Appendix

Glossary of Logical and Rhetorical Fallacies

Sometimes after students have started to study fallacies, they are inclined to approach arguments searching just for fallacies in them, only looking for points to pick apart, rather than also looking for good, fallacy-free arguments or those that effectively point out fallacies in someone else's argument. The latter approach should be part of your goal in studying this list of logical and rhetorical fallacies. ("Logical fallacies" is the usual term, referring mainly to unintentional flaws in reasoning. "Rhetorical fallacies" here refers to more devious motives in, and modes of, argument.)

Students sometimes also fret excessively over what is the proper label for a fallacious argument, rather than simply explaining in their own words how the argument is fallacious; pinning the label to the fallacy may be worthwhile, but it is secondary to showing your understanding of the argument's substantive flaws. Another source for fretting is which of several similar terms is the "correct" one; several of these terms, however, are synonymous or closely enough related so that they may be interchangeable. Here are some clusters of related fallacies, gathered from the following alphabetical glossary.

- Presenting only one side of a story, or slanting an account to one side: propaganda, special pleading, stacking the deck, half-truth, double standard, selective vision, cleans and dirties, tu quoque (in the sense of someone pointing out legitimately the fallacy in opponents who are guilty of the same fault of which they accuse others).
- Oversimplification: overgeneralization, sweeping generalization, either-or thinking, false dilemma, false dichotomy, reductive fallacy, not accounting for all factors or variables.
- Hasty conclusion or non sequitur: inadequate evidence, unrepresentative sample, argument from the exception.
- Inconsistency: compartmentalized thinking, self-contradiction, doublethink, shifting ground, equivocation, "I Won't, but I Will," "Heads I Win, Tails You Lose."
- Distraction: begging the question, evading the issue, shifting ground, red herring, irrelevance.
- Personal attacks: ad hominem, name-calling, straw man, poisoning the well, smearing, character assassination, tu quoque, guilt by association, derision, distortion.
- Appeals to widespread opinion or common practice: *ad populum,* bandwagon, plain folks, appeal to the past or resistance to change, common practice, two wrongs make a right.
- Emotional appeal: appeals to pity or fear, demagogy, scare tactics, sentimentality, religiosity, flag-waving, jingoism.

GLOSSARY OF LOGICAL AND RHETORICAL FALLACIES

ad hominem. Latin for argument "against the man." The rhetorical fallacy of attacking the character or motives of an opponent as a means of discrediting or evading the substance of his or her arguments. Variants include **name-calling**, poisoning the well, smearing, and character assassination.

ad populum. Latin, appeal "to the people." The logical fallacy of arguing that something is true because many or most people believe it is, or that a policy is valid because many or most agree with it. The fallacy lies in the fact that mass opinion is not always well informed, accurate, or morally just. When *is* it valid to cite majority opinion in the general population, or within any particular group, to support your position? When you can present evidence that the majority is well informed and has benefited from the policy you advocate.

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appeal to authority or **transfer of authority**. This logical fallacy takes three common forms. One is citing as a source on a particular subject someone who is an authority on *some* subject but not the one at issue, or even someone who is only, in Daniel Boorstin's phrase, "well-known for being well-known." (The celebrity endorsement ad is the most frequent occasion for this form.) Another form is citing the opinion of a source who is an authority on the issue as sufficient in itself, without presenting the evidence on which that opinion is based. The opinions of those who are authorities on a subject are likely to be supported with better evidence than those of nonexperts, but their evidence still needs to be documented. The third form is when a genuine authority is cited, but the authority's opinion diverges from the opinions of other authorities or is otherwise suspect. This might happen when the cited authority has a conflict of interest or holds an opinion about an issue that differs from the consensus of other authorities in a field. To avoid this third form of the fallacy, you should acknowledge the difference and present a case for why this authority's word should prevail over others' if you think it should.

