<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/fallacies/>

# **Fallacies**

Most academic writing tasks require you to make an argument—that is, to present reasons for a particular claim or interpretation you are putting forward. You may have been told that you need to make your arguments more logical or stronger. And you may have worried that you simply aren’t a logical person or wondered what it means for an argument to be strong. Learning to make the best arguments you can is an ongoing process, but it isn’t impossible: “Being logical” is something *anyone* can do, with practice.

Each argument you make is composed of *premises* (this is a term for statements that express your reasons or evidence) that are arranged in the right way to support your *conclusion* (the main claim or interpretation you are offering). You can make your arguments stronger by

1. **using good premises** (ones you have good reason to believe are both true and relevant to the issue at hand),
2. making sure your premises **provide good support for your conclusion** (and not some other conclusion, or no conclusion at all),
3. checking that you have **addressed the most important or relevant aspects** of the issue (that is, that your premises and conclusion focus on what is really important to the issue), and
4. **not making claims that are so strong or sweeping that you can’t really support them**.

You also need to be sure that you present all of your ideas in an orderly fashion that readers can follow. See our handouts on [argument](http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/argument/" \o "Argument)and [organization](http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/reorganizing-drafts/) for some tips that will improve your arguments.

This handout describes some ways in which arguments often fail to do the things listed above; these failings are called fallacies. If you’re having trouble developing your argument, check to see if a fallacy is part of the problem.

It is particularly easy to slip up and commit a fallacy when you have strong feelings about your topic—if a conclusion seems obvious to you, you’re more likely to just assume that it is true and to be careless with your evidence. To help you see how people commonly make this mistake, this handout uses a number of controversial political examples—arguments about subjects like abortion, gun control, the death penalty, gay marriage, euthanasia, and pornography. The purpose of this handout, though, is not to argue for any particular position on any of these issues; rather, it is to illustrate weak reasoning, which can happen in pretty much any kind of argument. *Please be aware that the claims in these examples are just made-up illustrations—they haven’t been researched, and you shouldn’t use them as evidence in your own writing.*

**WHAT ARE FALLACIES?**

Fallacies are defects that weaken arguments. By learning to look for them in your own and others’ writing, you can strengthen your ability to evaluate the arguments you make, read, and hear. It is important to realize two things about fallacies: first, fallacious arguments are very, very common and can be quite persuasive, at least to the casual reader or listener. You can find dozens of examples of fallacious reasoning in newspapers, advertisements, and other sources. Second, it is sometimes hard to evaluate whether an argument is fallacious. An argument might be very weak, somewhat weak, somewhat strong, or very strong. An argument that has several stages or parts might have some strong sections and some weak ones. The goal of this handout, then, is not to teach you how to label arguments as fallacious or fallacy-free, but to help you look critically at your own arguments and move them away from the “weak” and toward the “strong” end of the continuum.

**SO WHAT DO FALLACIES LOOK LIKE?**

For each fallacy listed, there is a definition or explanation, an example, and a tip on how to avoid committing the fallacy in your own arguments.

**Hasty generalization**

**Definition**: Making assumptions about a whole group or range of cases based on a sample that is inadequate (usually because it is atypical or too small). Stereotypes about people (“librarians are shy and smart,” “wealthy people are snobs,” etc.) are a common example of the principle underlying hasty generalization.

**Example**: “My roommate said her philosophy class was hard, and the one I’m in is hard, too. All philosophy classes must be hard!” Two people’s experiences are, in this case, not enough on which to base a conclusion.

**Tip**: Ask yourself what kind of “sample” you’re using: Are you relying on the opinions or experiences of just a few people, or your own experience in just a few situations? If so, consider whether you need more evidence, or perhaps a less sweeping conclusion. (Notice that in the example, the more modest conclusion “*Some* philosophy classes are hard for *some* students” would not be a hasty generalization.)

**Missing the point**

**Definition**: The premises of an argument do support a particular conclusion—but not the conclusion that the arguer actually draws.

**Example**: “The seriousness of a punishment should match the seriousness of the crime. Right now, the punishment for drunk driving may simply be a fine. But drunk driving is a very serious crime that can kill innocent people. So the death penalty should be the punishment for drunk driving.” The argument actually supports several conclusions—”The punishment for drunk driving should be very serious,” in particular—but it doesn’t support the claim that the death penalty, specifically, is warranted.

**Tip**: Separate your premises from your conclusion. Looking at the premises, ask yourself what conclusion an objective person would reach after reading them. Looking at your conclusion, ask yourself what kind of evidence would be required to support such a conclusion, and then see if you’ve actually given that evidence. Missing the point often occurs when a sweeping or extreme conclusion is being drawn, so be especially careful if you know you’re claiming something big.

***Post hoc* (also called false cause)**

This fallacy gets its name from the Latin phrase “*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*,” which translates as “after this, therefore because of this.”

**Definition**: Assuming that because B comes after A, A caused B. Of course, sometimes one event really does cause another one that comes later—for example, if I register for a class, and my name later appears on the roll, it’s true that the first event caused the one that came later. But sometimes two events that seem related in time aren’t really related as cause and event. That is, correlation isn’t the same thing as causation.

**Examples**: “President Jones raised taxes, and then the rate of violent crime went up. Jones is responsible for the rise in crime.” The increase in taxes might or might not be one factor in the rising crime rates, but the argument hasn’t shown us that one caused the other.

**Tip**: To avoid the *post hoc* fallacy, the arguer would need to give us some explanation of the process by which the tax increase is supposed to have produced higher crime rates. And that’s what you should do to avoid committing this fallacy: If you say that A causes B, you should have something more to say about how A caused B than just that A came first and B came later.

**Slippery slope**

**Definition**: The arguer claims that a sort of chain reaction, usually ending in some dire consequence, will take place, but there’s really not enough evidence for that assumption. The arguer asserts that if we take even one step onto the “slippery slope,” we will end up sliding all the way to the bottom; he or she assumes we can’t stop partway down the hill.

**Example**: “Animal experimentation reduces our respect for life. If we don’t respect life, we are likely to be more and more tolerant of violent acts like war and murder. Soon our society will become a battlefield in which everyone constantly fears for their lives. It will be the end of civilization. To prevent this terrible consequence, we should make animal experimentation illegal right now.” Since animal experimentation has been legal for some time and civilization has not yet ended, it seems particularly clear that this chain of events won’t necessarily take place. Even if we believe that experimenting on animals reduces respect for life, and loss of respect for life makes us more tolerant of violence, that may be the spot on the hillside at which things stop—we may not slide all the way down to the end of civilization. And so we have not yet been given sufficient reason to accept the arguer’s conclusion that we must make animal experimentation illegal right now.

Like post hoc, slippery slope can be a tricky fallacy to identify, since sometimes a chain of events really can be predicted to follow from a certain action. Here’s an example that doesn’t seem fallacious: “If I fail English 101, I won’t be able to graduate. If I don’t graduate, I probably won’t be able to get a good job, and I may very well end up doing temp work or flipping burgers for the next year.”

**Tip**: Check your argument for chains of consequences, where you say “if A, then B, and if B, then C,” and so forth. Make sure these chains are reasonable.

**Weak analogy**

**Definition**: Many arguments rely on an analogy between two or more objects, ideas, or situations. If the two things that are being compared aren’t really alike in the relevant respects, the analogy is a weak one, and the argument that relies on it commits the fallacy of weak analogy.

**Example**: “Guns are like hammers—they’re both tools with metal parts that could be used to kill someone. And yet it would be ridiculous to restrict the purchase of hammers—so restrictions on purchasing guns are equally ridiculous.” While guns and hammers do share certain features, these features (having metal parts, being tools, and being potentially useful for violence) are not the ones at stake in deciding whether to restrict guns. Rather, we restrict guns because they can easily be used to kill large numbers of people at a distance. This is a feature hammers do not share—it would be hard to kill a crowd with a hammer. Thus, the analogy is weak, and so is the argument based on it.

If you think about it, you can make an analogy of some kind between almost any two things in the world: “My paper is like a mud puddle because they both get bigger when it rains (I work more when I’m stuck inside) and they’re both kind of murky.” So the mere fact that you can draw an analogy between two things doesn’t prove much, by itself.

Arguments by analogy are often used in discussing abortion—arguers frequently compare fetuses with adult human beings, and then argue that treatment that would violate the rights of an adult human being also violates the rights of fetuses. Whether these arguments are good or not depends on the strength of the analogy: do adult humans and fetuses share the properties that give adult humans rights? If the property that matters is having a human genetic code or the potential for a life full of human experiences, adult humans and fetuses do share that property, so the argument and the analogy are strong; if the property is being self-aware, rational, or able to survive on one’s own, adult humans and fetuses don’t share it, and the analogy is weak.

**Tip**: Identify what properties are important to the claim you’re making, and see whether the two things you’re comparing both share those properties.

**Appeal to authority**

**Definition**: Often we add strength to our arguments by referring to respected sources or authorities and explaining their positions on the issues we’re discussing. If, however, we try to get readers to agree with us simply by impressing them with a famous name or by appealing to a supposed authority who really isn’t much of an expert, we commit the fallacy of appeal to authority.

**Example**: “We should abolish the death penalty. Many respected people, such as actor Guy Handsome, have publicly stated their opposition to it.” While Guy Handsome may be an authority on matters having to do with acting, there’s no particular reason why anyone should be moved by his political opinions—he is probably no more of an authority on the death penalty than the person writing the paper.

**Tip**: There are two easy ways to avoid committing appeal to authority: First, make sure that the authorities you cite are experts on the subject you’re discussing. Second, rather than just saying “Dr. Authority believes X, so we should believe it, too,” try to explain the reasoning or evidence that the authority used to arrive at his or her opinion. That way, your readers have more to go on than a person’s reputation. It also helps to choose authorities who are perceived as fairly neutral or reasonable, rather than people who will be perceived as biased.

***Ad populum***

**Definition**: The Latin name of this fallacy means “to the people.” There are several versions of the *ad populum* fallacy, but in all of them, the arguer takes advantage of the desire most people have to be liked and to fit in with others and uses that desire to try to get the audience to accept his or her argument. One of the most common versions is the bandwagon fallacy, in which the arguer tries to convince the audience to do or believe something because everyone else (supposedly) does.

**Example**: “Gay marriages are just immoral. 70% of Americans think so!” While the opinion of most Americans might be relevant in determining what laws we should have, it certainly doesn’t determine what is moral or immoral: there was a time where a substantial number of Americans were in favor of segregation, but their opinion was not evidence that segregation was moral. The arguer is trying to get us to agree with the conclusion by appealing to our desire to fit in with other Americans.

**Tip**: Make sure that you aren’t recommending that your readers believe your conclusion because everyone else believes it, all the cool people believe it, people will like you better if you believe it, and so forth. Keep in mind that the popular opinion is not always the right one.

***Ad hominem* and *tu quoque***

**Definitions**: Like the appeal to authority and *ad populum* fallacies, the *ad hominem* (“against the person”) and *tu quoque* (“you, too!”) fallacies focus our attention on people rather than on arguments or evidence. In both of these arguments, the conclusion is usually “You shouldn’t believe So-and-So’s argument.” The reason for not believing So-and-So is that So-and-So is either a bad person (*ad hominem*) or a hypocrite (*tu quoque*). In an *ad hominem* argument, the arguer attacks his or her opponent instead of the opponent’s argument.

