**11AP**

**Types of Claims**

Typically, we speak of three types of claims: *claims of fact, claims of value, and claims of policy*. Each type can be used to guide entire arguments, which we would call arguments of fact, arguments of value, and arguments of policy. While it’s helpful to separate the three for analysis, in practice it is not always that simple. Indeed, it’s quite common for an argument to include more than one type of claim.

**Claims of Fact**

These assert that something is true or not true. You can’t argue whether Zimbabwe is in Africa or whether restaurants on Main Street serve more customers at breakfast than at lunch. These issues can be resolved and verified – in the first case by checking a map, in the second through observation or by checking sales figures. You can, however, argue that Zimbabwe has an unstable government or that restaurants on Main Street are more popular with older patrons than younger ones. Those statements are arguable: What does “unstable” mean? What does “popular” mean? Who is “older” and who is “younger”?

Arguments of fact often pivot on what exactly is “factual.” Facts become arguable when they are questioned, when they raise controversy, when they challenge people’s beliefs. See the following statement: “It’s a fact that the Social Security program will go bankrupt by 2025.” This is a claim that could be developed in an argument of fact. Very often, so-called facts are a matter of interpretation. At other times, new “facts” call into question older ones. The claim that cell phones increase the incidence of brain tumors, for instance, requires sifting through new “facts” from medical research and scrutinizing who is carrying out the research, who is supporting it financially, and so on. Whenever you are evaluating or writing an argument of fact, it’s important to approach your subject with a healthy skepticism.

**Claims of Value**

These are perhaps the most common type of claim, which argues that something is good or bad, right or wrong, desirable or undesirable. Of course, just like any other claim, a claim of value must be arguable. Claims of value may be personal judgments based on taste, or they may be more objective evaluations based on external criteria. For instance, if you argue that Brad Pitt is the best leading mean in Hollywood, that is simply a matter of taste. The criteria for what is “best” and what defines a “leading man” are strictly personal. Another person could argue that while Pitt may be the best-looking actor in Hollywood, Leonardo DiCaprio is more highly paid and his movies tend to make more money. This is an evaluation based on external criteria – dollar and cents. To develop an argument from a claim of value, you must establish specific criteria or standards and then show to what extent the subject meets your criteria.