appeal to fear or **scare tactics**. Along with its flip side, **appeal to pity**, the most common form of emotional appeal—most prominently in calls for war or, more recently, protection against terrorism. This is another case where a judgment call is always necessary to determine whether such an appeal has legitimate grounds, when it is a perfectly valid line of argument, or whether it is deliberately fabricated or exaggerated to frighten people into compliance with those in power, or to attract a profitable media audience.

appeal to the past or tradition, or **resistance to change**. The logical fallacy of arguing for a policy only because it has been followed in the past or is a tradition in one's culture, regardless of whether it might be outdated.

appeal to pity. A common variety of **sentimentality**. The judgment call here is whether the people being defended truly deserve pity or whether the audience's heartstrings are being tugged on fraudulently. For example, in law courts, attorneys will often attempt to elicit the jury's pity for their clients to help the clients' case. But pitying someone is not a good justification for thinking that he or she did or did not commit a crime or that his or her legal claims have any warrant. Evidence is needed for that.

argument from the converse. The logical fallacy of starting with a statement whose truth has been established, in the form of "All

(or most) Xs are Y," then jumping to the converse conclusion, "All (or most) Ys are X," which is a form of **non sequitur**. This fallacy can usually be explained in terms of logical classes and subclasses or sets and subsets, as in mathematics, and illustrated through circle diagrams, as in figure 2.1, which indicates that all communists and Communists are socialists but not all socialists are communists or Communists.

argument from the exception. The logical fallacy of supporting an argument with a case that is an exception to the rule, contrary to the larger body of evidence supporting the opposing side; synonymous with an unrepresentative sample.

bandwagon. A variety of ***ad populum***, attempting to lure you to get on the bandwagon, to agree with a policy or take an action because "everybody's doing it." Extremely common in advertising.

begging the question. A fallacy in deductive logic in which a conclusion depends on prior acceptance of a premise whose truth has not been established or is disputable. Often used synonymously with **circular argument**. In common usage, "begs the question" is often used synonymously, but erroneously, with "raises the question" rather than its accurate meaning of "evades the issue."

changing the subject or **shifting ground**. This rhetorical fallacy occurs when people have no effective response to a refutation of an argument they have made, so they bring up a different line of argument on the same subject while hoping no one notices that they are evading the issue.

circular argument. A logical fallacy in which a reason given in support of a conclusion presupposes the truth of the conclusion, or in which the conclusion depends on prior acceptance of a premise that is believed only because the conclusion is already believed. "I believe the president is telling the truth." "How do you know that?" "Because he's a God-fearing man." "How do you know that?" "Because he says so." Another form is the attempt to support a premise with words that simply repeat the premise in slightly different language; for example, "Capitalism is desirable because it promotes free enterprise." Free enterprise is just another name for capitalism, so the argument does not give a reason why capitalism, or free enterprise, is desirable.

cleans and dirties. The rhetorical fallacy of using connotatively loaded language applying all positive words to your side and all negative ones to your opponents', purely for emotional appeal,

without sufficient evidence that loaded language like this is not ported by evidence.

common practice. The rhetorical cal practice because "everybody **two wrongs make a right**.