**Examples**: “Andrea Dworkin has written several books arguing that pornography harms women. But Dworkin is just ugly and bitter, so why should we listen to her?” Dworkin’s appearance and character, which the arguer has characterized so ungenerously, have nothing to do with the strength of her argument, so using them as evidence is fallacious.

In a *tu quoque* argument, the arguer points out that the opponent has actually done the thing he or she is arguing against, and so the opponent’s argument shouldn’t be listened to. Here’s an example: imagine that your parents have explained to you why you shouldn’t smoke, and they’ve given a lot of good reasons—the damage to your health, the cost, and so forth. You reply, “I won’t accept your argument, because you used to smoke when you were my age. You did it, too!” The fact that your parents have done the thing they are condemning has no bearing on the premises they put forward in their argument (smoking harms your health and is very expensive), so your response is fallacious.

**Tip**: Be sure to stay focused on your opponents’ reasoning, rather than on their personal character. (The exception to this is, of course, if you are making an argument about someone’s character—if your conclusion is “President Jones is an untrustworthy person,” premises about her untrustworthy acts are relevant, not fallacious.)

**Appeal to pity**

**Definition**: The appeal to pity takes place when an arguer tries to get people to accept a conclusion by making them feel sorry for someone.

**Examples**: “I know the exam is graded based on performance, but you should give me an A. My cat has been sick, my car broke down, and I’ve had a cold, so it was really hard for me to study!” The conclusion here is “You should give me an A.” But the criteria for getting an A have to do with learning and applying the material from the course; the principle the arguer wants us to accept (people who have a hard week deserve A’s) is clearly unacceptable. The information the arguer has given might *feel* relevant and might even get the audience to consider the conclusion—but the information isn’t logically relevant, and so the argument is fallacious. Here’s another example: “It’s wrong to tax corporations—think of all the money they give to charity, and of the costs they already pay to run their businesses!”

**Tip**: Make sure that you aren’t simply trying to get your audience to agree with you by making them feel sorry for someone.

**Appeal to ignorance**

**Definition**: In the appeal to ignorance, the arguer basically says, “Look, there’s no conclusive evidence on the issue at hand. Therefore, you should accept my conclusion on this issue.”

**Example**: “People have been trying for centuries to prove that God exists. But no one has yet been able to prove it. Therefore, God does not exist.” Here’s an opposing argument that commits the same fallacy: “People have been trying for years to prove that God does not exist. But no one has yet been able to prove it. Therefore, God exists.” In each case, the arguer tries to use the lack of evidence as support for a positive claim about the truth of a conclusion. There is one situation in which doing this is not fallacious: if qualified researchers have used well-thought-out methods to search for something for a long time, they haven’t found it, and it’s the kind of thing people ought to be able to find, then the fact that they haven’t found it constitutes some evidence that it doesn’t exist.

**Tip**: Look closely at arguments where you point out a lack of evidence and then draw a conclusion from that lack of evidence.

**Straw man**

**Definition**: One way of making our own arguments stronger is to anticipate and respond in advance to the arguments that an opponent might make. In the straw man fallacy, the arguer sets up a weak version of the opponent’s position and tries to score points by knocking it down. But just as being able to knock down a straw man (like a scarecrow) isn’t very impressive, defeating a watered-down version of your opponent’s argument isn’t very impressive either.

**Example**: “Feminists want to ban all pornography and punish everyone who looks at it! But such harsh measures are surely inappropriate, so the feminists are wrong: porn and its fans should be left in peace.” The feminist argument is made weak by being overstated. In fact, most feminists do not propose an outright “ban” on porn or any punishment for those who merely view it or approve of it; often, they propose some restrictions on particular things like child porn, or propose to allow people who are hurt by porn to sue publishers and producers—not viewers—for damages. So the arguer hasn’t really scored any points; he or she has just committed a fallacy.

**Tip**: Be charitable to your opponents. State their arguments as strongly, accurately, and sympathetically as possible. If you can knock down even the best version of an opponent’s argument, then you’ve really accomplished something.

**Red herring**

**Definition**: Partway through an argument, the arguer goes off on a tangent, raising a side issue that distracts the audience from what’s really at stake. Often, the arguer never returns to the original issue.

**Example**: “Grading this exam on a curve would be the most fair thing to do. After all, classes go more smoothly when the students and the professor are getting along well.” Let’s try our premise-conclusion outlining to see what’s wrong with this argument:

Premise: Classes go more smoothly when the students and the professor are getting along well.

Conclusion: Grading this exam on a curve would be the most fair thing to do.

When we lay it out this way, it’s pretty obvious that the arguer went off on a tangent—the fact that something helps people get along doesn’t necessarily make it more fair; fairness and justice sometimes require us to do things that cause conflict. But the audience may feel like the issue of teachers and students agreeing is important and be distracted from the fact that the arguer has not given any evidence as to why a curve would be fair.

**Tip**: Try laying your premises and conclusion out in an outline-like form. How many issues do you see being raised in your argument? Can you explain how each premise supports the conclusion?

**False dichotomy**

**Definition**: In false dichotomy, the arguer sets up the situation so it looks like there are only two choices. The arguer then eliminates one of the choices, so it seems that we are left with only one option: the one the arguer wanted us to pick in the first place. But often there are really many different options, not just two—and if we thought about them all, we might not be so quick to pick the one the arguer recommends.

**Example**: “Caldwell Hall is in bad shape. Either we tear it down and put up a new building, or we continue to risk students’ safety. Obviously we shouldn’t risk anyone’s safety, so we must tear the building down.” The argument neglects to mention the possibility that we might repair the building or find some way to protect students from the risks in question—for example, if only a few rooms are in bad shape, perhaps we shouldn’t hold classes in those rooms.

**Tip**: Examine your own arguments: if you’re saying that we have to choose between just two options, is that really so? Or are there other alternatives you haven’t mentioned? If there are other alternatives, don’t just ignore them—explain why they, too, should be ruled out. Although there’s no formal name for it, assuming that there are only three options, four options, etc. when really there are more is similar to false dichotomy and should also be avoided.

**Begging the question**

**Definition**: A complicated fallacy; it comes in several forms and can be harder to detect than many of the other fallacies we’ve discussed. Basically, an argument that begs the question asks the reader to simply accept the conclusion without providing real evidence; the argument either relies on a premise that says the same thing as the conclusion (which you might hear referred to as “being circular” or “circular reasoning”), or simply ignores an important (but questionable) assumption that the argument rests on. Sometimes people use the phrase “beg the question” as a sort of general criticism of arguments, to mean that an arguer hasn’t given very good reasons for a conclusion, but that’s not the meaning we’re going to discuss here.

**Examples**: “Active euthanasia is morally acceptable. It is a decent, ethical thing to help another human being escape suffering through death.” Let’s lay this out in premise-conclusion form:

Premise: It is a decent, ethical thing to help another human being escape suffering through death.

Conclusion: Active euthanasia is morally acceptable.

If we “translate” the premise, we’ll see that the arguer has really just said the same thing twice: “decent, ethical” means pretty much the same thing as “morally acceptable,” and “help another human being escape suffering through death” means something pretty similar to “active euthanasia.” So the premise basically says, “active euthanasia is morally acceptable,” just like the conclusion does. The arguer hasn’t yet given us any real reasons *why* euthanasia is acceptable; instead, she has left us asking “well, really, why do you think active euthanasia is acceptable?” Her argument “begs” (that is, evades) the real question.

Here’s a second example of begging the question, in which a dubious premise which is needed to make the argument valid is completely ignored: “Murder is morally wrong. So active euthanasia is morally wrong.” The premise that gets left out is “active euthanasia is murder.” And that is a debatable premise—again, the argument “begs” or evades the question of whether active euthanasia is murder by simply not stating the premise. The arguer is hoping we’ll just focus on the uncontroversial premise, “Murder is morally wrong,” and not notice what is being assumed.

**Tip**: One way to try to avoid begging the question is to write out your premises and conclusion in a short, outline-like form. See if you notice any gaps, any steps that are required to move from one premise to the next or from the premises to the conclusion. Write down the statements that would fill those gaps. If the statements are controversial and you’ve just glossed over them, you might be begging the question. Next, check to see whether any of your premises basically says the same thing as the conclusion (but in different words). If so, you’re probably begging the question. The moral of the story: you can’t just assume or use as uncontroversial evidence the very thing you’re trying to prove.

**Equivocation**

**Definition**: Equivocation is sliding between two or more different meanings of a single word or phrase that is important to the argument.

**Example**: “Giving money to charity is the right thing to do. So charities have a right to our money.” The equivocation here is on the word “right”: “right” can mean both something that is correct or good (as in “I got the right answers on the test”) and something to which someone has a claim (as in “everyone has a right to life”). Sometimes an arguer will deliberately, sneakily equivocate, often on words like “freedom,” “justice,” “rights,” and so forth; other times, the equivocation is a mistake or misunderstanding. Either way, it’s important that you use the main terms of your argument consistently.

**Tip**: Identify the most important words and phrases in your argument and ask yourself whether they could have more than one meaning. If they could, be sure you aren’t slipping and sliding between those meanings.

**SO HOW DO I FIND FALLACIES IN MY OWN WRITING?**

Here are some general tips for finding fallacies in your own arguments:

* **Pretend you disagree with the conclusion you’re defending.** What parts of the argument would now seem fishy to you? What parts would seem easiest to attack? Give special attention to strengthening those parts.
* **List your main points**; under each one, **list the evidence** you have for it. Seeing your claims and evidence laid out this way may make you realize that you have no good evidence for a particular claim, or it may help you look more critically at the evidence you’re using.
* **Learn which types of fallacies you’re especially prone to**, and be careful to check for them in your work. Some writers make lots of appeals to authority; others are more likely to rely on weak analogies or set up straw men. Read over some of your old papers to see if there’s a particular kind of fallacy you need to watch out for.
* **Be aware that broad claims need more proof than narrow ones**. Claims that use sweeping words like “all,” “no,” “none,” “every,” “always,” “never,” “no one,” and “everyone” are sometimes appropriate—but they require a lot more proof than less-sweeping claims that use words like “some,” “many,” “few,” “sometimes,” “usually,” and so forth.
* **Double check your characterizations of others**, especially your opponents, to be sure they are accurate and fair.

**CAN I GET SOME PRACTICE WITH THIS?**

Yes, you can. Follow [this link](http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/fallacies/sample-arguments-with-fallacies/) to see a sample argument that’s full of fallacies (and then you can follow another link to get an explanation of each one). Then there’s a more well-constructed argument on the same topic.

**WORKS CONSULTED**

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout’s topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the [UNC Libraries citation tutorial](http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/).

Hurley, Patrick J. A Concise Introduction to Logic. Thornson Learning, 2000

Lunsford, Andrea and John Ruszkiewicz. Everything’s an Argument. Bedford Books, 1998.

Copi, Irving M. and Carl Cohen. Introduction to Logic. Prentice Hall, 1998.

