LOGICAL FALLACIES

WHAT IS A LOGICAL FAL LACY?
The term ‘fallacy’ refers to error in reasoning. ‘Reasoning’ refers to the way we put together an argument or explanation. When there is a flaw or error in the way we put this argument together, we call this a fallacy. In addition, when that flaw appears to be correct – when it is presented within an argument as logical, accurate, or seems to “make sense” – it is referred to as a “logical fallacy”.

HERE IS A LIST OF COMMON LOGICAL FALLACIES:

**BANDWAGON/ APPEAL TO PEOPLE** suggests that something is correct because everyone is doing it.

**STRAW MAN FALLACY** is committed when a person ignores or weakens the original argument by disregarding the evidence. The original argument is replaced with an *overstated, misrepresented, or simplified* version; the weakened or simplified argument is then attacked, proven faulty and dismissed.

**AN APPEAL TO TRADITION** is when you assume that because something has always been done a certain way, it is therefore correct to do it that way.

**A SCARE TACTIC** is used when fear is used *in place of* evidence. A Scare Tactic instills fear in people in order to persuade them of the credibility of an argument.

**APPEALS TO AUTHORITY** are often legitimate; experts in a field are *usually* better able to judge evidence than those with no background. However, sometimes appealing to an authority is a fallacy: Sometimes the authority is the wrong authority for the example.

For example, it is a fallacy if one tries to support their claim by citing an authority who is *not* an expert in that field, or by citing an *anonymous* authority whose field of expertise or research cannot be verified (checked). Another problem could be citing an authority who has known biases (financial or emotional), a history of unethical behavior, or a lack of integrity.

**A False Dilemma** is committed when a speaker restricts the options presented, in order to avoid considering all of the possible choices. It is also a false dilemma to present a choice that appears to be *exclusive*, when in reality you could have both.

**Ad Hominem/Attack to Person** is a statement or attack against the *person speaking* and *not the argument itself*.

**A Red Herring** attempts to distract the audience from the relevant issue by introducing a nonrelated or trivial argument.

**A False Cause** is when one improperly concludes a cause and effect relationship among *related* items.

**A Hasty Generalization** is committed when a general conclusion is made based on an inappropriately small sample or body of evidence.

**Circular Argument/Begging the Question** is when someone concludes their argument with the original statement he/she began with. Usually, we apply reason in order to work *through* a problem and arrive at new conclusion or increase our degree of certainly about our evidence. A circular argument bases its conclusion on material *assumed* as true in the original claim.

**An Appeal to the Select Few** is an example of an *Appeal to the People*, but it is the opposite of a Bandwagon Fallacy. *Snob Appeal* suggests that something is correct because the *select few* or the elite are doing it. **Slippery Slope Arguments** are not always fallacies, but they are fallacies when it is falsely presumed (thought) that the original action will necessarily lead (either empirically or logically) to the undesired result.

**The Appeal to Ignorance** logical fallacy uses a *lack of* evidence to support a claim. Since there is no conclusive evidence to the contrary, the arguer claims that their conclusion is correct and should be accepted.

Additional Resources:
