

Lecture 11 Informal fallacies: Genetic, Ad Hominem, Ad Populam

- 1. What are 'informal fallacies'?**
- 2. First three fallacies**
- 3. Further examples**

What are 'informal fallacies'?

Common errors of reasoning where the problem is not a formal problem

Often related to patterns of reasoning that are not problematic

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. (Ronald Reagan)

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.

Parent: Screw you! You fascist dip shit!

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 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 had 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.

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 dumps tons of chemicals into the river every day.

Ad Populam

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

Ad Populam Bandwaggoning

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

Ruffles: America's best-selling chip.

Ad Populam Snobbery

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

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

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.

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.

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 mind. You, Senator, are no Jack Kennedy.

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

B: Get bent, do-gooder!

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.