List of common fallacies

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*You don't need to take drugs to hallucinate; improper language can fill your world with phantoms and spooks of many kinds.*

-Robert A. Wilson

When arguing with someone in an attempt to get at an answer or an explanation, you may come across a person who makes logical fallacies. Such discussions may prove futile. You might try asking for evidence and independent confirmation or provide other hypotheses that give a better or simpler explanation. If this fails, try to pinpoint the problem of your arguer's position. You might spot the problem of logic that prevents further exploration and attempt to inform your arguer about his fallacy. The following briefly describes some of the most common fallacies:

**ad hominem**: Latin for "to the man." An arguer who uses ad hominems attacks the person instead of the argument. Whenever an arguer cannot defend his position with evidence, facts or reason, he or she may resort to attacking an opponent either through: labeling, straw man arguments, name calling, offensive remarks and anger.

**appeal to ignorance** (*argumentum ex silentio*) appealing to ignorance as evidence for something. (e.g., We have no evidence that God doesn't exist, therefore, he must exist. Or: Because we have no knowledge of alien visitors, that means they do not exist). Ignorance about something says nothing about its existence or non-existence.

**argument from omniscience**: (e.g., All people believe in something. Everyone knows that.) An arguer would need omniscience to know about everyone's beliefs or disbeliefs or about their knowledge. Beware of words like "all," "everyone," "everything," "absolute."

**appeal to faith**: (e.g., if you have no faith, you cannot learn) if the arguer relies on faith as the bases of his argument, then you can gain little from further discussion. Faith, by definition, relies on a belief that does not rest on logic or evidence. Faith depends on irrational thought and produces intransigence.

**appeal to tradition** (similar to the bandwagon fallacy): (e.g., astrology, religion, slavery) just because people practice a tradition, says nothing about its viability.

**argument from authority**(*argumentum ad verecundiam*): using the words of an "expert" or authority as the bases of the argument instead of using the logic or evidence that supports an argument. (e.g., Professor so-and-so believes in creation-science.) Simply because an authority makes a claim does not necessarily mean he got it right. If an arguer presents the testimony from an expert, look to see if it accompanies reason and sources of evidence behind it.

**Appeal to consequences** (*argumentum ad consequentiam*): an argument that concludes a premise (usually a belief) as either true or false based on whether the premise leads to desirable or undesirable consequences. Example: some religious people believe that knowledge of evolution leads to immorality, therefore evolution proves false. Even if teaching evolution did lead to immorality, it would not imply a falsehood of evolution.

**argument from adverse consequences**: (e.g., We should judge the accused as guilty, otherwise others will commit similar crimes) Just because a repugnant crime or act occurred, does not necessarily mean that a defendant committed the crime or that we should judge him guilty. (Or: disasters occur because God punishes non-believers; therefore, we should all believe in God) Just because calamities or tragedies occur, says nothing about the existence of gods or that we should believe in a certain way.

**argumentum ad baculum**: An argument based on an appeal to fear or a threat. (e.g., If you don't believe in God, you'll burn in hell)

**argumentum ad ignorantiam**: A misleading argument used in reliance on people's ignorance.

**argumentum ad populum**: An argument aimed to sway popular support by appealing to sentimental weakness rather than facts and reasons.

**bandwagon fallacy**: concluding that an idea has merit simply because many people believe it or practice it. (e.g., Most people believe in a god; therefore, it must prove true.) Simply because many people may believe something says nothing about the fact of that something. For example many people during the Black plague believed that demons caused disease. The number of believers say nothing at all about the cause of disease.

**begging the question**(or assuming the answer): (e.g., We must encourage our youth to worship God to instill moral behavior.) But does religion and worship actually produce moral behavior?

**circular reasoning**: stating in one's proposition that which one aims to prove. (e.g. God exists because the Bible says so; the Bible exists because God influenced it.)

**composition fallacy**: when the conclusion of an argument depends on an erroneous characteristic from parts of something to the whole or vice versa. (e.g., Humans have consciousness and human bodies and brains consist of atoms; therefore, atoms have consciousness. Or: a word processor program consists of many bytes; therefore a byte forms a fraction of a word processor.)

**confirmation bias**(similar to observational selection): This refers to a form of selective thinking that focuses on evidence that supports what believers already believe while ignoring evidence that refutes their beliefs. Confirmation bias plays a stronger role when people base their beliefs upon faith, tradition and prejudice. For example, if someone believes in the power of prayer, the believer will notice the few "answered" prayers while ignoring the majority of unanswered prayers (which would indicate that prayer has no more value than random chance at worst or a placebo effect, when applied to health effects, at best).

**confusion of correlation and causation**: (e.g., More men play chess than women, therefore, men make better chess players than women. Or: Children who watch violence on TV tend to act violently when they grow up.) But does television programming cause violence or do violence oriented children prefer to watch violent programs? Perhaps an entirely different reason creates violence not related to television at all. Stephen Jay Gould called the invalid assumption that correlation implies cause as "probably among the two or three most serious and common errors of human reasoning" ([The Mismeasure of Man](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0393314251/freethinkers)).

**excluded middle** (or false dichotomy): considering only the extremes. Many people use Aristotelian either/or logic tending to describe in terms of up/down, black/white, true/false, love/hate, etc. (e.g., You either like it or you don't. He either stands guilty or not guilty.) Many times, a continuum occurs between the extremes that people fail to see. The universe also contains many "maybes."

**half truths**(suppressed evidence): A statement usually intended to deceive that omits some of the facts necessary for an accurate description.

**loaded questions**: embodies an assumption that, if answered, indicates an implied agreement. (e.g., Have you stopped beating your wife yet?)

**meaningless question**: (e.g., "How high is up?" "Is everything possible?") "Up" describes a direction, not a measurable entity. If everything proved possible, then the possibility exists for the impossible, a contradiction. Although everything may not prove possible, there may occur an infinite number of possibilities as well as an infinite number of impossibilities. Many meaningless questions include empty words such as "is," "are," "were," "was," "am," "be," or "been."

**misunderstanding the nature of statistics**: (e.g., the majority of people in the United States die in hospitals, therefore, stay out of them.) "Statistics show that of those who contract the habit of eating, very few survive." -- Wallace Irwin

**non sequitur**: Latin for "It does not follow." An inference or conclusion that does not follow from established premises or evidence. (e.g., there occured an increase of births during the full moon. Conclusion: full moons cause birth rates to rise.) But does a full moon actually cause more births, or did it occur for other reasons, perhaps from expected statistical variations?

**no true Christian** ([no true Scotsman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_true_Scotsman)): an informal logical fallacy, an *ad hoc* attempt to retain an unreasoned assertion. When faced with an example, rather than denying it, this fallacy excludes the specific case without reference to any objective rule. Example: Many Christians in history have started wars. Reply: Well no true Christian would ever start a war.

**observational selection** (similar to confirmation bias): pointing out favorable circumstances while ignoring the unfavorable. Anyone who goes to Las Vegas gambling casinos will see people winning at the tables and slots. The casino managers make sure to install bells and whistles to announce the victors, while the losers never get mentioned. This may lead one to conclude that the chances of winning appear good while in actually just the reverse holds true.

**post hoc, ergo propter hoc**: Latin for "It happened after, so it was caused by." Similar to a non sequitur, but time dependent. (e.g. She got sick after she visited China, so something in China caused her sickness.) Perhaps her sickness derived from something entirely independent from China.

**proving non-existence**: when an arguer cannot provide the evidence for his claims, he may challenge his opponent to prove it doesn't exist (e.g., prove God doesn't exist; prove UFO's haven't visited earth, etc.). Although one may prove non-existence in special limitations, such as showing that a box does not contain certain items, one cannot prove universal or absolute non-existence, or non-existence out of ignorance. One cannot prove something that does not exist. The proof of existence must come from those who make the claims.

**red herring**: when the arguer diverts the attention by changing the subject.

**reification fallacy**: when people treat an abstract belief or hypothetical construct as if it represented a concrete event or physical entity. Examples: IQ tests as an actual measure of intelligence; the concept of race (even though genetic attributes exist), from the *chosen* combination of attributes or the labeling of a group of people, come from abstract social constructs; Astrology; god(s); Jesus; Santa Claus, black race, white race, etc.

**slippery slope**: a change in procedure, law, or action, will result in adverse consequences. (e.g., If we allow doctor assisted suicide, then eventually the government will control how we die.) It does not necessarily follow that just because we make changes that a slippery slope will occur.

**special pleading**: the assertion of new or special matter to offset the opposing party's allegations. A presentation of an argument that emphasizes only a favorable or single aspect of the question at issue. (e.g. How can God create so much suffering in the world? Answer: You have to understand that God moves in mysterious ways and we have no privilege to this knowledge. Or: Horoscopes work, but you have to understand the theory behind it.)

**statistics of small numbers**: similar to observational selection (e.g., My parents smoked all their lives and they never got cancer. Or: I don't care what others say about Yugos, my Yugo has never had a problem.) Simply because someone can point to a few favorable numbers says nothing about the overall chances.

**straw man**: creating a false or made up scenario and then attacking it. (e.g., Evolutionists think that everything came about by random chance.) Most evolutionists think in terms of natural selection which may involve incidental elements, but does not depend entirely on random chance. Painting your opponent with false colors only deflects the purpose of the argument. (From the email that I get on NoBeliefs.com this appears as the most common fallacy of all.)

**two wrongs make a right**: trying to justify what we did by accusing someone else of doing the same. (e.g. how can you judge my actions when you do exactly the same thing?) The guilt of the accuser has no relevance to the discussion.

**Use-mention error:** confusing a word or a concept with something that supposedly exists. For example an essay on THE HISTORY OF GOD does not refer to an actual god, but rather the history of the concept of god in human culture. (To avoid confusion, people usually put the word or phrase in quotations.

Science attempts to apply some of the following criteria:

1) Skepticism of unsupported claims

2) Combination of an open mind with critical thinking

3) Attempts to repeat experimental results.

4) Requires testability

5) Seeks out falsifying data that would disprove a hypothesis

6) Uses descriptive language

7) Performs controlled experiments

8) Self-correcting

9) Relies on evidence and reason

10) Makes no claim for absolute or certain knowledge

11) Produces useful knowledge

Pseudoscience and religion relies on some of the following criteria:

1) Has a negative attitude to skepticism

2) Does not require critical thinking

3) Does not require experimental repeatability

4) Does not require tests

5) Does not accept falsifying data that would disprove a hypothesis

6) Uses vague language

7) Relies on anecdotal evidence

8) No self-correction

9) Relies on belief and faith

10) Makes absolute claims

11) Produces no useful knowledge

**Master List of Logical Fallacies**

 Fallacies are fake or deceptive arguments, arguments that prove nothing. Fallacies often seem superficially sound, and they far too often retain immense persuasive power even after being clearly exposed as false. Fallacies are not always deliberate, but a good scholar’s purpose is always to identify and unmask fallacies in arguments. Note that many of these definitions overlap, but the goal here is to identify contemporary and classic fallacies as they are used in today's discourse.

