Claim-Evidence-Warrant:
A Model for Analyzing Arguments
(adapted from the work of Stephen Toulmin)

Claim

Definition: A claim states your position on the issue you have chosen to write about.

- A good claim is not obvious. Why bother proving a point nobody could disagree with?
- A good claim is engaging. Consider your audience's attention span and make claims which point out new ideas: teach the reader something new.
- A good claim is not overly vague. Attacking enormous issues leads only to generalizations and vague assertions; keep it manageable.
- A good claim is logical; it emerges from a reasonable consideration of the evidence. However, this does not mean that evidence has only one logical interpretation.

Examples:

- Though they seem mere entertainment, Hollywood movies are actually responsible for reinforcing cultural stereotypes in America.

- The most plausible explanation for the recent increase in gambling as an acceptable pastime is the perceived stamp of approval by cultural institutions, such as state and local governments and organized religion.

Evidence

Definition: the evidence or data which you cite to support your claim. Like a lawyer presenting evidence to a jury, you must support your claim with facts; an unsupported claim is merely an assertion.

Data can include:
- <u>Facts or statistics</u>: objectively determined data about your topic. (Note: "objective" may be open to debate.)
- <u>Expert opinion</u>: Learned opinion, theory, and analysis that you should cite frequently, both to support your argument and to disagree with. Sources must be quoted, paraphrased, and cited appropriately.
- <u>Primary research</u>: an explanation and discussion of your own research findings and how they relate to your topic.
- <u>Personal anecdotes</u>: the most difficult kind of data to use well because doing so requires a persuasive argument that your own experience is relevant and can be objectively grasped by your reader. Personal experience can, however, bring an argument to life.

Example:
Last year the State of Minnesota spent $X million dollars promoting their state-run lottery through ads focusing on the contributions made to environmental funds (Cary). Churches have used raffles, bingo nights, and even card tournaments as fundraisers for years.

Warrant

Definition: the warrant interprets the data and shows how it supports your claim. In other words, the warrant explains why and how the data proves the claim.

- A good warrant will be a reasonable interpretation and analysis of the facts.
- A good warrant will not make illogical interpretive leaps.
- A good warrant will not assume more than the evidence supports.
- A good warrant may consider and respond to possible counter-arguments (refute).

Example:
Citizens look at the amount of time and effort devoted to promoting gambling-related activities by their government and churches and assume that this is a legitimate and even risk-free activity with little social stigma attached. If the state and church rely on these funds to survive, gambling may even be regarded as a social service: the more money they lose, the more they're helping others.