the thesis. For instance, you might write that the **mise-en-scene** of Lord Voldemort’s meeting at the Malfoy Manor is dark, fearful, and accompanied by foreboding **non-diegetic sounds**, and you would be correct—but take this a step further by relating back to your thesis, explaining that the atmosphere is dark and foreboding to reflect the Death Eaters’ fear of Lord Voldemort because they realize that he could kill them at any time. His presence at the table and the ominous sounds of this scene link back to the control that Voldemort has over his subjects.

To recap:

* Analyze, don’t summarize!
* Thesis first, terms second!
* Link terms back to thesis!