1. **A Priori Argument:**Also, Rationalization; Proof Texting.A corrupt argument from logos,starting with a given, pre-set belief, dogma, doctrine, scripture verse, "fact" or conclusion and then searching for any reasonable or reasonable-sounding argument to rationalize, defend or justify it. Certain ideologues and religious fundamentalists are proud to use this fallacy as their primary method of "reasoning" and some are even honest enough to say so. The opposite of this fallacy is the Taboo.
2. **Actions have Consequences:**  The contemporary fallacy of a person in power falsely applying an imposed punishment or penalty as a "consequence" of another's negative act. E.g.," The consequences of your misbehavior could include suspension or expulsion." A corrupt argument from ethos, arrogating to oneself or to one's rules or laws an ethos of cosmic inevitability, i.e., the ethos of God, Fate, Destiny or Reality Itself.  Freezing to death is a "consequence" of going out naked in subzero weather but going to prison is a *punishmen*t for bank robbery, not a natural, inevitable or unavoidable "consequence," of robbing a bank.  Not to be confused with the Argument from Consequences, which is quite different. An opposite fallacy is that of Moral Licensing.
3. **Ad Hominem Argument** (also, "Personal attack," "Poisoning the well."): The fallacy of attempting to refute an argument by attacking the opposition’s personal character or reputation, using a corrupted negative argument from ethos. E.g., "He's so evil that you can't believe anything he says." See also "Guilt by Association." Also applies to cases where valid opposing evidence and arguments are brushed aside without comment or consideration, as simply not worth arguing about, solely because of the lack of power or status of the person making the argument. The opposite of this latter is the "Star Power" fallacy.
4. **The Affective Fallacy (**alsoThe Romantic Fallacy): A fallacy of Pathos, that one's "feelings" and personal experiences are in every case self-validating and remain above challenge or critique. In this fallacy one argues, "My experiences and feelings are valid, so therefore you don't get to criticize what I say or how I say it."  This latter is also a fallacy of stasis, confusing reasoned response or refutation with personal devaluation, disrespect, prejudice or hostility.
5. **Alphabet Soup:** A corrupt implicit fallacy from ethos in which a person overuses acronyms, abbreviations, form numbers and arcane insider "shop talk" primarily to prove to an audience that s/he "speaks their language" and is "one of them" and to shut out, confuse or impress outsiders. E.g., "It's not uncommon for a K-12 with ASD to be both GT and LD." Or,  "I hope I'll keep on drawing my BAQ until I get my DD214."
6. **Appeal to Closure**: The contemporary fallacy that an argument, standpoint, action or conclusion no matter how questionable must be accepted as final or else the point will remain unsettled, which is unthinkable, and those affected will be denied "closure." This fallacy falsely reifies a specialized term from Gestalt Psychology (closure) while refusing to recognize the undeniable truth that some points will indeed remain unsettled, perhaps forever. E.g., "Society would be protected, crime would be deterred and justice served if we sentence you to life without parole, but we need to execute you in order to provide some closure." See also, Argument from Ignorance, and Argument from Consequences.
7. **Appeal to Heaven**: (also Deus Vult, Gott mit Uns, Manifest Destiny, American Exceptionalism, the Special Covenant). An extremely dangerous fallacy (a deluded argument from ethos) asserting that God (or History, or a higher power) has ordered, supports or approves of one's own standpoint or actions so no further justification is required and no serious challenge is possible. (E.g., "God ordered me to kill my children," or "We need to take away your land, since God [or Manifest Destiny, or Fate, or Heaven] has given it to us as our own.") A private individual who seriously asserts this fallacy risks ending up in a psychiatric ward, but groups or nations who do it are far too often taken seriously. This vicious fallacy has been the cause of endless bloodshed over history. See also, Magical Thinking. Also applies to deluded negative Appeals to Heaven, e.g., "God wouldn't ever let that happen!" The opposite of the Appeal to Heaven is the Job's Comforter fallacy.
8. **Appeal to Pity**: (also "Argumentum ad Miserecordiam"). The fallacy of urging an audience to “root for the underdog” regardless of the issues at hand (e.g., “Those poor, cute little squeaky mice are being gobbled up by mean, nasty cats that are ten times their size!”) A corrupt argument from pathos. See also, Playing to Emotions. The opposite of the Appeal to Pity is the **Appeal to Rigor,**an argument (often based on machismo or on manipulating an audience's fear) based on mercilessness. E.g., "I'm a real man, not like those bleeding hearts, and I'll be tough on [here fill in the name of the enemy or bogeyman of the hour.]"  In academia this latter fallacy applies to politically-motivated or elitist calls for "Academic Rigor" and against "Dumbing Down" or "Grade Inflation."
9. **Appeal to Tradition**: (also, Conservative Bias, "The Good Old Days"). The fallacy that a standpoint, situation or action is right, proper and correct simply because it has "always" been that way, because people have "always" thought that way, or because it continues to serve one particular group very well. A corrupted argument from ethos (that of past generations). (E.g., "In America, women have always been paid less, so let's not mess with long-standing tradition.").  See also Argument from Inertia, and Default Bias..The opposite of this is **The Appeal to Novelty**(also, "Pro-Innovation bias," "Recency Bias, "The Bad Old Days"), e.g., "It's NEW, and [therefore it must be] improved!" or "This is the very latest discovery--it has to be better."

1. **Argument from Consequences** (also, Outcome Bias) The major fallacy of arguing that something cannot be true because if it were the consequences would be unacceptable. (E.g., "Global climate change cannot be caused by human burning of fossil fuels, because if it were, switching to non-polluting energy sources would bankrupt American industry," or "Doctor, that's wrong! I can't have terminal cancer, because if I did that'd mean that I won't live to see my kids get married!")

Not to be confused with Actions have Consequences.

1. **Argument from Ignorance:** The fallacy that since we don’t know (or can never know, or cannot prove) whether a claim is true or false, it must be false (or that it must be true). E.g., “Scientists are never going to be able to positively prove their theory that humans evolved from other creatures, because we weren't there to see it! So, that proves the Genesis six-day creation account is  literally true as written!” This fallacy includes **Attacking the Evidenc**e, e.g. "Your evidence is missing, incomplete, or even faked! That proves I'm right!" This usually includes “Either-Or Reasonin**g**:” E.g., “The vet can't find any reasonable explanation for why my dog died. See! See! That proves that you poisoned him! There’s no other logical explanation!” A corrupted argument from logos. A fallacy commonly found in American political, judicial and forensic reasoning.

See also "A Priori Argument" and "Argumentum ex Silentio."

1. **Argument from Inertia** (also “Stay the Course”). The fallacy that it is necessary to continue on a mistaken course of action even after discovering it is mistaken, because changing course would mean admitting that one's decision (or one's leader, or one's faith) was wrong, and all one's effort, expense and sacrifice was for nothing, and that's unthinkable. A variety of the Argument from Consequences, E for Effort, or the Appeal to Tradition.
2. **Argument from Motives** (also Questioning Motives). The fallacy of declaring a standpoint or argument invalid solely because of the evil, corrupt or questionable motives of the one making the claim. E.g., "Bin Laden wanted us out of Afghanistan, so we have to keep up the fight!" Even evil people with corrupt motives sometimes say the truth (and even those who have the highest motives are often wrong or mistaken). A variety of the Ad Hominem argument. The counterpart of this is the fallacy of falsely justifying or excusing evil or vicious actions because of the perpetrator's purity of motives or lack of malice. (E.g., "He's a good Christian man; how could you accuse him of doing something like that?")

see also Moral Licensing.

1. **Argumentum ad Baculam** ("Argument from the Club." Also, "Argument from Strength," "Muscular Leadership," "Non-negotiable Demands," Bullying, Fascism). The fallacy of "persuasion" or "Proving one is right" by force, violence, or threats. E.g., "Gimmee your wallet or I'll knock your head off!" or "We have the perfect right to take your land, since we have the guns and you don't." Also applies to indirect forms of threat. E.g., "Give up your foolish pride, kneel down and accept our religion today if you don't want to burn in hell forever and ever!"
2. **Argumentum ex Silentio** (Argument from Silence). The fallacy that if available sources remain silent or current knowledge and evidence can prove nothing about a given subject or question this fact in itself proves something about the truth of the matter. E.g., "Science can tell us nothing about God. That proves God doesn't exist." Or "Science admits it can tell us nothing about God, so you can't deny that God exists!" Often misused in the American justice system, where, contrary to the 5th Amendment,  remaining silent or "taking the Fifth" is often falsely portrayed as proof of guilt. E.g., "Mr. Hixel has no alibi for the evening of January 15th. This proves that he was in fact in room 331 at the Smuggler's Inn, murdering his wife with a hatchet!" In today's America, choosing to remain silent in the face of a police officer's questions can make one guilty enough to be arrested or even shot. See also, Argument from Ignorance.
3. **Availability Bias**(also, Attention Bias, Anchoring Bias): A fallacy of logos stemming from the natural tendency to give undue importance to information that is immediately available at hand, particularly the first or last information received, and to minimize or ignore broader data or wider evidence that clearly exists but is not as easily remembered or accessed. E.g., "We know from experience that this doesn't work," when "experience" means the most recent local experience, ignoring multiple instances in other places and times where it *ha*s worked and *does*work.
4. **Bandwagon** (also, Argument from Common Sense, Argumentum ad Populum): The fallacy of arguing that because "everyone" supposedly thinks or does something, it must be right. E.g., "Everyone knows that undocumented aliens ought to be kicked out!" Sometimes also includes Lying with Statistics, e.g. “Surveys show that over 75% of Americans believe Senator Snith is not telling the truth. For anyone with half a brain, that conclusively proves he’s a dirty liar!”

  Sometimes combined with the "Argumentum ad Baculam," e.g., "Like it or not, it's time to choose sides: Are you going to get on board  the bandwagon with everyone else, or get crushed under the wheels as it goes by?" For the opposite of this argument see the Romantic Rebel fallacy.

