**SAMPLE THESIS BUILDING**

**(Underlined phrases indicate what will be changed in the following thesis. Italicized phrases indicated what has been changed from the previous thesis. Comments explaining the changes are in bold.)**

The penal system shows us a problem with the American Dream.

**How? “The American Dream” is too vague.**

The penal system shows us a problem with the American Dream, *which is based on equality.*

**“Shows us a problem” is unclear – what is the problem?**

*The ‘American Dream,’ built primarily upon the foundation of equality*, is threatened by the penal system.

**How does the penal system “threaten” the American dream?**

The ‘American dream, built primarily upon the foundation of equality,*cannot continue to exist* with our current penal system.

**“Our current penal system” is pretty vague – what about it threatens the American dream?**

The ‘American dream,’ built primarily upon the foundation of equality, cannot continue to exist *in a nation that tolerates the disproportionate distribution of justice* we see in our current penal system.

**How do we see a disproportionate distribution of justice in our current penal system?**

The ‘American Dream,’ built primarily upon a foundation of equality, cannot continue to exist in a nation that tolerates the disproportionate distribution of justice we see *in recent policy changes**to*our penal system**.**

**“We see” is unclear – what is the relationship between recent policy changes & a disproportionate distribution of justice?**

The ‘American Dream,’ built primarily on a foundation of equality, cannot continue to exist in a nation that tolerates the disproportionate distribution of justice *that comes from* recent policy changes to our penal system.

**It seems like the focus here is really on recent policy changes, then. That should be the subject of the thesis, right? Also, was justice distributed proportionately before these changes?**

*Recent policy changes to our penal system reinforce the disproportionate distribution of justice.* The ‘American Dream, built primarily on a foundation of equality, cannot continue to exist in a nation that tolerates this.

**OK. Now we’re close. But the language is clunky. What is “this” at the end of the sentence referring to?**

Recent policy changes to our penal system, *which* reinforce the disproportionate distribution of justice, *threaten* the ‘American Dream,’ built primarily on a foundation of equality.

**Closer, for sure. But now we’re back to our earlier question – how do they threaten the American dream?**

Recent changes to our penal system, which reinforce the disproportionate distribution of justice, threaten *the foundation of equality on which* the ‘American Dream’ is built.

**Solid thesis. Clear, narrow, debatable.**