

## **ENG 114 03 'Bad' Culture The Elements of an Argument**

The questions below will help you define and identify the basic elements of an academic argument. Asking these questions about a text will help you develop a greater critical understanding of the issues, claims, and evidence the writer offers for your consideration and response. Asking these questions about your own writing will help you focus your ideas, develop a clear claim, choose effective evidence to support your claim, and identify what your claim adds to the general conversation about the issues you address.

### **Problem**

- Is there in your subject a gap, tension, contradiction, ambiguity, or difficulty?
- Is there disagreement about your subject? What is the basis of that disagreement? Who disagrees?
- What aspect of the conventional view of your subject is mistaken or incomplete?
- What can you imagine your audience not understanding about your subject?

### **Claim**

- What is the main point that you want to argue? What idea are you adding to the conversation?
- Could a reasonable person disagree with this point?
- Is your point a matter of persuasion rather than of belief or taste?

### **Evidence**

- How can you prove your claim?
- What reasons support your claim?
- What kinds of evidence support your claim? Do you need to include, for instance, facts, concepts, theories, statistics, definitions, anecdotes, expert opinion, popular opinion, or interpretations?
- Do you need to address arguments that contradict your own?

### **Motive**

- How does the claim you make transform the conversation about these issues?
- What are the stakes of your claim for your audience?
- In what ways would accepting your claim benefit your audience?
- What are the larger implications of your claim?
- Why is it important to address or resolve the problem that you have identified?