1. **Big Lie Technique** (also "Staying on Message"): The contemporary fallacy of repeating a lie, fallacy, slogan, talking-point or deceptive half-truth over and over in different forms (particularly in the media) until people believe it without further proof or evidence.. E.g., "What about the Jewish Question?" Note that when this particular phony debate was going on there was no "Jewish Question," only a "Nazi Question," but hardly anybody in power recognized or wanted to talk about that.
2. **Blind Loyalty** (also Blind Obedience, Unthinking Obedience, the "Team Player" appeal, the Nuremberg Defense). The dangerous fallacy that an argument or action is right simply and solely because a respected leader or source (a President, expert, one’s parents, one's own "side," team or country, one’s boss or commanding officers) say it is right. This is over-reliance on authority, a corrupted argument from ethos that puts loyalty above truth,  above one's own reason and  above conscience. In this case a person attempts to justify incorrect, stupid or criminal behavior by whining "That's what I was told to do," or “I was just following orders."  See also, "The Soldiers' Honor Fallacy." A not-uncommon but extreme example of this fallacy is the **Big Brain/Little Brain Fallacy** (also, the Fuhrerprinzip) in which a tyrannical cult-leader tells followers "Don't think with your little brains (the brain in your head) but with your BIG brain (the leader's)." This last is sometimes expressed in positive terms, i.e., "You don't have to stress out about the moral rightness or wrongness of your acts since I, the leader. am taking all responsibility. I will defend you and gladly accept all the consequences up to and including eternal damnation if I'm wrong." See also, "Just Do It!"
3. **Blood is Thicker than Water**(also Favoritism, Compadrismo, "For my friends, anything."). The reverse of the "Ad Hominem" fallacy, a corrupt argument from ethos where a statement, argument or action is automatically regarded as true, correct and above challenge because one is related to, or knows and likes, or is on the same team as the individual involved.  (E.g., "My brother-in-law says he saw you goofing off on the job. You're a hard worker but who am I going to believe, you or him? You're fired!")
4. **Brainwashing** (also, Propaganda, "Radicalization."): The Cold War-era fantasy that an enemy can instantly convince an unsuspecting audience with their vile but somehow unspeakably persuasive "propaganda,"  e.g., "Don't look at that website! They're trying to brainwash you with terrorist propaganda!" Historically, this fallacy refers more properly to the inhuman Argumentum ad Baculam of  "beating an argument into" a prisoner via pain, fear, sensory or sleep deprivation, prolonged abuse and sophisticated psychological manipulation (also, the "Stockholm Syndrome."). Such "brainwashing" can also be accomplished by pleasure ("**Love Bombing**,"),, e.g., "Did you like that? I know you did. Well, there's lots more where that came from when you sign on with us!" (See also, "Bribery.") An unspeakably sinister form of persuasion by brainwashing involves deliberately addicting a person to drugs and then providing or withholding the substance depending on the addict's compliance. Note: Only the "other side" brainwashes. "We" *never* brainwash.
5. **Bribery** (also Material Persuasion, Material Incentive, Financial Incentive). The fallacy of "persuasion" by bribery, gifts or favors, the reverse of the Argumentum ad Baculam. As is well known, someone who is persuaded by bribery rarely "stays persuaded" unless the bribes keep on coming in and increasing with time.
6. **Circular Reasoning** (The Vicious Circle; Catch 22, Begging the Question, Circulus in Probando): A fallacy of logos where A is because of B, and B is because of A, e.g., "You can't get a job because you have no experience, and you have no experience because you can't get a job." Also refers to falsely arguing that something is true by repeating the same statement in different words. E.g., “The witchcraft problem is the most urgent spiritual crisis in the world today. Why? Because witches threaten our immortal souls.” A corrupt argument from logos. See also the "Big Lie technique."
7. **The Complex Question**: The fallacy of demanding a direct answer to a question that cannot be answered without first analyzing or challenging the basis of the question itself. E.g., "Just answer me 'yes' or 'no':  Did you think you could get away with plagiarism and not suffer the consequences?" Or, "Why did you rob that bank?" Also applies to situations where one is forced to either accept or reject complex standpoints or propositions containing both acceptable and unacceptable parts. A corruption of the argument from logos. A counterpart of Either/Or Reasoning.
8. **Confirmation Bias:** A fallacy of logos, recognizing the fact that one always tends to see, select and share evidence that confirms one's own standpoint and beliefs, as opposed to contrary evidence. This fallacy is how "Fortune Tellers" work--If I am told I will meet a "tall, dark stranger" I will be on the lookout for a tall, dark stranger, and when I meet someone even marginally meeting that description I will marvel at the correctness of the "psychic's" prediction. See also, "Half Truth,," and "Defensiveness."
9. **Default Bias:** (also, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it;" Acquiescence; "Making one's peace with the situation;" "Get used to it;" "Whatever*is*, is right;"  "Let it be, let it be;" "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't know."). The logical fallacy of automatically favoring or accepting a situation simply because it exists right now, and arguing that any other alternative is mad, unthinkable, impossible, or at least would take too much effort, stress and risk to change.  The opposite of this fallacy is **Nihilism** ("Tear it all down!"), blindly rejecting what exists in favor of what could be, the infantile disorder of romanticizing anarchy, "permanent revolution," or change for change's sake.
10. **Defensiveness** (also, Choice-support Bias): A fallacy of ethos (one's own), in which after one has taken a given decision, commitment or course of action, one automatically tends to defend that decision and to irrationally dismiss opposing options, even when one's decision later on proves to be shaky or wrong. "Yeah, I voted for Snith. Sure, he turned out to be a crook and a liar and he got us into war, but I still say that he was better than the available alternatives!"  See also "Argument from Inertia" and "Confirmation Bias."
11. **Diminished Responsibility**: The common contemporary fallacy of applying a specialized judicial concept (that criminal punishment should be less if one's judgment was impaired) to reality in general. E.g., "You can't count me absent on Monday--I was hung over and couldn't come to class so it's not my fault."  Or, "Yeah, I was speeding on the freeway and killed a guy, but I was buzzed out of my mind and didn't know what I was doing so it didn't matter that much." In reality the death does matter very much to the victim, to his family and friends and to society in general. Whether the perpetrator was high or not does not matter at all since the material results are the same. This fallacy is rooted in the confusion of "consequences" with "punishment."
12. **Disciplinary Blinders**: A very common contemporary scholarly fallacy of ethos (that of one's discipline or field),  automatically disregarding, discounting or ignoring *a priori* otherwise-relevant arguments and evidence that come from outside one's own professional discipline, discourse community or academic area of study. E.g., "That may be true or may be false, but it's*so* not what we're doing in our field right now,"  See also, "Star Power."
13. **E" for Effort**. (also Noble Effort) The common contemporary fallacy that something must be right, true, valuable, or worthy of respect and honor simply because someone has put so much sincere good-faith effort or even sacrifice and bloodshed into it. (See also Appeal to Pity; Argument from Inertia; Heroes All; or Sob Story.).
14. **Either/Or Reasoning:**(also False Dilemma, False Dichotomy, Black/White Fallacy, Binary Logic). A fallacy that falsely offers only two possible options even though a broad range of possible alternatives are always readily available. E.g., "Either you are 100% Simon Straightarrow or you are queer as a three dollar bill--it's as simple as that and there's no middle ground!" Or, “Either you’re in with us all the way or you’re a hostile and must be destroyed!  What's it gonna be?"  Also applies to falsely contrasting one option or case to another that is not really opposed, e.g., falsely countering "Black Lives Matter" with "Blue Lives Matter" when in fact not a few police officers are themselves African American, and African Americans and police are not (or ought not to be!) natural enemies.  See also, Overgeneralization.
15. **Equivocation**: The fallacy of deliberately failing to define one's terms, or knowingly and deliberately using words in a different sense than the one the audience will understand. (E.g., Bill Clinton stating that he did not have sexual relations with "that woman," meaning no sexual penetration, knowing full well that the audience will understand his statement as "I had no sexual contact of any sort with that woman.") This is a corruption of the argument from logos, and a tactic often used in American jurisprudence.
16. **Esoteric Knowledge** (Esoteric Wisdom, Gnosticism, Inner Truth): A fallacy from logos and ethos, that there is some knowledge reserved only for the Wise or the Enlightened, things that the masses cannot understand and do not deserve to know, at least not until they become more "spiritually advanced."  The counterpart of this fallacy is that of**Obscurantism**(Obscurationism; Willful Ignorance), that (almost always said in a basso profundo voice) "There are some things that mere mortals must never seek to discover!" E.g., "Scientific research on human sexuality is morally wrong!  There are some things that humans are simply not meant to know!" For the opposite of this latter, see the "Plain Truth Fallacy" below. Related to this is the "**Long Ago and Far Away**" fallacy, that facts, evidence, practices or arguments from ancient times and/or distant lands and "exotic" cultures carry a special gravitas or ethos simply because of their language or origin, e.g., the Greek or Latin Liturgy, Latin or Greek names for fallacies, or for those who have no Asian roots, Zen Buddhist practices and chanting Sanskrit Mantras.
17. **Essentializing**: A fallacy that proposes a person or thing “is what it is and that’s all that it is,” and at its core will always be the way it is right now (E.g., "All terrorists are monsters, and will still be terrorist monsters even if they live to be 100," or "'The poor you will always have with you,' so any effort to eliminate poverty is pointless."). Also refers to the fallacy of arguing that something is a certain way "by nature," an empty claim that no amount of proof can refute. (E.g., "Americans are cold and greedy by nature," or "Women are naturally better cooks than men.") See also "Default Bias."  The opposite of this  is the fallacy of **Relativizing,** blithely dismissing any and all arguments against one's standpoint by shrugging one's shoulders and responding that "Everything's relative," or falsely invoking Einstein, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle or Quantum Weirdness to confuse, mystify or "refute" an opponent. See "Red Herring."
18. **Excluded Middle:** A corrupted argument from logos that proposes that since a little of something is good, more must be better (or that if less of something is good, none at all is even better). E.g., "If eating an apple a day is good for you, eating an all-apple diet is even better!" or "If a low fat diet prolongs your life, a zero-fat diet should make you live forever!"  The opposite of this fallacy is that of **Excluded Outliers**, where one arbitrarily dismisses examples or results that disprove one's standpoint by simply describing them as "Weird," "Outliers," or "Atypical."
19. **False Analogy**: The fallacy of incorrectly comparing one thing to another in order to draw a false conclusion. E.g., "Just like an alley cat needs to prowl, a normal adult can’t be tied down to one single lover."

The opposite of this fallacy is the **Sui Generis Fallacy**, a postmodern stance that rejects the validity of analogy and of inductive reasoning altogether, because any given person, place, thing or idea is "sui generis" i.e., unique, in a class unto itself.

1. **Finish the Job:**The dangerous contemporary fallacy that an action or standpoint (or the continuation of the action or standpoint) may not be questioned or discussed because there is "a job to be done," falsely assuming all "jobs" are meaningless but never to be questioned. Sometimes those involved internalize ("buy into") the "job" and make the task a part of their own ethos.  (E.g., "Ours is not to reason why / Ours is but to do or die.") Related to this is the "**Just a Job"** fallacy. (E.g., "How can torturers stand to look at themselves in the mirror?  But, I guess it's OK because for them it's just a job.")   (See also "Blind Loyalty," "The Soldiers' Honor Fallacy" and "Argument from Inertia.")
2. **Free Speech Fallacy:** The infantile fallacy of defending one's statements by whining, "It's a free country, isn't it?  I can say anything I want to!" An extreme case of this is the "Safe Space," where it is not allowed to refute, challenge or even discuss another's arguments because that might be too uncomfortable or "triggery" for emotionally fragile individuals.
3. **Gaslighting:** A vicious fallacy of logic, deliberately distorting facts, memories, scenes or events in order to disorient and to make a vulnerable other doubt his/her sanity. This fallacy is named after the 1938 stage play "Gas Light," also known as "Angel Street."
4. **Guilt by Association:** The fallacy of trying to refute or condemn someone's standpoint, arguments or actions by evoking the negative ethos of those with whom one is identified or of a group, party, religion or race to which he or she belongs or once associated with. A form of Ad Hominem Argument. (E.g., "Don't listen to her. She's a Republican so you can't trust anything she says.")  An extreme instance of this is the**"For my enemies, nothing" Fallacy**, where perceived "enemies" are*always* wrong and must be conceded nothing, not even the time of day, e.g., "He's a Republican, so even if he said the sky is blue I wouldn't believe him."
5. **The Half Truth** (also Card Stacking, Stacking the Deck, Incomplete Information). A corrupt argument from logos, the fallacy of consciously selecting, collecting and sharing only that evidence that supports one's own standpoint, telling the strict truth but deliberately minimizing or omitting important key details in order to falsify the larger picture and support a false conclusion.(e.g. “The truth is that Ciudad Juárez, Mexico is one of the world's fastest growing cities and can boast of a young, ambitious and hard-working population, mild winters, a dry and sunny climate, low cost medical and dental care, a multitude of churches and places of worship, a delicious, spicy local cuisine and a swinging nightclub scene. Taken together, all these facts clearly prove that Juárez is one of the world’s most desirable places for young families to live, work and raise a family.”)  See also, Confirmation Bias.
6. **Hero-Busting** (also, "The Perfect is the Enemy of the Good") under which, since nothing and nobody in this world is perfect there are not and have never been any heroes: Washington and Jefferson held slaves, Lincoln was a racist, Karl Marx had a kid by the housemaid, Martin Luther King Jr. had an eye for women too, Lenin condemned feminism, the Mahatma drank his own urine (ugh!), the Pope is wrong on same-sex marriage and women's ordination, Mother Teresa loved suffering and was wrong on just about everything else too, etc., etc  Also applies to the now near-universal political tactic of ransacking everything an opponent has said, written or done since childhood in order to find *something* to misinterpret or condemn (and we all have *something!*). An early example of this latter is deftly described in Robert Penn Warren's classic novel, *All the King's Men*. This is the opposite of the "Heroes All" fallacy.
7. **Heroes All** (also Everyone's a Winner). A contemporary fallacy that *everyone* is above average or extraordinary. A corrupted argument from pathos (not wanting anyone to lose or to feel bad). Thus, every member of the Armed Services, past or present, who served honorably is a national hero, every student who competes in the Science Fair wins a ribbon or trophy, and every racer is awarded a winner's yellow jersey. This corruption of the argument from pathos, much ridiculed by American comedian Garrison Keeler, ignores the fact that if everybody wins *nobody* wins, and if everyone's a hero *no one's* a hero. The logical result of this fallacy is that, as author Alice Childress writes, "a hero ain't nothing but a sandwich." See also the "Soldiers' Honor Fallacy."
8. **I Wish I Had a Magic Wand:** The fallacy of regretfully (and falsely) proclaiming oneself powerless to change a bad or objectionable situation.. E.g., "What can we do about gas prices? As Secretary of Energy I wish I had a magic wand, but I don't" [shrug] .