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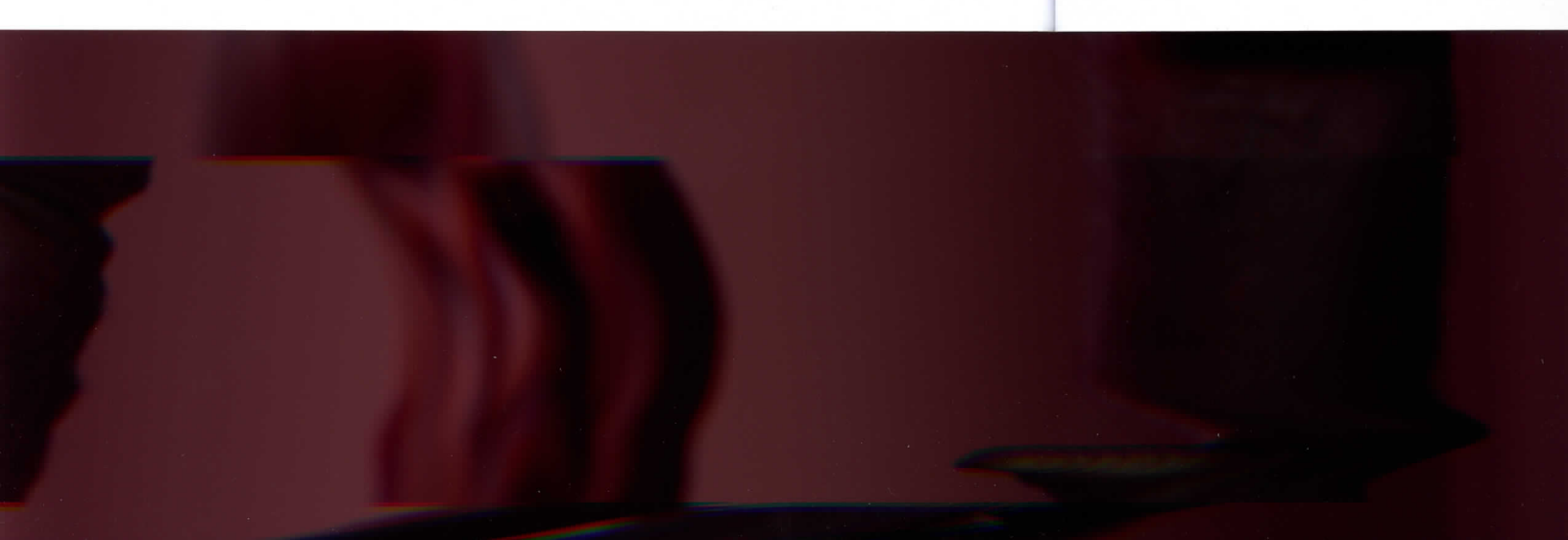

without sufficient evidence that the words are accurate. Using loaded language like this is not fallacious, however, if it *is* supported by evidence.

common practice. The rhetorical fallacy of justifying a shady ethical practice because "everybody does it." Also see **tu quoque** and **two wrongs make a right**.

compartmentalization or **compartmentalized thinking**. Logical self-contradiction or inconsistency. In its extreme form it results in Orwellian **doublethink**. The concept can also apply to saying one thing but doing another.

demagogy or **demagoguery**. The use of emotional appeal by unscrupulous politicians or other public figures—**demagogues**—to manipulate the ethnocentric beliefs or prejudices of a mass audience for their own benefit.

derision. A form of **ad hominem** in which the opponent's ideas or character are just ridiculed or sneered at without any substantive refutation.

distortion. The rhetorical fallacy of misrepresenting an opponent's ideas, whether unintentionally or intentionally. Related to **straw man**.

double standard. The rhetorical fallacy, or mode of deception, in which a variety of critical standards are applied to opponents but are not applied consistently, not applied as strongly, or not applied at all to one's own views or to the views of people on one's side. See "A Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric" in Chapter 1, as well as **selective vision** and **stacking the deck**.

doublethink. Coined by George Orwell in his novel *1984* to describe the logical or rhetorical fallacy of being brainwashed by propaganda to believe self-contradictory ideas like "war is peace," "slavery is freedom," "ignorance is strength." Also applicable to abrupt reversals or deceptions in political policies without recognition of an inconsistency. In *1984*, a government reduction in the chocolate ration is announced as an increase, but the people join a mass celebration in gratitude.

either-or. Also known as *false dilemma* or *false dichotomy*. The fallacy of setting two positions in opposition to each other when they might be mutually compatible, or of suggesting that there are only two feasible alternatives when there are in fact others.

emotional appeal. The rhetorical fallacy of invalid appeal to the audience's emotions at the expense of reason. Appeals to emotion are fallacious generally when they appeal to feeling about some truth *as evidence* for it. For example, fearing that global warming is now happening cannot serve as evidence that it is happening. However, if there is firm evidence that global warming really is happening, our fear of the consequences can be used as a good reason supporting a call to action.

