Five Types of Claims

Claims can be categorized into five types, though there will obviously be instances of overlap and confusion. Analyzing the nature of the claim helps both with understanding its implications and the best approach to refute it.

Claims of Fact
Claims of fact center on debates about subjects we believe to be objectively true or untrue. These types of claims should be empirically disputable. Examples include:

- Global warming is a human-caused phenomenon. Women are as effective as men in combat. The 1950s were a time of racial and gender harmony in the United States.

Claims of Definition
Claims of definition center on the meaning, composition or classification of things. Examples include:

- Alcoholism is a disease, not a vice. The detainees at Guantanamo are prisoners of war. The death penalty violates the 8th Amendment’s prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment.

Claims of Cause
Claims of cause deal with the causes and effects of events. They analyze questions like “what led to this?” and “what are the likely results of this event?” Examples include:

- The economic boom of the Clinton Presidency was caused by skillful decision-making during the Reagan Administration. Easy access to the Internet has made plagiarism inevitable. Mr. Pogreba’s class is responsible for rampant violence and despair at Helena High School.

Claims of Value
Claims of value evaluate the inherent goodness or morality of an event and the value systems by which we should make decisions. Examples include:

- Euthanasia is an affront to God. The dancing that occurs in high schools leads to immoral behavior. Democracies are the only legitimate form of government.

Claims of Policy
Claims of policy address the course of action we should take, the policies we should adopt, and the way that we attempt to solve problems. Examples include:

- The state of Texas should secede from the United States. The United States should adopt a Canadian-style universal healthcare system. We should dismantle prisons and spend our resources on education.