Or, "No, you can't quit piano lessons. I wish I had a magic wand and could teach you piano overnight, but I don't, so like it or not, you have to keep on practicing." The parent, of course, ignores the possibility that the child may not want or need to learn piano. See also, TINA.

1. **Job's Comforter Fallacy:**The fallacy that since there is no such thing as chance and we (I, my group, or my country) are under special protection of heaven, any misfortune or random natural disaster that we suffer must be due to someone's secret sin or open wickedness. The opposite of the Appeal to Heaven, this is the fallacy employed by the Westboro Baptist Church members who protest fallen service members' funerals all around the United States. See also, Magical Thinking.
2. **Just Plain Folks:**This corrupt modern argument from ethos argues to a less-educated or rural audience that the one arguing is "just plain folks" who "speaks plainly" and thinks like the audience, and is thus worthy of belief, unlike some "double-domed professor," "Washington bureaucrat," "tree-hugger" or other despised outsider who "doesn't think like we do" or "doesn't share our old-fashioned values."  This is a counterpart to the Ad Hominem Fallacy and occasionally carries a distinct flavor of xenophobia or racism as well. This also includes the fallacy that "We're just plain folks so we need to keep our heads down and not get involved in the big things of this world, like politics, demonstrations or protests." See also the Plain Truth Fallacy.
3. **Just Do it.  (**also**, "Find a way;" "I don't care;" "Accomplish the mission;" "By Any Means Necessary." )**A pure, abusive Argumentum ad Baculam (argument from force), in which someone in power arbitrarily waves aside or overrules the moral objections of subordinates and orders them to accomplish a goal by any means required, fair or foul  The clear implication is that unethical or immoral methods should be used. E.g., "You say there's no way you can finish the dig on schedule because there's an old unmarked graveyard under the excavation site? Well, find a way! I don't want to know *how* you do it, just do it! This is a million dollar contract and we need  it done by Tuesday."  See also, Plausible Deniability.
4. **Law of Unintended Consequences**(also, "Every Revolution  Finally Ends up Eating its own Young")**:** In this very dangerous, archly pessimistic postmodern fallacy the bogus "Law of Unintended Consequences," once a semi-humorous satirical corollary of "Murphy's Law," is elevated to to the status of an iron law of history. This fallacy arbitrarily proclaims *a priori* that since we can never know *everything* or foresee *anything*, sooner or later in today's "complex world" unforeseeable adverse consequences and negative side effects (so-called "unknown unknowns") will *always* end up blindsiding and overwhelming, defeating and vitiating any and all "do-gooder" efforts to improve our world. Instead, we must always expect defeat and be ready to roll with the punches by developing "grit" or "resilience" as a primary survival skill. This nihilist fallacy is a practical negation of the the possibility of *any*argument from logos. See also, TINA.
5. **Lying with Statistics**: The contemporary fallacy of using true figures and numbers to “prove” unrelated claims. (e.g. "College tuition costs have actually never been lower. When expressed as a percentage of the national debt, the cost of getting a college education is actually far lower today than it was in 1965!"). A corrupted argument from logos often preying on the public's perceived or actual mathematical ignorance. This includes the **Tiny Percentage Fallacy**, that an expense that is quite significant in itself somehow becomes insignificant simply because it's a tiny percentage of something larger.  E.g., a consumer who would choke at spending a dollar extra for two cans of peas will typically ignore $50 extra on the price of a car, or $1000 extra on the price of a house simply because these differences are "only" a tiny percentage of the much larger amount being spent.  Historically, sales taxes or value-added taxes have successfully gained public acceptance and remain "under the radar" because of this latter fallacy. (See also Half-truth,  Snow Job, and Red Herring.)
6. **Magical Thinking** (also, the Sin of Presumption):: An ancient but deluded fallacy of logos, that when it comes to "crunch time," provided one has enough faith, prays hard enough, does the right rituals, or "claims the promise," God will always work a miracle at the request of the True Believer. In practice this nihilist fallacy denies the existence of a rational or predictable universe and thus the possibility of *any* argument from logic. See also, Positive Thinking, the Appeal to Heaven, and the Job's Comforter fallacy. .
7. **Mala Fides** (**Arguing in Bad Faith;**also**Sophism**):  Using an argument that the arguer himself or herself knows is not valid.  E.g., An unbeliever attacking believers by throwing verses from their own Holy Scriptures at them , or a lawyer arguing for the innocence of someone whom s/he knows fully well to be guilty. This latter is a common practice in American jurisprudence, and is sometimes portrayed as the worst face of "Sophism."  Included under this fallacy is the fallacy of  **Motivational Truth**, deliberately lying to "the people" to motivate them toward some desirable action (using evil discursive means toward a good material end).  A particularly bizarre and corrupt form of this latter fallacy is **Self Deception.** in which one deliberately and knowingly deludes oneself.
8. **Moral Licensing:**The contemporary ethical fallacy that one's consistently moral life, good behavior or recent especially-significant sacrifice earns him/her the right to commit an immoral act without repercussions, consequences or punishment. E.g., "I've been good all year, so one bad won't matter," or  "After what I went through, God knows I need this."  See also Argument from Motives.  The opposite of this fallacy is the (excessively rare in our times) ethical fallacy of **Scruples,** in which one obsesses to pathological excess about one's accidental, unrecognized, unrepented or unforgiven sins and because of them, the seemingly inevitable prospect of eternal damnation.
9. **Moving the Goalpost:**A fallacy of logos, demanding a certain degree of proof or evidence and then when this is offered, demanding more, different or better evidence in order to settle an argument or accept a in fact, scientists don't exactly know which neurons are involved in speech.standpoint.
10. **MYOB** (Mind Your Own Business; You're Not the Boss of Me;  "So What?", The Appeal to Privacy), The contemporary fallacy of arbitrarily terminating any discussion of one's own standpoints or behavior, no matter how absurd, dangerous, evil or offensive, by drawing a phony curtain of privacy around oneself and one's actions. A corrupt argument from ethos (your own). (E.g., "Sure, I was doing eighty and weaving between lanes on Mesa Street--what's it to you? You're not a cop, you're not my nanny. It's my business to speed, and your business to get the hell out of my way.  Mind your own business!" Or, "Yeah, I killed my baby. So what? Butt out!  It's none of your business!") Rational discussion is cut off because "it is none of your business!" See also, "Taboo." The counterpart of this is "**Nobody Will Ever Know,**" (also "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas;." or the Heart of Darkness Syndrome) the fallacy that just because nobody important is looking (or because one is on vacation, or away in college, or overseas) one may freely commit immoral, selfish or negative acts at will without expecting any of the normal consequences or punishment . Author Joseph Conrad graphically describes this sort of moral degradation in the character of Kurtz in his classic novel, *The Heart of Darkness*.
11. **Name-Calling:**A variety of the "Ad Hominem" argument.The dangerous fallacy that, simply because of who one is, any and all arguments, disagreements or objections against one's standpoint or actions are automatically racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, bigoted, discriminatory or hateful. E.g., "My stand on abortion is the only correct one. To disagree with me, argue with me or  question my judgment in any way would only show what a pig you really are." Also applies to refuting an argument by simply calling it a "fallacy," or declaring it invalid without proving *why*it is invalid, or summarily dismissing  arguments or opponents by labeling them "racist," "communist," "fascist," or some other negative name without further explanation . A subset of this is the **Newspeak** fallacy, creating identification with a certain kind of audience by inventing racist or offensive, sometimes military-sounding nicknames for common enemies, e.g., "The damned RINO's are even worse than the Libs and the Dems." Or, "In the Big One it took us only five years to beat the J\*ps and the Jerries, so a decade and a half after 9er/11 why is it so hard for us to beat a raggedy bunch of Hajjis and Towel-heads?" See also, "Reductionism," "Ad Hominem Argument," and "Alphabet Soup."
12. **No Discussion** (also No Negotiation, the Control Voice, Peace through Strength, Fascism):  A pure Argumentum ad Baculam that rejects reasoned dialogue, offering either instant, unconditional compliance/surrender or defeat/death as the only two options for settling even minor differences. E.g., "Get down on the ground, *now*!" or "We don't talk to terrorists." This deadly fallacy falsely paints real or potential "hostiles" as monsters devoid of all reason, and far too often contains a very strong element of "machismo" as well. I.e. "A real, muscular leader never resorts to pantywaist pleading, apologies, fancy talk or argument. That's for lawyers, liars and pansies and is nothing but a delaying-tactic. A real man stands tall, talks straight, draws fast and shoots to kill."  The late actor John Wayne frequently portrayed this fallacy in his movie roles. See also, The Pout.
13. **Non-recognition:** A deluded fallacy in which one deliberately chooses not to publicly "recognize"  ground truth, usually on the theory that this would somehow reward evil-doers if we recognize their deeds as real. Often the underlying theory is that the situation is "temporary" and will soon be reversed. E.g., In the decades from 1949 until Richard Nixon's time the United States officially refused to recognize the existence of the most populous nation on earth, the People's Republic of China because America supported the Republic of China government on Taiwan instead and hoped they might return to power on the mainland. More than half a century after the Korean War the U.S. still refuses to pronounce the name of or recognize a nuclear-armed DPRK (North Korea). An individual who does this risks institutionalization (e.g., "I refuse to recognize Mom's murder, 'cuz that would give the victory to the murderer! I refuse to watch you bury her! Stop!  Stop!) but tragically, such behavior is common in international relations. See also the State Actor Fallacy, Political Correctness, and The Pout.
14. **Non Sequitur**: The fallacy of offering reasons or conclusions that have no logical connection to the argument at hand (e.g. “The reason I flunked your course is because the government is now printing purple five-dollar bills!*Purple!*”). (See also Red Herring.)