equal and opposite extreme. The logical fallacy of rejecting an irrational, extreme position, but then failing to draw the line in lurching to an opposite extreme that is equally irrational, as in critics of the prejudices in white- or male-dominated culture who end up proclaiming the innate superiority of blacks or women, in "reverse racism" or "reverse sexism."

equivocation. The rhetorical fallacy of changing the sense in which a word is used, in the middle of an argument, or of using a definition of it that is not applicable in the context. A mode of **shifting ground**. For example, when people defending capital punishment because they believe it deters potential murderers are confronted with empirical evidence to the contrary, they sometimes respond, "Well, it deters the executed criminal from killing again."

evading the issue. There are several fallacious means of trying to squirm out of acknowledging that one's opponent has made a point that one cannot logically refute, including **begging the question**, **changing the subject**, introducing a **red herring**, **shifting ground**, **ad hominem**, **name-calling**, and **tu quoque** attacks on the opponent.

false analogy or **false equation**. The logical fallacy of arguing that two situations are similar to one another or exactly the same, so that what we accept as true about one should also be accepted about the other, when there are significant differences between them.

faulty causation. Common fallacies in assertions of causes. *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc*: After, therefore because of; assuming (without adequate evidence) that because one thing happened after another one, the first caused the second, or some other confusion of correlation with causation. *Reductive fallacy*: Reducing a probable multiplicity of causes to a single one. *Slippery slope*: Arguing (without adequate evidence) that one action or policy will lead to a whole series of increasingly dire consequences. *Confusion of cause and effect*: Viewing an action or policy as the cause of a particular

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effect when it might be the effect of a different cause. *Too much or too little?*: Has a policy been unsuccessful because it has been pushed too far or not far enough? *Giving your side credit for positive results*: Along with giving your side credit, you may be blaming the other side for negative results (without adequate evidence). *Blaming the victim*: Placing the blame on the victim of a harmful action or policy rather than on the cause of it.

flag-waving, jingoism. The rhetorical fallacy of emotional appeal deceptively manipulating patriotism and fear of a foreign enemy.

guilt by association. The rhetorical fallacy of smearing opponents by falsely associating them with a disreputable person or organization. It is not fallacious to criticize opponents for their actual, admitted association with disreputable forces.

half-truth. The rhetorical fallacy of **stacking the deck** by playing up only those portions of a truth that favor one's own side, while suppressing mention of other portions that discredit it, as in ads that boast of a certain feature of a brand without mentioning that every other brand of the product has the same feature.

hasty conclusion. The logical fallacy of jumping to a conclusion based on inadequate evidence, an unrepresentative sample, or an **overgeneralization**.

inadequate evidence or **unrepresentative sampling**. In inductive reasoning, the fallacy of drawing a conclusion or making a generalization based on a sampling of evidence, or set of examples, too small to generalize from or unrepresentative of a larger sampling.

inconsistency or **self-contradiction**. The logical fallacy of an argument some of whose parts are inconsistent with, or contradict, others in the same argument or an earlier one by the same author.

inductive leap. A form of **non sequitur** or **hasty conclusion** in which one jumps to an extreme conclusion based on skimpy empirical evidence.

irrelevance. An argument that does not really apply to the point at issue. Whether intentional or unintentional, it is a form of **evading the issue**.

lip service. The rhetorical fallacy of making a public show of belief in a popular cause, such as religion or patriotism, while not practicing what one preaches.

name-calling. The most common variety of **ad hominem**, substituting nasty words describing opponents for reasoned refutation

of their arguments. As with other forms of **emotional appeal**, name-calling can be a valid rhetorical method *if you support the name you call someone by sufficient evidence,* or if such evidence has been historically established beyond much dispute—such as, "Hitler, Stalin, and Saddam Hussein were insane, murderous tyrants."

