Generalizations

Generalizations are sweeping claims made about persons, places, things, or events.

Why are generalizations a problem?

- They are easily disproven.
- They cannot be supported with evidence.
- They make the author appear untrustworthy.
- They can lead to stereotypes, which are both false and potentially hurtful.

Let's look at some examples of generalization.

> *Texas Tech students are never seen wearing anything but red or black!*
> This generalization can be disproven by finding only one student out of the 36,000 who attend Tech wearing a color other than red or black.

> *People in Lubbock agree that COWamongus! makes the best burgers in town.*
> Many people at Tech, and in the Lubbock community, love to eat at COWamongus!, but there are also people who have never eaten here, and others who have never even heard of it.

How do you avoid and/or correct generalizations?

- Be conscientious of biases and avoid them.
- Use modifying words such as many, most, some, a few, often, occasionally, frequently, etc.
  > *Texas Tech students are <u>often</u> seen wearing red or black.*
- Replace generalizations with specific language.
  > *Although <u>many Tech students</u> love to eat at COWamongus!, there are numerous great burger options in Lubbock.*

Finally. . .

It is risky to make claims about all of history, all of philosophy, or all people.
These statements are nearly impossible to prove and quite easy to disprove. When you avoid generalizations, you are acknowledging that the world is a complex place that we don't know absolutely everything about. Through avoiding generalizations, your readers will perceive your writing as more credible, trustworthy, and nuanced.