Occasionally involves the breathtaking arrogance of claiming to have special knowledge of why God, fate or the Universe is doing certain things. E.g., "This week's earthquake was obviously meant to punish those people for their great wickedness."

1. **Nothing New Under the Sun** (also, “Seen it all before,” "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.")  Fairly rare in contemporary discourse, this deeply cynical fallacy, a corruption of the argument from logos, falsely proposes that there is not and has never been any real novelty in this world,. Any argument that there are truly “new” ideas or phenomena is judged  *a priori* to be unworthy of serious discussion and dismissed with a sigh and a wave of the hand as "the same old same old."  E.g., “[Sigh!] Idiots! Don't you see that the current influx of refugees from the Mideast is just the same old Muslim invasion of Europe that’s been going on for 1,500 years?”   Or, “Libertarianism is nothing but anarchism, which, in turn, is nothing but the ancient Antinomian Heresy. Like I told you before, there's nothing new under the sun!”
2. **Overgeneralization** (also Hasty Generalization, Totus pro Partes Fallacy**)**where a  broad generalization that is agreed to be true is offered as overriding all particular cases, particularly special cases requiring immediate attention. E.g., "Doctor, you say that this time of year a  flu vaccination is essential. but I would countert that ALL vaccinations are essential" (implying that I'm not going to give special attention to getting the flu shot).  Or, attempting to refute "Black Lives Matter" by replying, 'All Lives Matter," the latter undeniably true but still a fallacious overgeneralization in that specific and urgent context.  "Overgeneralization" also includes the the **Pars pro Toto Fallacy**,. the stupid but common fallacy of incorrectly applying one or two true examples to all cases. E.g. “Some college student was tailgating me all the way up North Main Street last night. This proves that all college students are lousy drivers and that we should pull their driver’s licenses until they either grow up, learn to drive or graduate!”
3. **Panic:** The contemporary fallacy that one's actions, no matter how evil, somehow don't "count" because "I panicked!"  A false generalization of a specialized concept of American law into larger reality.
4. **The Paralysis of Analysis** (also, Procrastination, the Nirvana Fallacy): A postmodern fallacy that since *all*data is never in, any conclusion is always provisional, no legitimate decision can *ever*be made and any action should always be delayed until forced by circumstances. A corruption of the argument from logos.

(See also "Law of Unintended Consequences.")

1. **The Passive Voice Fallacy**: A fallacy from ethos, concealing agency behind the curtain of the grammatical passive voice, e.g., "It has been decided that you will be let go," arrogating an ethos of cosmic inevitability to a very fallible decision made by identifiable and fallible human beings.
2. **Paternalism:**A fallacy of ethos, arbitrarily dismissing or ignoring another's arguments as "childish" or "immature;" taking an a condescending attitude of superiority toward opposing arguments or opponents themselves.  Also refers to the sexist fallacy of dismissing a woman's argument because she is a woman, e.g., "Oh, it's that time of the month..."
3. **The Plain Truth Fallacy;**(also, the Simple Truth fallacy, Salience Bias, the KISS Principle [Keep it Short and Simple], the Executive Summary): A fallacy of logos favoring familiar or easily comprehensible data, examples and evidence over that which is more complex and unfamiliar but much closer to the truth. E.g,, "Ooooh, look at all those equations and formulas!  Just boil it down to the Simple Truth," or "I don't want your damned philosophy lesson!  Just tell me the Plain Truth about why this is happening!"  A more sophisticated version of this fallacy arbitrarily proposes, as did Scottish rhetorician John Campbell, that the Truth is always simple by nature and only malicious enemies of the Truth would ever seek to make it complicated. (See also, The Snow Job.) The opposite of this is the postmodern fallacy of **Ineffability** or **Complexity**, arbitrarily declaring that today's world is so complex that there is no truth, or that Truth (capital-T), if indeed such a thing exists, is unknowable except by God and is thus forever inaccessible and irrelevant to us mere finite mortals. (See also the Paralysis of Analysis.)
4. **Plausible Deniability:**A vicious fallacy of ethos under which someone in power forces those under his or her control to do some questionable or evil act and to then falsely assume or conceal responsibility for that act in order to protect the ethos of the one in command. E.g., "Make sure he meets with a fatal accident and that it doesn't get back to me. And be sure that I know nothing about it!"
5. **Playing on Emotion** (also, the Sob Story, the Pathetic Fallacy, or the"Bleeding Heart" fallacy): The classic fallacy of pure argument from pathos, ignoring facts and calling on emotion alone. E.g., “If you don’t agree that witchcraft is a major problem just shut up, close your eyes for a moment and picture in your mind all those poor moms crying bitter tears for their innocent tiny children whose cozy little beds and happy tricycles lie all cold and abandoned, just because of those wicked old witches! Let's string’em all up!” The opposite of this is the archly cynical fallacy of**Apathy**, where any and all legitimate arguments from pathos are brushed aside because, in the words of country music singer Jo Dee Messina, "My give a damn is busted."

Also associated with the Pathetic Fallacy is the fallacy of **Refinement** ("*Real* Feelings"), where certain classes of living beings such as plants and animals, infants, babies and children, slaves, deep-sea sailors, farmworkers, convicts, refugees, addicts, terrorists, foreigners, the poor, or "the lower classes" in general are deemed incapable of experiencing *real* pain like we do, or of having any "*real* feelings" at all, only brutish appetites, lusts, instincts, drives, cravings and automatic tropisms. See also, They're Not Like Us.

1. **Political Correctness**("PC"): A postmodern fallacy, a counterpart of the "Name Calling" fallacy, supposing that the nature of a thing or situation can be changed by simply changing its name. E.g., "Today we strike a blow for animal rights and against cruelty to animals by changing the name of ‘pets’ to ‘animal companions.’" Or "Never, ever play the 'victim' card, because it's so manipulative and sounds so negative, helpless and despairing. Instead of saying 'victims,' we are 'survivors.'" (Of course, when "victims" disappear then perpetrators conveniently vanish as well!)

Also applies to other forms of  political "**Language Control,"** e.g., being careful *never* to refer to North Korea or ISIS/ISIL by their rather pompous proper names ("the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" and "the Islamic State," respectively) or to the Syrian government as the "Syrian government," (Instead, it's always the "Regime."). See also, Non-recognition.

1. **Positive Thinking Fallacy:**An immensely popular but deluded modern fallacy of logos, that because we are "thinking positively" that in itself somehow biases external, objective reality in our favor even before we lift a finger to act. See also, Magical Thinking. Note that this particular fallacy is often part of a much wider closed-minded, sometimes cultish ideology where the practitioner is warned against paying attention to to or even acknowledging the existence of "negative" evidence or counter-arguments against his/her standpoints. In the latter case rational argument or refutation is most often futile.
2. **Post Hoc Argument**: (also, "Post Hoc Propter Hoc;"  "Too much of a coincidence," the "Clustering Illusion"): The classic paranoiac fallacy of attributing imaginary causality to random coincidences, concluding that just because something happens close to, at the same time or just after something else, the first thing is caused by the second. E.g., "AIDS first emerged as a problem back in the very same era when Disco music was becoming popular--that's too much of a coincidence: It proves that Disco caused AIDS!"
3. **The Pout** (also The Silent Treatment, Noncooperation):. An Argumentum ad Baculam that arbitrarily rejects or gives up on dialogue before it is concluded. The most benign nonviolent form of this fallacy is found in passive-aggressive tactics such as slowdowns, boycotts, sitdowns and strikes.  The United States recently ended a half-century long political Pout with Cuba. See also "No Discussion" and "Nonrecognition."
4. **Red Herring**: An irrelevant distraction, attempting to mislead an audience by bringing up an unrelated but usually emotionally loaded issue. E.g., "In regard to my several bankruptcies and recent indictment for corruption let’s be straight about what’s really important: *Terrorism!*Vote for me and I'll fight those terrorists anywhere in the world!"  Also applies to raising unrelated issues as falsely opposing the issue at hand, e.g., "You say 'Black Lives Matter," but I say 'Zika Matters!'" when the two contentions are in no way opposed, only competing for attention. See also Availability Bias.
5. **Reductionism**: (also, Oversimplifying, Sloganeering): The fallacy of deceiving an audience by giving simple answers or bumper-sticker slogans in response to complex questions, especially when appealing to less educated or unsophisticated audiences. E.g., "If the glove doesn’t fit, you must vote to acquit." Or, "Vote for Snith. He's tough on terrorism!"
6. **Reifying**: The fallacy of treating imaginary categories as actual, material "things." (E.g., "The War against Terror is a fight to the death between Freedom and Absolute Evil!") Sometimes also referred to as "Essentializing" or “Hypostatization.”
7. **The Romantic Rebel**(also, the Truthout Fallacy**;**the Brave Heretic; the Iconoclastic Fallacy):The contemporary fallacy of claiming truth or validity for one's standpoint solely or primarily because one is heroically standing up to prevailing "orthodoxy," the current Standard Model, conventional wisdom, or whatever may be the Bandwagon of the moment; a corrupt argument from ethos. E.g., "Back in the day the scientific establishment thought that the world was flat, until Columbus proved them wrong!  Now scientific orthodoxy has us believing that ordinary water is nothing but H2,O. Are you going to believe them? Now they're frantically trying to suppress the truth that our drinking-water actually has nitrogen in it and causes congenital vampirism! And what about Area 51?"  The opposite of the Bandwagon fallacy.
8. **Scapegoating** (also, Blamecasting): The ancient fallacy that whenever something goes wrong there's always*someone* other than oneself to blame. Sometimes this fallacy is a practical denial of randomness or chance itself ("I don't care if it's an accident! Somebody's gonna pay for this!"), though more often scapegoating is cynically used to shield those truly responsible from blame. A particularly corrupt example of this is **Blaming the Victim,** in which one falsely casts the blame for one's own evil or questionable actions on those affected, e.g., "If you try so much as move an eyelash I'll have to kill you and you'll be to blame!" or "You dressed immodestly and that *made* me rape you!  It's all your fault!"
9. **Scare Tactic** (also Paranoia): A variety of Playing on Emotions, a raw appeal to fear. A corrupted argument from pathos.(E.g., "If you don't shut up and do what I say we're all gonna die! In this moment of crisis we can't afford the luxury of criticizing or trying to second-guess my decisions when our very lives and freedom are in peril!  Instead, we need to be united as one!") See also, "We Have to do *Something!*."
10. **Sending the Wrong Message**: A dangerous fallacy of logos that attacks a given statement, argument or action, no matter how true or necessary, because it will "send the wrong message." In effect, those who use this fallacy are openly confessing to fraud and admitting that the truth will destroy the fragile web of illusion that has been created by their lies. E.g., "Actually, we're losing the war against drugs hands down, but if we publicly admit it we'll be sending the wrong message."  See also, "Mala Fides."
11. **Shifting the Burden of Proof**.  A fallacy of logos that challenges an opponent to disprove a controversial claim rather than asking the person making the claim to defend his/her own argument. E.g., "Space-aliens are everywhere among us masquerading as true humans, even right here on campus! I dare you prove it isn't so! See?  You can't!  That means  what I say has to be true." See also, Argument from Ignorance.

