Types of Claims

Claims typically fall into one of five categories. Thinking about how you want to approach your topic, in other words what type of claim you want to make, is one way to focus your thesis on one particular aspect of your broader topic.

1. **Claims of fact or definition**: These claims argue about what the definition of something is or whether something is a settled fact. Example:

   Despite unprecedented governmental changes, the American War for Independence was not revolutionary because fundamental rights did not change for the vast majority of new Americans based on their class, gender, and race.

2. **Claims of cause and effect**: These claims argue that one person, thing, or event caused another thing or event to occur. Example:

   While Jefferson is considered the father of the Constitution, it has been Hamilton’s practical interpretation that has guided America’s development as a nation.

3. **Claims about value**: These are claims made of what something is worth, whether we value it or not, how we would rate or categorize something. Example:

   Cyrus the Great was the most effective ruler of the Persian Empire because the reforms he established created a stable empire based on respect and individual morality as opposed to fear and oppression.

4. **Claims about solutions or policies**: These are claims that argue for or against a certain solution or policy approach to a problem. Example:

   The United Nations’ response to the unrest in Rwanda was the first time the agency retreated from its stated commitment to “defend life, liberty, independence and religious freedom,” and it was this absence of defense that allowed the Rwandan genocide to occur.

5. **Claims of compare/contrast**: These are claims that argue the ways in which things or ideas—usually two of them—are similar to and/or different from one another. When you reflect on similarities and differences, you gain a deeper understanding of the items you are comparing, their relationship to each other, and what is most important about them.

   Through the use of charisma, education, and propaganda, Hitler created stronger feelings of nationalism and loyalty among his followers than Stalin did, who relied far too much on mass terror.

Which type of claim is right for your argument? Which type of thesis or claim you use for your argument will depend on your position and knowledge of the topic, your audience, and the context of your paper. You might want to think about where you imagine your audience to be on this topic and pinpoint where you think the biggest difference in viewpoints might be.