

Phil. 103: Introduction to Logic

Class Exercise: Fallacies of Relevance

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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. Betty Ainsley, one of the greatest artists of our generation, has maintained that in the next fifty years a significant proportion of new births will be cloned babies. We cannot afford to ignore this conclusion of such a well respected and widely known figure.

ad verecundiam The fact that an individual is a great artist does not insure expertise in the future application of genetic discovery for society.

2. No one has succeeded in proving beyond doubt that unidentified flying objects are visitations from other planets. Therefore, the conclusion is inescapable: UFOs do not exist.

ad ignorantiam From the fact that we have no proof for UFO visitations, we cannot conclude anything.

3. Fellow workers, the management has put forward patiently and clearly their arguments for the reduction of wages during the next year. I am sure that you will agree with their reasoning since you surely do not want to expose yourself to the unfortunate consequences which will result if you choose to disagree with them.

ad baculum A threat of harm is made in order to gain support for management policy.

4. The Hollywood Actor's Guild has endorsed the all-new Memory Mega-Series Development Kit manufactured by Idotic Enterprises. Since this prestigious organization thinks so highly of the kit, I believe it is worth a try for struggling salespersons.

ad verecundiam The Hollywood Actor's Guild has no special expertise for the evaluation of the effectiveness of memory techniques.

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5. When the executive officer sets forward her reasons for the change in marketing policies, the employee is expected to recognize their worth. If employees do not see the the executive officer's reasoning, then they need to look for employment elsewhere.
- ad baculum* The threat of being laid off is made in order to support the policies of the executive officer.
6. A good deal of intensive research over the past two decades has absolutely revealed no conclusive evidence that the National Security Agency has been wiretapping the members of the Underground Students Network. Clearly, if this governmental agency had been doing so, some information would have been unearthed by now.
- ad ignorantiam* Whenever there is no conclusive evidence for a conclusion, we cannot conclusively conclude any statement.
7. The late Richard J. Stephens, the former Chairman of the Board of the International Nuclear Industry Associates, wrote extensively about the safety of nuclear power plants in his often-cited posthumous work, *The Promise of Nuclear Energy for the 21st Century*. However, on that basis, I genuinely doubt, given his occupational background, his book can be regarded as entirely unbiased.
- ad hominem* The evidence and arguments of Mr. Stephens should be evaluated independently of whether or not we suspect he is biased because of his circumstances. One could just as well argue that because of his past experience, he is a relevant authority in the field. But the *ad verecundiam* fallacy does not occur since his expertise is relevant to the issues under discussion.
8. Gosh, Dr. Matrix, I know I am failing your math class, but I have studied with much more diligence than the other students. I think I deserve a passing graded because I have worked longer and harder than you recommended in your syllabus. For these reasons, I shouldn't be objectified as an *F* student.
- ad misericordiam* Grades are normally assigned on the basis on accomplishment rather than the student's claim of effort extended.
9. Professor Higgs, history professor *emeritus* at University of the Southwest, asserts that adequate evidence exists to conclude that President Roosevelt knew in advance when the Japanese were to attack Pearl Harbor, and he chose not to alert the troops in the Pacific because he desperately sought to incite the American public to support a declaration of war against Japan. Such a castigation of President Roosevelt is absurd and patently anti-American.
- ad hominem* Consideration of whatever evidence Prof. Higgs has is disregarded and name-calling results.

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10. It's not a good idea to criticize the present administration in Uberganistan unless you feel sure you can survive being intensively audited by the revenue service
- ad baculum* The threat of a tax audit is used to prevent the criticism of the government.
11. Kline's argument concerning the pervasiveness of corruption and influence-peddling during the last term of the Nixon administration cannot be relied upon because Kline has been an integral part of the Democratic Party apparatus in many of the Northeastern states for a good many years.
- ad hominem* Kline's affiliation with the Democratic party is used to discredit his testimony.
12. This is simply not fair. Unless I receive a *C* in statistics, I'll not only lose my state scholarship, but my GPA will drop below that required for law school. Professor Jones, my lack-luster performance is no reason to destroy my future and dash my hope to follow in my father's footsteps.
- ad misericordiam* The appeal to pity or misery is used to argue for a better evaluation.
13. I think this quiz is more than fair enough, and I think you will agree with me on that point because if you don't think so, your grade in the course will most certainly be in jeopardy.
- ad baculum* The irrelevant threat of force is being used to gain acceptance of an opinion.
14. Judy has to work forty hours a wee on top of supporting her parents after her father lost his job in the oil industry. She's spent all of her free time studying and has worked especially hard on her math course. So I think you'll see that she deserved to pass with at least a *C* in the course.
- ad misericordiam* Although we probably emphasize with Judy, the special circumstances she relates are not the kinds of things a math grade is based upon.
15. I believe that my proposals are quite sound, and I think you will believe that they are good, especially when you see the personal benefits which will accrue if your support them.
- ad baculum* In this case, a bribe is used to leverage support for some proposals rather than seeking support on the basis reasons, grounds, or evidence in favor of the proposals.