non sequitur. Latin, "it does not follow," that is, one statement does not follow logically from the previous one. The many kinds of non sequitur include deductive arguments in which the conclusion does not follow from the premises, **evading the issue**, **circular argument**, **hasty conclusion**, **inductive leap**, and **faulty causation**. Also a general term for an abrupt change of subject in which the second subject is asserted to be related to the first but isn't.

overgeneralization or **sweeping generalization**. The logical fallacy of making a generalization that is so vague or vast as to be practically useless, or that jumps to a conclusion about a large class of people or things based on an **inadequate** or **unrepresentative sampling**.

oversimplification. The broadest category of the many logical and rhetorical fallacies that reduce a complex set of realities to an overly simplistic, black-and-white explanation.

plain folks. The rhetorical fallacy of a politician or other public figure who in wealth, power, or education is an elitist but who pretends to be a populist, speaking like, and claiming to represent the interests of, the masses of ordinary citizens, often for the purpose of demagogic manipulation.

propaganda. A deliberately one-sided view of any issue, usually produced by governments, political parties and candidates, special interests, and professional agents in their service. Propaganda employs the whole range of rhetorical methods of **stacking the deck**. See Chapter 4.

quotation out of context. The rhetorical fallacy of quoting a few words or sentences from a source text in a manner that makes them appear to have a different meaning than they have within the context of the complete text. This is a common tactic in writers of invective who deliberately distort their opponents' ideas in this manner. It is also used by advertisers of cultural productions to put the most favorable spin on journalistic reviews, as when an ad quotes a review of a movie calling it "spectacular," when the full text reads, "This film is the most spectacular disaster in years."

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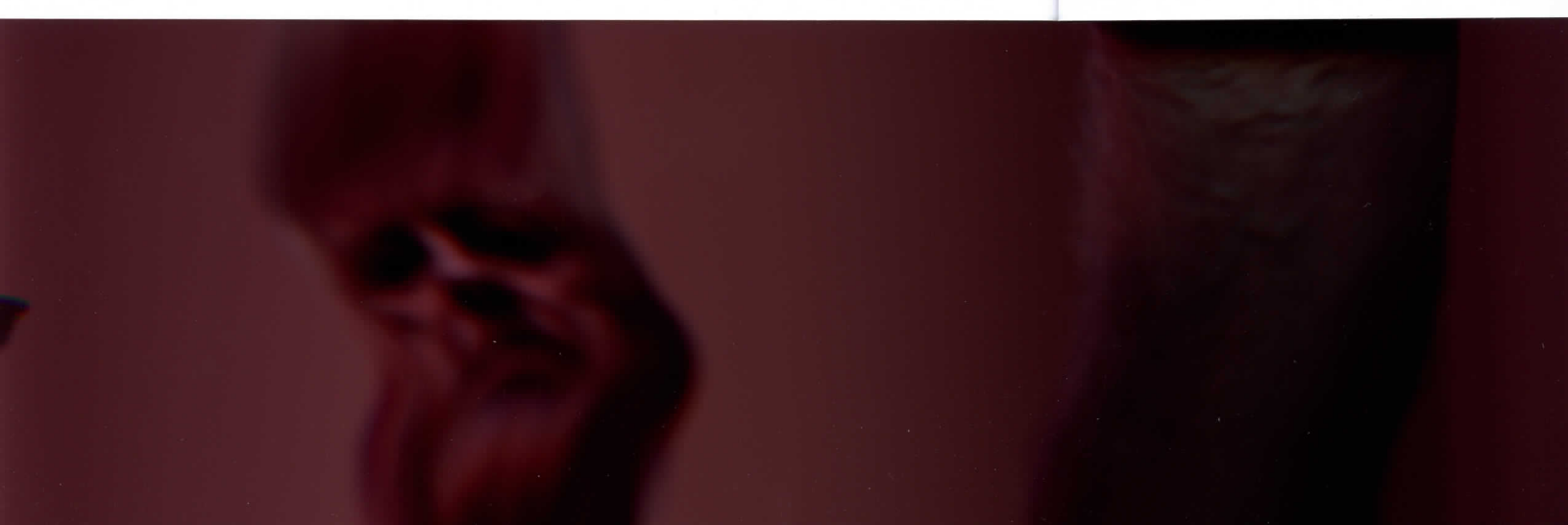

red herring. The rhetorical fallacy of **changing the subject** by jumping from addressing an issue to dragging in another one, usually strong in **emotional appeal**, to distract attention from the first.

