

# STRUCTURING YOUR ARGUMENT

# CLAIM CLARITY

- Move from the **abstract** to the **concrete**
  - Is the claim *big* enough?
    - Does it avoid being trivial or uninteresting?
  - Is the claim *small* enough?
  - Is the claim *specific* enough?
  - *Can* the claim realistically be addressed?
    - How readily accessible is data relating to the problem?
    - How accessible is the solution?
    - How do we measure “success” in terms of implementation?
  - *Should* it be solved?

# FROM THE ABSTRACT TO THE CONCRETE COMMUNICATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Is the claim *big* enough?
  - Focuses on all public higher education institutions in the United States
- Is the claim *small* enough?
  - Focuses only on communication and critical thinking-based courses
- Is the claim *specific* enough?
  - Focuses on emphasizing the importance of *these* exact courses in *these* exact institutes
- *Can* the claim realistically be addressed?
  - Data from institutes where the classes are required vs. not required can show differences in academic success, job placement, etc.
- *Should* it be solved?
  - Do students benefit from classes on critical thinking-centric communication?

*“The U.S. Department of Education should mandate that all public community colleges and universities require a course on communication & critical thinking to better equip students for life outside of the classroom.”*

# STOCK ISSUES

- A series of critical issues or questions you must ask, answer, and support via reasoning and evidence.
- Must be addressed by the advocate.
- Meant to measure the need and solvency of the claim, as well as other parameters around making the claim, such as maintaining relevance and clarity.
- Each type of claim (proposition) has its own set of specific stock issues.

# STOCK ISSUES OF POLICY PROPOSITIONS

There are four main stock issue questions to ask, answer, and prove.

## *Ills/Harms*

- What harm is caused by the status quo?
  - Also includes “significance” – how much impact does the harm have?

## *Blame*

- Who/What is the cause of the harm?
  - Usually a systemic issue
  - Also includes “inherency” – the likelihood of the problem repeating itself if left unchanged

## *Cure*

- Why does your proposed change fix the harms and blame?

## *Cost*

- Does your proposed change present a net gain over the costs (monetary, cultural, etc.) involved in adopting the cure?

### The Ill

Private prisons exploit employees and prisoners for corporate gain, often subjecting prisoners to unpaid labor that does not adhere to typical safety standards in any other workplace.

### The Blame

Private corporations motivated by profit from the products generated by unpaid prison labor. The public prison system for its inability to effectively manage and provide rehabilitative services to current inmates.

*“The United States Department of Justice should end the privatization of the U.S. Prison System and begin the transfer of all inmates to public incarceration or public rehabilitative facilities.”*

### The Cure

All private prisons will immediately cease intake of new prisoners while current inmates are transferred to public prisons.

### The Cost

New public prisons will need to be constructed, or existing prisons renovated to handle increased capacity. The influx of new prisoners to the public system may cause a stagnation in sentence duration.

# STOCK ISSUES EXERCISE

*“The United States Federal Government should implement a federal policy to cap rent increases at 5% per year.”*

*“The United States Federal Government should substantially increase its investment in high-speed rail.”*

- Ills/Harms (WHAT is wrong with the status quo to necessitate this change?)
- Blame (WHO is currently to blame for this problem?)
- Cure (WHAT is your proposed change and HOW does it account for both Harm and Blame?)
- Cost (Do the benefits outweigh the time, effort, finances, etc. it will take for the change?)