

Informal fallacies:

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Often related to patterns of reasoning that are not problematic

What are fallacies of relevance, and fallacies of weak induction?

Fallacies of relevance (Chapter 5) are informal fallacies where an irrelevant consideration is offered as though it should be persuasive -- and in many cases it ends up being persuasive.

What are fallacies of relevance, and fallacies of weak induction?

Fallacies of weak induction (Chapter 6) are informal fallacies where a premise that provides at best weak inductive support is offered as though it offers strong support.

## Genetic Fallacy

The genetic fallacy is committed when someone attempts to criticize an argument or view or theory not by dealing with it directly, but by citing its (perhaps questionable) origin.

## Genetic Fallacy

Did you see the governor's plan for bolstering the economy? Most people don't know this, but this plan is from Sun Tzu's The Art of War. I don't think it would be a good idea to plan our economy according to ideas from a book about war.

## Genetic Fallacy

I've noticed that everyone who is for abortion has already been born.  
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Most of the support for tax cuts for higher tax brackets comes from people who are wealthy. So clearly we should oppose these cuts.

## Ad Hominem

This fallacy is committed when the arguer ignores the merits of his/her opponent's argument, and rather makes some reference to the arguer himself/herself, and assumes that this somehow discredits the argument.

## Ad Hominem: Abusive

When the arguer verbally abuses his/her opponent, rather than addressing their argument.

**Ad Hominem:  
Abusive**

Principal Smith: I think your child should be held back a grade. He is younger than his classmates, and the material seems to be a bit too advanced for him.

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Principal Smith: I think your child should be held back a grade. He is younger than his classmates, and the material seems to be a bit too advanced for him.

Parent: Screw you! You fascist dip shit!

**Ad Hominem:  
Abusive**

Pete: Have you read the new book by Amanda Hugginkiss?

**Ad Hominem:  
Abusive**

Pete: Have you read the new book by Amanda Hugginkiss?

Rick: Are you kidding? She's dumber than a box of wet hammers.

**Ad Hominem  
Circumstantial**

When the arguer, rather than addressing their opponent's argument, merely points out that their opponent's circumstances (usually, but not always, circumstances that produce ulterior motives) may be influencing their position.

**Ad Hominem  
Circumstantial**

I know that the administrator said that filling out all these forms was crucial to obtaining financial support for the university. But these forms take a lot of time. Of course an administrator wants there to be more paperwork. Without more forms to process, they'd all be out of work.

### Ad Hominem Circumstantial

Senator Kaholic has argued persuasively in favor of federal subsidies for dairy products. But the Senator comes from Wisconsin, which has a huge dairy industry. So of course she would argue for that position. Therefore, it seems reasonable to vote the subsidies down.

### Ad Hominem Tu Quoque

When A argues that some activity is wrong, and B responds by merely pointing out that A executes that activity him/herself.

### Ad Hominem Tu Quoque

Parent: You shouldn't smoke, it's bad for your health.

### Ad Hominem Tu Quoque

Parent: You shouldn't smoke, it's bad for your health.

Smart-ass child: Dad, you hypocrite! You smoke 3 packs a day!

### Ad Hominem Tu Quoque

Editors of the Sacramento Bee have accused our company of being one of the worst water polluters. But the Bee is responsible for more pollution than we are. They own Axis Chemicals, from whom they get their ink, and dump tons of chemicals into the river every day.

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) - Comedian Carol Burnett has filed a copyright infringement suit against the makers of Fox TV's cartoon sitcom "Family Guy" over an episode poking fun at the performer and her variety show from the 1960s and '70s.

The lawsuit, filed on Thursday in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, claims "Family Guy" violated Burnett's exclusive rights to her name and likeness by depicting her signature cleaning-woman character in a segment last April without her consent.

The suit, which seeks at least \$2 million in damages, also says the cartoon episode used a "slightly altered version" of the copyrighted musical theme to "The Carol Burnett Show" without permission from the 73-year-old entertainer.

A spokesman for 20th Century Fox Television, which produces "Family Guy," said on Friday the suit was without merit and that references to Burnett and her show in an 18-second sequence of the cartoon amounted to parody.

"'Family Guy,' like the 'Carol Burnett Show,' is famous for its pop culture parodies and satirical jabs at celebrities," the studio said in a statement. "We are surprised that Ms. Burnett, who has made a career of spoofing others on television, would go so far as to sue 'Family Guy' for a simple bit of comedy."

## Ad Hominem Association

An ad hominem association is committed when the arguer claims that his opponent (or someone involved in the issue) is associated with some person, group or event with negative connotations, and claims that this supports their own position. It is a fallacy if the association is not relevant.

Barbara has argued that we should protect the rain forest, since, allegedly, if we do not, then we will be causing damage to the environment. But my private investigator has just told me that Barbara has been secretly donating money to neo-Nazi groups throughout the region. If that doesn't discredit her position, I don't know what does.

Barbara has argued that she would be a good choice for mayor since she is unbiased and would help to fairly ease racial tensions in our city. But you may recall Barbara as the woman who gave money to the Neo-Nazi movement in last year's election.

## Ad Populum

When arguer appeals to bandwagoning, snobbery, or fear of being different than the majority in order to influence the arguer.

### Ad Populum Bandwagoning

20 million people own a Ford. Maybe they know something you don't.

