DEVELOPING A CLAIM/PROPOSITION

In argument, you propose and defend an idea that is not accepted by all as true. Since the truth of the idea is in question or not certain, it is a proposition. This proposed idea takes the form of a single declarative sentence, otherwise known as your thesis statement. Depending on how you word it, your claim (proposition) will take one of three forms:

**A proposition of FACT:** Something is true or untrue.

* We will switch from gasoline to hydrogen-powered cars (fuel cells) in the next ten years.
* Shakespeare is not the true author of the plays that bear his name.
* North Korea is attempting to acquire and build nuclear weapons.
* Life exists on the other planets.

**Of course one might take the opposing side on these topics:**

* Shakespeare alone is the author of the plays that bear his name.
* We will continue relying on the internal combustion engine for some time.

**A proposition of VALUE:** Something is good or bad, moral or immoral, right or wrong, harmful or not harmful, better or worse, etc. This approach places a value judgment on the topic at hand.

* Standardization tests are a poor instrument for measuring learning.
* The Chicago area is one of the best places in the country to live.
* Private schools offer more than public schools.
* Illinois is one of the most corrupt states in the country.

**Again, the opposing side of an idea might also function as a persuasive topic:**

* Illinois is not among the country’s most corrupt states.
* Private schools don’t offer any more than public schools.

**A proposition of POLICY:** We should (or should not) take a certain course of action. The word should is integral to the proposition (thesis statement).

* The U.S. should invade North Korea when it secures the cooperation of other key nations.
* Criminals convicted of heinous crimes should receive the death penalty.

**Like the other approaches, the opposing side of a topic might also work:**

* We should not invade North Korea.
* The death penalty should be banned in the United States.

On a separate sheet of paper, create a list of topics that are of interest to you. From that list, create ten propositions. Remember, these ten propositions MUST be written as complete sentences.

Eventually, after you select the one proposition (claim) to use for your speech, you will write 2-3 arguments (reasons) to support your claim. These should be written as complete sentences as well. These are what you will need to find evidence to support. Therefore, make sure the reasons are unique from one another and researchable.