

Logical fallacies



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A fallacy is an error in reasoning, which differs from factual error in that errors are simply wrong about the facts. A fallacy can occur in any kind of discussion, argument, or reading. For the purposes of this paper, the fallacies discussed will pertain to arguments. A fallacious argument is an argument in which the premises given for the conclusion do not provide the needed degree of support (Atheism Web). Fallacies of distraction attempt to distract from the falsity of an argument by the illegitimate use of logical operators (Stephen's Guide to Logical Fallacies). False Dilemma. In this fallacy, the distraction lies in the wording of the argument. It is worded so that we are only given two alternatives. One of which is sometimes so outrageous as to be unacceptable, while the other is usually being argued for. This argument is deceptive because if carefully constructed, it has a valid form but it ignores the possibility that there may be more than two alternative actions (Stephen's Guide to Logical Fallacies). For example: ' Either we furlough all federal employees, or the Country will go bankrupt by the end of October.' The reason this argument is valid, yet not sound is that there are some other options which can be used to prevent national bankruptcy (Atheism Web). Some examples are subtler: " If you think education is expensive, try ignorance" (Harvard President Derek Bok, 1978). While it is true that some education is better than none, the education we receive does not need to cost as much Harvard or be as formal as an Ivy League education. Ad ignorantium. Argumentum ad ignorantium is Latin for " argument from ignorance." This fallacy occurs when it is argued that something must be true simply because it has not been proven false. Conversely, something is false simply because it has not been proven true (Stephen's Guide to Logical Fallacies). One of the few exceptions of the use of this argument is in the <https://assignbuster.com/logical-fallacies-critical-essay-samples/>

American justice system where one is presumed innocent until proven guilty. Of course the opposite choice would have been to assume guilty until proven innocent, which is a tactic used by authoritarian regimes (Atheism Web). A good example of an argument from ignorance can be seen in the following anecdote: A man is walking down the street one day when he meets an old friend of his. After the usual greetings the man noticed that his friend was wearing an unusual pendent. After a while the man's curiosity was just too great and he asked, " What is that unusual pendent that your wearing?" " Oh, this? It a pendent the frightens away wild elephants." " Well, that's silly. There are no elephants around here!" " See! It's working." Slippery Slope. This type of fallacy centers on the claim that if we justify an action, then this will also justify some other actions that will not be desirable. Example: ' The choice of what should be taught in universities should be left to professors. If students are allowed to influence this choice, they will see themselves as running the school. This will lead to a breakdown of order and discipline, and pretty soon there will be no learning at all in the University' (Atheism Web). You will also find the Slippery Slope used to justify positions on both sides of the abortion issue (which may itself be a false dilemma), on our continued support of the War on Terrorism (" you are either with us or against us"), and in the debate over raising postal rates or cutting the defense budget (Atheism Web). The best way to counter this fallacy is to point out that there is a logical point at which a " line" can be drawn which will prevent the " slide" down the slope (Stephen's Guide to Logical Fallacies). References Atheism Web (n. d.). Logic and Fallacies. Retrieved July 24, 2004 from <http://www.infidels.org/news/atheism/logic.html> Bok, Derek (n. d). Retrieved July 24, 2004 from <http://www.knowledgeboard.com/index.html> <https://assignbuster.com/logical-fallacies-critical-essay-samples/>

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