ESSAY TYPES

Persuasive: Convinces readers to take the student's point of view about a given subject. Differs from an argument essay in that the goal is to persuade the reader, not just explain the point of view; often, personal pronouns are acceptable.

Sample thesis: Fish are the best pets because they are easy to take care of, fun to watch, and inexpensive.

Argument: Presents the student's point of view on a controversial topic, using research and logical arguments to prove a point. Not an opinion or an editorial piece (no personal pronouns).

Sample thesis: Americans should eliminate the regular consumption of fast food because a fast food diet leads to preventable and expensive health issues, such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.

Variation: Epideictic argument: Argues that a person, organization, theory, etc. is better than all others by using praise/acknowledgement in the evaluation (eg. accomplishments, awards, selfless acts, etc).

Sample thesis: Mother Theresa is the most benevolent woman in history because of her admirable selfless acts, overwhelming generosity, and capacity for love that eclipses that of all others.

Expository: Takes a stance on an issue and explains it. This is similar to an argument essay but simpler and requires less research. When a student says "it's supposed to be an argument, but we didn't need to do research," this is usually what he/she means.

Sample thesis: Though it has many opponents, Instagram is in fact a useful program because it helps people develop their creativity and learn about culture.

Narrative: Describes something that the student has personally experienced and is told from the student's point of view, using 'I, me, my', in the past-tense. Tells a story, usually about an event that happened within the span of a few hours or one day, that has a moral or a lesson to be learned.

Sample thesis: When I met her for the first time, I had no idea that my whole idea of love was about to change for the better.

Descriptive: Describes something – object, person, place, experience, emotion, situation. Paints a picture for the reader to visualize, using descriptive language that covers all five senses. Can be presented from the first- or third-person narrative, but not the second.

Sample thesis: Colorado is my favorite place to visit because of the beautiful scenery, delicious food, and exciting activities.

Exemplification/Illustration: Describes something using examples. This means that examples should be used, not descriptive phrases (despite the fact that 'illustration' is in the title). Typically, an exemplification essay focuses on one main topic and then uses examples to describe this one topic.

Sample thesis: Although most students know that plagiarism is wrong, laziness leads them to plagiarize their work.

The body paragraphs would then be made up of examples of student laziness (procrastination, not wanting to read, hating to write, etc.) and show how these lead to plagiarism. Examples should include specific personal anecdotes, generalizations, or hypothetical situations.

Cause and Effect: Identifies either the causes OR the effects of a situation (eg. the effects of second-hand smoke OR the causes of childhood obesity). Then, the essay uses research to identify patterns and explain why things turned out the way they did.

Sample thesis: Air pollution is caused by exhaust gases from cars, uncontrolled factory releases, and burning of low-quality coal for heating

Variation: Some teachers will ask the students to identify the causes AND effects, but this is unusual.

Sample thesis: Air pollution is caused by exhaust gases from cars, uncontrolled factory releases, and burning of low-quality coal for heating; this then leads to acid rain, eutrophication, and worsening medical conditions.

Compare and Contrast: Identifies the similarities and/or differences between two or more things (eg. online classes vs. in-person classes). There are two methods of organizing this type of essay. First, there might be two body paragraphs, one devoted to each main topic. Or, there might be three body paragraphs, each devoted to different similarity/difference, using examples from each main topic within the paragraph.

> *Sample thesis:* While Dennys and IHOP serve similar food, they are different in their customer service, atmosphere, and quality.

Variation: Some teachers will want the students to include their opinions/evaluations in the conclusion (eg. "Because of the superior customer service, atmosphere, and quality, IHOP is superior to Dennys.").

Rhetorical Analysis: This essay focuses on any type of medium: article, film, television, commercial, magazine ad, etc. This type of essay should <u>not</u> discuss the topic of the medium, but should focus on <u>how</u> the author/creator made his/her points (tone, word choice, authority, etc.). Typically, students will discuss ethos, pathos, and logos when developing this type of essay.

> *Sample thesis*: The Gucci ad's use of ethos, pathos, and logos contributes to its overall message, which is to show women that beauty equals strength.

Literary Analysis: Focuses on analyzing a chosen/given literary text. Reviews and further evaluates the text and its meaning, value, and implications. The essay should not be a summary, but an analysis of characterization, plot, symbols, themes, etc.

> *Sample thesis:* In *The Secret Agent*, Conrad uses beast and cannibal imagery to describe the characters and their relationships to each other.

Variation: Character Analysis in a literary text: Similar to literary essay but focuses on a particular character. Typically, the essay will track the character's growth, development, or change without summarizing the action.

> *Sample thesis:* The character Hamlet proves to be exceedingly existential as he explores deep questions, seeks truth and understanding, and tries to come to grips with his father's death.

Evaluation essay: Establishes a judging criteria (eg. what makes a movie good or bad? Or what makes one idea more valid than another?) and then makes a judgment on a thing, theory, action, etc. Each body paragraph will focus on a specific criterion, upon which the topic will be evaluated.

Sample thesis: The *Twilight* movies are terrible adaptations of the books because the filmmakers have deleted necessary plot points, revised some main characters, and changed the ending.

Classification essay: Separates things in specific categories and discusses each of them. The purpose may be to make a complex idea easier to understand by sorting its parts into logical sections.

Sample thesis: Teachers usually fall into one of three categories: explainers, involvers, and enablers.

Definition essay: Defines a term or phrase. It's usually best to use a complex idea (like 'love' or 'friendship' or 'evil') rather than a concrete object (like 'a tree' or 'television').

Sample thesis: Success is defined in terms of monetary wealth, fame, and happiness.

Process essay/How-to essay: Describes the steps in a process. Usually written in chronological order and tells the reader 'how to' do something. Second-person narrative is often acceptable, here.

Sample thesis: If you want to make the best cup of coffee, you should follow these steps exactly.