1. **Slippery Slope**(also, the Domino Theory): The common fallacy that "one thing inevitably leads to another." E.g., "If you two go and drink coffee together one thing will lead to another and soon enough you'll be pregnant and end up spending your life on welfare living in the Projects," or "If we close Gitmo one thing will lead to another and before you know it armed terrorists will be strolling through our church doors with suicide belts!"
2. **Snow Job** (also Information Bias):The fallacy of “proving” a claim by overwhelming an audience with mountains of irrelevant facts, numbers, documents, graphs and statistics that look extremely impressive but which they cannot be expected to understand or evaluate. This is a corrupted argument from logos. See also, "Lying with Statistics."
3. **Soldiers' Honor Fallacy**. The ancient fallacy that all who wore a uniform, fought hard and followed orders are worthy of some special honor or glory or are even "heroes," whether they fought for freedom or fought to defend slavery, marched under Grant or Lee, Hitler, Stalin or McArthur, fought to defend their homes, fought for oil or to spread empire, or even fought against and killed U.S. soldiers!. A corrupt argument from ethos (that of a soldier), closely related to the "Finish the Job" fallacy ("Sure, he died for a lie, but he deserves honor because he followed orders and did his job to the end!"). See also "Heroes All." This fallacy was recognized and decisively refuted at the Nuremburg Trials after World War II but remains powerful to this day nonetheless. See also "Blind Loyalty." Related is the **State Actor Fallacy**, that those who fight and die for a country (America, Russia, Iran, the Third Reich, etc.) are worthy of honor or at least pardonable while those who fight for a non-state actor (abolitionists, guerrillas, freedom-fighters, jihadis) are not and remain "terrorists" no matter how noble or vile their cause, until or unless they are adopted by a state after the fact.
4. **Star Powe**r (also Testimonial, Questionable Authority, Faulty Use of Authority): In academia, a corrupt argument from ethos in which arguments, standpoints and themes of academic discourse are granted unquestioned validity or condemned to obscurity solely by whoever the reigning "stars" of the discipline are at the moment, e.g., "Network Theory has been thoroughly criticized and is so last-week!. This week everyone's into Safe Spaces, Trigger Warnings, and Pierce's Theory of Microaggressions. Get with the program." (See also, the Bandwagon.) At the popular level this also refers to a corrupt argument from ethos in which popular support for a standpoint or product is established by a well-known or respected figure (e.g. a star athlete or entertainer) who is not an expert and who may have been well paid to make the endorsement (e.g., “Olympic gold-medal pole-vaulter Fulano de Tal uses Quick Flush Internet-shouldn’t you?" Or, "My favorite rock star warns that vaccinations spread rickets, so I'm not vaccinating *my* kids!" ). Includes other false, meaningless or paid means of associating oneself or one’s product or standpoint with the ethos of a famous person or event (e.g., “Try Salsa Cabria, the official taco sauce of the Winter Olympics!”).
5. **Straw Man** (also "The Straw Person" ""The Straw Figure"): The fallacy of setting up a phony, weak or ridiculous parody of an opponent's argument and then proceeding to knock it down with a wave of the hand. E.g., "Vegetarians say animals have feelings like you and me. Ever seen a cow laugh at a Shakespeare comedy? Vegetarianism is nonsense!" Or, "Pro-choicers hate babies!" Or, "Pro-lifers hate women and want them to spend their lives barefoot, pregnant and chained to the kitchen stove!" This fallacy is only too common in American politics and popular discourse.
6. **Taboo**: The fallacy of unilaterally declaring certain arguments, standpoints or actions "sacrosanct" and not open to discussion, or arbitrarily taking some tones, standpoints or options "off the table" beforehand. (E.g., "I won't talk to you until you calm down," "Let's *no*t discuss my sexuality," "Don't bring my drinking into this," or "Before we start, you need to know I won't allow you to play the race card or to attack my arguments by claiming 'That's just what Hitler would say!'")  Also applies to discounting or rejecting certain arguments and evidence out of hand because they are "against the Bible" or other sacred doctrine (See also the A Priori Argument). This fallacy occasionally degenerates into a separate, distracting argument over who gets to define the parameters, tone and taboos of the main argument, though at this point reasoned discourse most often breaks down and the entire affair becomes a naked Argymentun ad Baculam. See also, Tone Policing.
7. **They're all Crooks**. The contemporary fallacy of refusing to get involved in public politics because all politicians and politics are allegedly corrupt, ignoring the fact that if this is so it is precisely because "decent" people like you and me refuse to get involved, leaving the field open to the "crooks" by default. An example of Circular Reasoning.
8. **They're Not Like Us**(also, Stereotyping, Xenophobia. Prejudice): A badly corrupted, discriminatory argument from ethos where facts, arguments, experiences or objections are arbitrarily disregarded, ignored or put down without serious consideration because those involved "are not like us," or "don't think like us." E.g., "It's OK for Mexicans to earn a buck an hour in the maquiladoras.  If it happened here I'd call it brutal exploitation and daylight robbery but south of the border, down Mexico way they're different from us."  Or, "You claim that life must be really terrible over there for terrorists to ever think of blowing themselves up with suicide vests just to make a point, but remember that they're different from us. In their religion they don't think about life and death the same way we do." A variety of the Ad Hominem Fallacy, most often applied to non-white or non-Judeochristian populations.
9. **The "Thousand Flowers" Fallacy** (also, "Take names and kick butt."): A sophisticated "Argumentum ad Baculam" in which free and open discussion and "brainstorming" is temporarily allowed and encouraged not in order to hear and consider opposing views, but rather to "smoke out," identify and later punish or liquidate dissenters. The name comes from the Thousand Flowers Period in Chinese history when Communist leader Chairman Mao Tse Tung applied this policy with deadly effect.
10. **TINA** (There Is No Alternative. Also "That's an order," "Get over it," "It is what it is," or the "Fait Accompli"). A very common contemporary extension of the either/or fallacy in which someone in power quashes critical thought by announcing that there is no realistic alternative to a given standpoint, status or action, arbitrarily ruling any and all other options out of bounds, or announcing that a decision has been made and any further discussion is insubordination, disloyalty, disobedience or simply a waste of precious time when there's a job to be done. (See also, "Taboo;" "Finish the Job.")  Often a variety of the Argumentum ad Baculam.
11. **Tone Policing.**A corrupt argument from pathos,the fallacy of judging the validity of an argument primarily by its emotional tone of delivery. I.e., a valid argument remains valid whether it is offered calmly and deliberatively or in a "shrill" or even "hysterical" tone, whether stated in professional or academic language or screamed out with a bull-horn and peppered with vulgarity. Conversely, a highly urgent, emotional matter is still urgent even if argued coldly and rationally.  This fallacy creates a false dichotomy between reason and emotion and thus implicitly favors those who are not personally involved or emotionally invested in an argument. This fallacy is frequent in contemporary discourse, particularly responses to discourse of protest.
12. **Transfer**: (also, Name Dropping) A corrupt argument from ethos, falsely associating a famous person, place or thing with an unrelated standpoint (e.g. putting a picture of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on an advertisement for mattresses, using Genghis Khan, a Mongol who hated Chinese, as the name of a Chinese restaurant, or using the Texas flag to sell cars or pickups that were made in Detroit, Kansas City or Kyoto). This fallacy is common in contemporary academia in the form of using a profusion of scholarly-looking citations from respected scholars to lend a false gravitas to otherwise specious ideas or text.

(See also "Star Power.")

1. **Tu Quoque**("You Do it Too!"; also, Two Wrongs Make a Right): A corrupt argument from ethos, the fallacy of defending a shaky or false standpoint or excusing one's own bad action by pointing out that one's opponent's acts, ideology or personal character are also open to question, or are perhaps even worse than one's own. E.g., "Sure, we may have tortured prisoners and killed kids with drones, but we don't cut off heads off like they do!" Or, "You can't stand there and accuse me of corruption! You guys are all into politics and you know what you have to do to get reelected!"  Related to the Red Herring and to the Ad Hominem Argument.
2. **Venting**(also, Letting off Steam)**:** In the Venting fallacy a person argues that her/his words are or ought to be above criticism because s/he was "only venting," even though this very admission implies that the one "venting" was, at long last, freely expressing his/her true, uncensored opinion about the matter in question. See also, the Affective Fallacy.
3. **We Have to Do *Something***: (also,  the Placebo Effect, "Security Theater"). The dangerous contemporary fallacy that when "People are scared / People are angry / People are fed up" it becomes necessary to do something, *anything*, at once even if it is an overreaction, is a completely ineffective, inert placebo, or actually makes the situation worse, rather than "just sitting there doing nothing." (E.g., "Banning air passengers from carrying ham sandwiches onto the plane and making parents take off their newborn infants' little pink baby-shoes probably does nothing to deter potential hijackers, but people are scared and we have to do *something* to respond to this crisis!") This is a badly corrupted argument from pathos. (See also "Scare Tactic.")
4. **Where there’s Smoke, there’s Fire** (also Hasty Conclusion, Jumping to a Conclusion). The dangerous fallacy of drawing a snap conclusion and/or taking action without sufficient evidence. E.g., “My neighbor Jaminder Singh wears a long beard and a turban and speaks a funny language. Where there's smoke there's fire. That’s all the evidence we need that he's a terrorist! Let's burn his store down!” A variety of the “Just in Case” fallacy.

The opposite of this is the "Paralysis of Analysis."

1. **The Wisdom of the Crowd**(also, The Magic of the Market; the Wikipedia Fallacy). A very common contemporary fallacy that individuals may be wrong but "the crowd" or "the market" is infallible, ignoring historic examples like witch-burning, lynching, and the market crash of 2008. This fallacy is why most colleges and universities ban students from using Wikipedia as a serious reference work.
2. **The Worse Negates the Bad** (also, Be Grateful for What You've Got): The logical fallacy that a bad situation stops being bad because it could be far worse, or because someone, somewhere has it even worse than you. E.g., "I cried because I had no shoes, until I saw someone who had no feet." Or, "You're protesting because you earn only $7.25 an hour? Well, I happen to know there are people in Uttar Pradesh who are doing the very same work you're doing for one tenth of what you're making, and they're grateful just to have a job!  You need to shut up, put down that picket sign, go back to work and  thank heaven every day for what little you've got!"
3. **Worst Case Fallacy**(also, "Just in case."): A pessimistic fallacy by which one’s reasoning is based on an improbable, far-fetched or even completely imaginary worst-case scenario rather than on reality. This plays on pathos (fear) rather than reason. E.g., "What if armed terrorists were to attack your county grain elevator tomorrow morning at dawn? Are you ready to fight back?  Better stock up on assault rifles and ammunition today, just in case!" The opposite of this is the Positive Thinking Fallacy.
4. **Zero Tolerance** (also, Zero Risk Bias, Disproportionate Response, Even One is Too Many, Judenrein). The contemporary fallacy of declaring an "emergency" and promising to devote unlimited resources to stamp out a limited or even nonexistent problem. E.g., "I just read about an actual case of cannibalism somewhere in this country. That's disgusting, and even one case is way, way too many! We need a Federal Taskforce against Cannibalism with a million-dollar budget and offices in every state, a national SCAN program in all the grade schools (Stop Cannibalism in America Now!), and an automatic double death penalty for cannibals; in other words, zero tolerance for cannibalism in this country!" This is a corrupt and cynical argument from pathos, almost always politically driven, a particularly sinister variety of the "We Have to do Something" fallacy. (See "Playing on Emotions," "Red Herring," and also the "Big Lie Technique.")