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Ruffles: America's best-selling chip.

### Ad Populum Bandwagoning

Tonight, a special episode of ER that everyone will be talking about tomorrow.

### Ad Populum Snobbery

Only the ultimate in fashion could complement the face of Elizabeth Hurley. Spectrum Sunglasses -- for the beautiful people.

### Appeal to Pity/Spite

An appeal to pity fallacy is committed when the arguer attempts to influence the listener not by providing good reasons for the conclusion, but by mentioning sad or difficult circumstances that are irrelevant to the issue.

Professor Wüthrich, I know I bombed the exams, but surely I deserve to pass the class. My grandmother died, my car broke down, and my dog got hit by the Amtrak train from Fresno. I can't control things like this!!

I think we should give the academy award to Russell Crowe. I mean, he should have received it last year for *The Insider*, and he has had such a hard time getting any good roles for a long time.

I don't think that Lawrence Phillips should get the Heisman Trophy this year. After all, he was accused of rape and a number of other violent crimes during his time at Nebraska.

### Straw Man

This fallacy is committed when the arguer distorts an opponent's position, directs arguments at this distorted position, and takes this to have defeated the opponent's real argument.

Ms. Smith has argued against prayer in the public schools. Obviously she advocates atheism. But atheism is what they have in Russia. Atheism leads to the suppression of all religions and the replacement of God by an omnipotent state. Is this what we want? Of course not. Ms. Smith's position is nonsense.

The student committee has presented us with an argument favoring alcohol privileges on campus. What do the students want? Is it their intention to stay boozed up from the day they enter as freshmen to the day they graduate? Do they want a chain of bars across the campus? Such a proposal is ridiculous!

### Alternate Description

This fallacy is committed when the arguer responds to an opponent's argument by providing an alternate description of an object or event, and implying that under the new description the opponent's argument is flawed. It is a fallacy if the original description is more appropriate.

My ex-wife got all bent out of shape last week because I took our eight-year-old son to a topless bar. She said I was being a bad influence. But the courts said she has to let me spend time with my son, and I was just trying to spend time with him! How can spending time with your loving father be a bad influence?

My client is not a drug dealer. He is simply trying to provide for his family. How can the court put someone in jail for trying to provide for his family??!!

As for the accusations that the administration has been harassing student run organizations, they are groundless. We have been actively enforcing the standards that the student government itself established for the operation of these organizations. For example, we shut down Classical Notes because they were forcing their employees to work through finals week.

### Begging the question

This fallacy occurs when an arguer attempts to establish some conclusion P by appealing to some premises such that one or more of the premises illicitly assumes that P is true.

Bill: Of course God exists.  
 Jean: How do you know?  
 Bill: It says so in the Bible.  
 Jean: So? Why should we believe the Bible?  
 Bill: The Bible is the word of God, and God doesn't lie!

Why are you for capital punishment?  
 It's simple to prove you wrong. Killing human beings is always wrong. Capital punishment is killing a human being. Therefore, capital punishment is wrong.



Mike said that he wasn't sick last week, but just had allergies. Yeah, right! He comes in sneezing and coughing, and then the next day 2 people get sick, and if Mike hadn't come in then they wouldn't have become sick -- and he says that he just had allergies!

## Additional examples

The Japanese have claimed that our import restrictions on cars and steel are protectionist and threaten a trade war. What hypocrites! The Japanese use hundreds of schemes to block import of dozens of products, including computers, cars and fruit! So it is OK if we have import restrictions too.

"To begin with, let me say how much I appreciate the thorough discussion you set forth there. Valuable though it may be for a discussion of updating and clarifying policy for the future, however, your argument is compromised by the fact that your interpretation would both benefit you personally and justify an action already taken."

Former acting dean of DAH  
Eric van Young

Benson: Don't you think you're too young to be President?

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Quayle: I'm the same age as Jack Kennedy.

Benson: Don't you think you're too young to be President?

Quayle: I'm the same age as Jack Kennedy.

Benson: I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. You, Senator, are no Jack Kennedy.

Governor Ventura has argued that we should provide free health care for the poor. But Ventura will do anything to get his name in the paper, which is no doubt why he is making these arguments. So we should not take his position seriously.

A letter to the editor in today's paper claimed that the Governor's plan to keep developers away from the forests in the northern part of the state was drafted by the Sierra Club. But actually the plan was initially proposed by the logging industry, who probably wants to exploit the region for their own interests. So the plan must be bad for the environment.

A: Hey, you should sign our Save the Planet initiative.

B: Get bent, do-gooder!

Starr has accused President Clinton of lying under oath and engaging in other unethical practices. But Starr himself has acted unethically, as this report shows, and has probably lied about having sex with interns too.

Of course God exists! Every culture throughout history has had religious beliefs. How could all these people be wrong?

Senator Collins supports the proposal for the new B-2 bomber. But his argument in favor of this project should be discounted, since the primary bidder on the B-2 bomber comes from the state he represents.

You have heard Congressman Atkins' argument in favor of reduced military expenditures. But surely you won't take them seriously. Atkins, as you know, is an admitted alcoholic, and his wife, who is a very decent person, just divorced him.

Mr. Jones, surely I'm qualified for the open position in your accounting department. I need the money desperately, and if I don't get the job soon I know I'll have a nervous breakdown.