

Fact, Value, Policy, or Bust?

Examine each statement to determine whether it is an appropriate working thesis for a FACT CLAIM, a VALUE CLAIM, a POLICY CLAIM, or none.

1. Pete Rose should be admitted to the Baseball Hall of Fame.
2. Rising sea levels due to global warming will have a much greater impact on the Eastern US than on the Western US.
3. The United States was wrong to invade Iraq.
4. More Africans die of AIDS than any other people in the world.
5. Online shopping is more dangerous than most people realize.
6. The use of racial slurs in public – even among friends of the same racial group – is always in bad taste.
7. The Confederate flag offends some Southerners and some Northerners.
8. The Pacific decadal oscillation indicates that the Earth's weather is entering a period of extreme change.
9. We should take marriage more seriously.
10. Children of divorce fare better with their fathers than with their mothers.
11. The Simpsons should be added to the Chaffey College sociology curriculum.
12. California's elected state representatives have failed in their responsibility to the people who elected them.
13. Rape is based on evolutionary drives to spread one's genes rather than on a violent impulse or psychosis.
14. Child abuse is wrong.
15. The nutritional needs of children are different from those of adults.

Understanding Claims

- A **fact claim** is an argumentative research paper which makes a quantifiable assertion; in other words, it is an argument (claim) about a measurable topic (fact).
- A **value claim** is an argumentative research paper which makes a qualifiable assertion; in other words, it is an argument (claim) about a moral, aesthetic, or philosophical topic (value).
- A **policy claim** is an argumentative research paper which makes an assertion about a course of action the reader should take; in other words, it is an argument (claim) about an actionable topic (policy).

Samples

Fact claim: The death penalty does not deter crime.

Value claim: Since it is inequitably administered, capital punishment is unjust.

Policy claim: Because it does not deter crime, because it is inequitably administered, and because it is unjust, the death penalty should be abandoned by civilized societies.

Fact claim: Smoking marijuana is less harmful to one's health than smoking cigarettes is.

Value claim: The prejudices about the social conditions that led to current marijuana legislation are outdated.

Policy claim: Because the social conditions that gave rise to current marijuana legislation no longer exist and because of the potential medical and financial benefits of its decriminalization, lawmakers should reconsider the legal status of cannabis.

Fact claim: Changes in land use patterns in Southern California over the past 100 years have rendered the Salton Sea the single most important waterway in the West for migrating waterfowl.

Value claim: The presence and availability of wildlife enriches human life.

Policy claim: Congress must pass effective legislation to ensure the restoration and continued maintenance of the Salton Sea so that loss of avifauna does not diminish human existence.

Fact claim: Public school performance in the United States has plummeted over the past 20 years.

Value Claim: It is unfair to force taxpayers to contribute to a school system that does not serve them.

Policy Claim: Following the Canadian system, Congress should form a system for public funding of religious schools for families that opt out of the public school system.