4.1: The Topics of Argumentation

Each day we may be faced with situation where you tell yourself need to argue.

• You’ve just been stopped and given what you feel is an undeserved traffic citation for speeding.
• You open up your afternoon mail and discover a letter from the IRS calling you in for an audit on last year's tax return.
• You notice that your VISA bill contains a charge you did not make and you want it removed.
• You sense that your boyfriend or girlfriend has been neglecting you and you feel the necessity to talk about it.
• You open up your grade report and get an unexpected low grade in a course.

Instead of just ranting at each of these situations you need an appropriate Claim to be phrased and argued. Only then can you know what you need to argue and what your personal responsibility is in that argument.

All of us have been in a situation where halfway into the argument we don't know what we were arguing about in the first place; or we’ve started an argument over one specific point, and wound up arguing about two, three, or four different things. Losing focus is easy if the parties involved in the argument are not clear as to the exact topic of the argument, or if each is advocating a different topic.

This chapter will give you some perspectives on the way to bring organization and structure to the argumentative environment by creating and utilizing a proper claim.