selective vision. The rhetorical fallacy of seeing, or discussing, only your opponents' bad policies and behavior, while turning a blind eye to your own side's similar faults. Synonymous with **double standard**.

sentimentality. The rhetorical fallacy of using excessive or manipulative evocation of positive **emotional appeal**. Words commonly applied to sentimental appeals are "tear-jerking," "corny," and "sappy." Staples of sentimentality are religiosity (a religious posture without any commitment to substantial religious morality), **flag-waving**, images of Mom and apple pie, cute little children and puppy dogs, soap-opera-like **appeal to pity** (as in celebrity journalism's accounts of the tragedies of the rich and famous), and so on. Also used in public relations to fabricate a cosmeticized, saintly image of some public figure or organization. Like other forms of emotional appeal, sentimentality is often employed with **selective vision**, by which one tries to gain sympathy for a favored individual or group while ignoring the fact that an opponent or some other social group might deserve as much or more sympathy. In politics and war, sentimentality is evident in selective emotional appeals for one's own side's causes or forces ("our boys") while the opponents' are demonized.

shifting ground. The logical or rhetorical fallacy of changing your position or line of argument—especially in a contradictory manner—without justification, resulting in **compartmentalized thinking** or **doublethink**. In the 2000 presidential election, when the Florida Supreme Court was overruled by the U.S. Supreme Court to give George W. Bush the victory, Democrats, who usually support the primacy of federal government over state governments, shifted ground in denouncing the U.S. Supreme Court action, while Republicans did the opposite shift.

special pleading. The rhetorical fallacy of claiming to be an objective, neutral analyst in order to conceal the reality that one is an advocate for special interests or one side of an issue, or of arguing that some extenuating circumstances apply—"I'm special"; "This case is special"—when in fact the circumstances are not very special.

stacking the deck. General term for the whole repertory of rhetorical fallacies—including **double standard** and **selective vision**—used to present a **propagandistically** one-sided view, through **playing up**, or "cherry picking," all arguments and evidence in favor of one side while **downplaying** or suppressing altogether all arguments and evidence against that side and in favor of the other side. See "A Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric" in Chapter 4.

straw man. The rhetorical fallacy of depicting an image of opponents that bears no real resemblance to them or that distorts or oversimplifies their ideas and then claiming that you have disposed of their ideas by refuting the false version of them.

tokenism. A form of **lip service** in which one complies minimally or halfheartedly with a required policy, such as equal-opportunity hiring, with "a token woman" or "a token minority."

tu quoque. Latin, "you too." The rhetorical fallacy of defending your side against an accusation by saying the other side is guilty of the same abuse. A form of **two wrongs make a right**. Tu quoque can be a valid, effective line of argument if it is not used to excuse your side from fault but to point out the other side's hypocrisy in not practicing what they preach to others.

two wrongs make a right. The logical fallacy of rationalizing one's bad behavior on the grounds of **common practice**, **tu quoque**, or "getting even." That is, it's okay for me/us to do this, because you/our opponents have done the same thing. This is frequently practiced with a **double standard**, by which one side—in war, for example—will justify its atrocities or desire to get even, while denying any such justification to the other side.

what do you mean, "we"? The rhetorical fallacy of a falsely all-encompassing "we," as when a teacher says, "We'll have an exam next week," a wealthy government official says, "We all need to make sacrifices in these hard times," a corporate polluter says, "We're all concerned about the environment, or someone who is not in military service and whose life is not at risk says, "We have to go to war."

wishful thinking. The form of rationalization in which people believe what they want to believe, or what benefits them or their allies, rather than drawing reasoned conclusions.

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