

Phil. 103: Introduction to Logic

Class Exercise: Fallacies of Relevance Answers

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Directions: Identify the informal fallacies in the following passages. Choose from the fallacies of *ad ignorantiam*, *ad verecundiam*, *ad hominem*, *ad populum*, *ad misericordiam*, and *ad baculum*.

1. In spite of the best efforts of the scientific establishment, no cure for cancer has been forthcoming. There is no conclusive evidence that cancer can ever be cured. Therefore, I conclude that it is futile to continue spending vast sums of money hoping for a cure when we could be spending that money on cancer prevention.

ad ignorantiam If there is no evidence, then no conclusion can be made.

2. If you ask around you will see that most persons forced to take a foreign language in college find it a useless requirement which is irrelevant in later life. For this reason, universities are ill-advised to continue requiring language credits for the baccalaureate degree.

ad populum If most people believe something is true, it does not logically follow that it is true.

3. Michael Greensby, one of the most erudite fiction writers of the later twentieth century, has recently endorsed the traditional herbal remedies for the effective treatment of rheumatism. Surely the testimony of this great writer is one that all persons with this afflicting disease should consider.

ad verecundiam The testimony of Mr. Greensby is outside his field of expertise. There is no reason to suppose that his opinion on this subject is any better or worse than any other opinion.

4. The administration and staff of this university have issued a press release that the registration process is one of the most efficient in the state. I wouldn't choose to question this claim if I were you since you might not get into any of the classes you register for next semester if word gets out.

ad baculum The reason for the conclusion that the university's registration process is efficient is the threat that harm will come to whomever does not agree.

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5. John Bardeen's work at the Advanced Institute for Physics has progressed so slowly that even his colleagues call him a plodder. Hence, it is prudent at present not to take seriously his current theory relating how strings constitute the smallest of subatomic particles.
- ad hominem* The worth of Dr. Bardeen's theory is not logically related to the supposed personal characteristic of his cautiousness.
6. Everyone knows that low self-esteem leads to aggression at one time or another. Hence it is no surprise that this psychological insight is the case.
- ad populum* Simply because most persons have a belief is no reason to suppose that the belief is true.
7. Members of the committee, you have before you the new hiring procedures for each of your departments. These procedures are the product of a month-long intensive concerted effort by the Personnel Department staff. I am sure that you agree that these policies are in the best interests of your respective departments; otherwise, I expect your resignation by the end of the week.
- ad baculum* If any member of the committee does not agree to the truth of the conclusion of the hiring procedures, then that member will be harmed. The threat of job loss is not logically connected to the worth of the hiring procedures.
8. Correspondent David Smith's charges that the Democratic candidate for Representative of our District fails to provide cogent and salutary leadership are hardly worth a second thought. It's well known that Smith has been a Republican ever since he started doing political commentary for the *Atlanta Post* over a decade ago.
- ad hominem* Simply because someone belongs to a particular political party does not thereby imply that what he says is false.
9. A recent Senate subcommittee has convened to study and investigate the question as to whether specific prisoners of war held overseas were subject to methods of torture in an effort locate terrorists. Such an investigation would never have been started unless there was conclusive evidence that these prisoners were actually being tortured.
- ad ignorantiam* If the committee has not reached a conclusion, it is fallacious to conclude that any particular conclusion is true.
10. As part of the annual salary recommendations for the mail-room employees, we urge that Mary Simmons be granted a fifteen percent increase over her fellow staff. It's not that her job performance has exceeded theirs this past year, but that she has had a number of unforeseeable unfortunate circumstances occur recently. She broke her wrist in a fall, her mother needed hospice care, and her transportation to and from work has proved to be unreliable.

ad misericordiam The lamentable personal circumstances of Ms. Simmons are *ceteris paribus* logically irrelevant to a proposed raise in her salary.

11. Mrs. Smith has set forth her reasons for the comparatively low salaries for Postal employees. Her arguments are hardly deserving of careful consideration. After all, she has worked for the U.S. Post Office for the last forty years.

ad hominem One cannot logically infer that an individual's reasoning is poor from the fact that she works at a particular job.

12. The World Business Report at 7:00 this evening on Channel 6 is the best report on current dealings on Wall Street because no comparative study of business reports has ever proved to our satisfaction that there is any better.

ad ignorantiam Whenever there is no proof for a belief, then no conclusion can be logically drawn.

13. Mr. Connelly I would greatly appreciate it if you would withdraw your complaint to the police about my dog not being enclosed and running around the neighborhood. I simply cannot afford to buy a chain-link fence since I am presently up to my ears in medical bills and I recently lost my overtime at work.

ad misericordiam Irrelevant personal difficulties are *ceteris paribus* logically independent of being excused from obeying the law.

14. Mr. Johnson has clearly and succinctly given his arguments concerning the lack of evidence that tobacco use causes cancer. I hardly need to remind you, however, that his arguments are tainted by the fact that he has served on the Board of Directors of a major tobacco conglomerate for a good many years.

ad hominem The place that Mr. Johnson works cannot be considered by itself, without further evidence, a good reason against the correctness of his arguments.

15. It is well recognized by most persons that the present technological revolution has affected the ethical basis of the nation's institutions of education. Whenever a belief such as this is so widely held, there can be little doubt of its accuracy.

ad populum The truth of a belief is not logically dependent upon how many persons believe that it is true.

16. Dr. Robert M. Jeffries, the President of the American Psychiatric Association, noted that the media who fault the effectiveness and cogency of psychoanalysis are projecting their own feelings of inadequacy upon the highly skilled and trained practitioners of the science.

ad hominem Rather than logically responding to the media critics, Dr. Jeffries asserts that what they say is a result of a hidden motive. He has dropped the issue and attacked the purported motive for their assertion.

17. The campus newspaper survey on the President's instituted policy of shortening the semester and increasing classroom hours resulted in disapproval by 87% of students and 82% of faculty and staff. It's evident that this unpopular procedure is adversely affecting the quality of education provided at this university.

ad populum Simply because a policy is unpopular, it does not logically follow that the policy is ineffective.

18. In this month's meeting, the Evansville School Board failed to consider the student petition advocating revision of the Pershing High School Dress Code. Obviously, the Board opposes the proposal and remains firmly aligned with the conservative policies instituted three years ago.

ad ignorantiam If the petition was not discussed, then there is no evidence to suppose either that the Board opposed it or approved of it.

19. The CCGE, Concerned Citizens for a Greener Environment, has for months intensively studied the most effective methods of waste disposal in the major cities of the state. Many staff and researcher personnel have expended their weekends by working overtime at their own expense to bring these proposals before the legislature in a timely manner. For these reasons, the CCGE has every hope that the sacrifice of this organization might result in favorable legislation.

ad misericordiam Simply on account of the sacrifice of personnel to set forth proposals, we are not justified to conclude that the proposals should be instituted.

20. The U. S. Department of Transportation, in an effort to reduce that alarming increase in highway related deaths last year, announced Saturday that highway funds earmarked for bridge repair will be blocked in those states not proactively enforcing federal highway safety measures.

ad baculum The reason given for enforcing federal highway safety measures is the threat of withdrawing money earmarked to the states.