

LESSON PLAN: Political Commercials

Handout #1: Logical Fallacies

Student Name _____

Class Period _____

Date _____

Appeal to Authority

- cites an authority who is not qualified to have an expert opinion.
- cites an expert when other experts disagree on the issue.
- cites an expert by hearsay only.

"Firemen support Jones as the best choice for our town's future."

(Firemen would be experts only on the town's fire safety.)

Your example _____

Appeal to Force

- predicts dangerous outcomes if you follow a course other than the speaker's.

"This kind of economic policy will lose you your job - and hurt your children's future."

(Is there evidence that it might actually build prosperity and bring additional jobs?)

Your example _____

Appeal to Popularity

- also known as "Bandwagon"
- holds an opinion to be valuable because large numbers of people support it.

"Polls show that Americans prefer their current health care system."

(Are there options? Could a majority be missing the boat?)

Your example _____

Attacking the Person

- also known as "Ad Hominem"
- attacks the person making the argument instead of the argument.
- attacks the person making the argument because of those with whom he associates.
- insinuates that the person making the argument would stand to gain by it.

"Certainly he's in favor of a single tax - he's rich!"

(But could it be that a single tax might benefit others too?)

Your example _____

False Dilemma

- offers a limited number of options - usually two - when there are really more choices.

"Either we continue the failed war against drugs and lose another generation or make marijuana legal."

(Are there other ways to deal with the drug issue?)

Your example _____

Hasty Generalization

- uses a sample too small to support the conclusion.

"We've seen here in Smallville's widget factory that free trade doesn't help the American worker."

(How about the millions of American workers elsewhere?)

Your example _____

Slippery Slope

- threatens a series of increasingly dire consequences from taking a simpler course of action.

"First it's gun show laws, and then they'll come to confiscate all guns, and then we lose democracy altogether."

(Do gun laws imply eventual confiscation?)

Your example _____