Usual meaning of “argument” in academic/professional work:

An opinion that is justified with reasons and evidence
Some other basic terms:

- **Issue**: A question or topic that people have differing opinions about.

- **Position**, also called ultimate conclusion or thesis in an argument: The opinion someone has on an issue.
Some other basic terms:

- **Claim**: A statement, typically of what the speaker/writer believes to be true, and may want others to believe. (A thesis is an example of a claim, and is supported by other claims.)

- **Reason**: A claim that supports another claim. In an argument, these are often called *points*.

- **Evidence**: Information (facts, experiences, etc.) that justifies/supports a claim.
In “Why I Am a Nontraditional Student,”

• What is the issue?
• What is the writer’s position?
• There are many claims in the essay. Find one (or more) that you see as a fairly important point in support of the writer’s position.
• There is also a lot of evidence in the essay. Consider how (some of) it supports the points in the argument.
One way to distinguish types of claims:

• Factual
  – Our class meets Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.
  – Our class meets at 10:30 am.

• Individual perception / basic value ("mere opinion," not based on reasons and evidence)
  – Chicken tastes better than steak.
  – Human life has inherent value.

• Arguable opinion, a position
  – A vegetarian diet is healthier than a meat-based diet.
  – Any killing of a human being is wrong.
Consider whether each claim is a statement of fact, mere opinion, or an arguable opinion:

- Shakespeare died in 1616.
- Marlowe really wrote the plays of Shakespeare.
- It’s appalling that English majors aren’t required to take a Shakespeare course.
- Nuclear power plants are fundamentally safe.
- Socialism is evil.
- I feel that people convicted of non-violent crimes should not be sent to prison.