

Presentation on Informal Fallacies

This assignment focuses on collaborative learning and identifying common reasoning errors in everyday contexts. It is fine not to know them already, of course; the goal is to explain them in your own words and help others to recognize them, too. **Choose one of the following.**

1. **Ad Hominem:** attacking the person instead of the argument.
2. **Straw Man:** misrepresenting an opponent's view to make it easier to attack.
3. **Begging the Question:** assuming what needs to be proven; circular reasoning.
4. **False Dilemma:** presenting only two options when more exist.
5. **Hasty Generalization:** drawing a conclusion from a sample that is too small or unrepresentative.
6. **Slippery Slope:** claiming without evidence that one small step will lead to extreme consequences.
7. **Appeal to Authority:** relying on an authority figure's opinion when the figure is not actually an expert.
8. **Appeal to Emotion:** using fear, pity, or other emotions as a substitute for argument.
9. **Post Hoc (False Cause):** assuming that because A happened before B, A caused B.
10. **Equivocation:** shifting between different meanings of the same word within an argument.

Grading Standards

This assignment is 10% of your grade:

1. **Explanation of the Fallacy 4%:** Define the fallacy in your own words. Avoid technical terms or textbook definition. Imagine someone who has never studied philosophy. Identify the reasoning mistake and explain why it undermines the argument. Capture the main idea. Be accurate (no major misconceptions).
2. **Example & Analysis 3%:** Provide an original or well-chosen real-world example (e.g., from social media or the news). Explain how it illustrates the fallacy. Show the different parts to the fallacy (if applicable). Show how someone might correct it.
3. **Clarity, Organization, and Delivery 2%:** Present the information clearly. Stay within 5 minutes. Use simple language.
4. **Engagement & Preparedness 1%:** Be prepared. Stay on topic. Respond to a question if asked.

Examples of student work (shared with permission):



Definition

occurs when an argument is attacked by criticizing the person making it rather than the reasoning or evidence behind the claim

replaces logical analysis with personal attacks or irrelevant criticism of the speaker

focuses on the individual, shifting attention to a person's character, background, or traits instead of evaluating the argument itself

Why it's a Problem



Distracts from the real issue, shifting focus away from evidence and logical reasoning

Weakens arguments, because personal attacks do not prove or disprove a claim

Example



You're just saying that we should raise the minimum wage because you've never run a real business.

This is ad hominem because it attacks the person instead of discussing whether raising the minimum wage is a good policy.

Raising the minimum wage could hurt small businesses by increasing labor costs and potentially leading to layoffs. We should examine economic data before making that decision.

Example

"Bad Bunny is a morally corrupt celebrity who clearly has no respect for American values.

He is conclusive proof that Puerto Rico should never be a state."

- X User



This is ad hominem because it dismisses a political question by attacking an individual associated with the issue.

- The argument attacks Bad Bunny / a performance associated with Puerto Rico, not the actual political question of statehood.
- No evidence about Puerto Rico's economy, governance, population, or constitutional criteria for statehood is addressed.
- A single individual has no logical connection to whether millions of people deserve political representation.

Example

"Bad Bunny is a morally corrupt celebrity who clearly has no respect for American values.

He is conclusive proof that Puerto Rico should never be a state."

- X User



"I oppose Puerto Rico's statehood because of concerns about its current fiscal stability, long-term public debt, and how statehood might affect federal taxation and representation in Congress."

Example



This is ad hominem because Rep. Taylor Greene is attacking Dr. Fauci personally in order to dismiss his credibility instead of using scientific evidence.



"You should be prosecuted for crimes against humanity. You belong in prison, Dr. Fauci."

- Fauci made policy decisions.
- She claims those decisions were immoral.
- Therefore, he is a criminal and should be imprisoned.

Example



"You should be prosecuted for crimes against humanity. You belong in prison, Dr. Fauci."

- Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene

1. Remove the personal insult
2. Focus on specific actions or policies
3. Provide evidence
4. Explain logical consequences

Connor Nolen

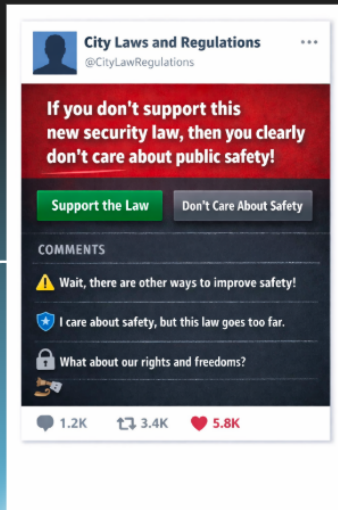
False Dilemma

What is False Dilemma?

A **false dilemma** is when someone presents a situation as if there are only **two possible options**, even though more options exist. The issue is the **artificial limit** of the choices.



Example



Why is this a false dilemma?

Only two possibilities are presented; Support the law or not care about public safety

These are not the only possibilities

Someone could ...

- Care about public safety but think the law goes too far
- Support alternative security measures
- Believe the law is ineffective or poorly designed

Parts of Fallacy

False choice: Support the law or don't care about safety

Hidden alternatives: Supporting safety while opposing this specific law

Emotional Pressure: It implies moral failure if you disagree

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How to fix this situation?

In order to correct this situation "City Laws and Regulations" must account for the complexity and room for disagreement of the law

They could accomplish this by rewording the statement to "Some people support this law because they believe it improves public safety, while others care about safety but disagree with this approach"

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Real World Examples



False dilemmas show up all the time in politics, social media debates, and even everyday conversations. They're effective because they simplify arguments, but that simplicity comes at the cost of truth.

"You're either with us or with the terrorists" - George W. Bush

"Either we ban all guns or we don't care about children" - NRA

"You're either voting to protect democracy, or you're voting against it." - Joe Biden

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Sources

<https://psychologyfanatic.com/logical-fallacy-of-false-dilemmas/>

<https://www.logicallyfallacious.com/logicalfallacies/False-Dilemma>

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<https://helpfulprofessor.com/false-dilemma-examples/>

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