

Project: Finding Fallacies

For this project, you'll write a 500-to-1000-word essay exploring the nature of "fallacies."

Directions. Choose a topic that you are interested in, and know something about (examples: a specific sport, music, your job, your favorite TV show or book, an academic subject, etc.). You'll use your knowledge of this topic to explore "fallacies." Here's what you'll be doing:

1. In a paragraph or so, explain your choice of topic, and provide an argument that you are an "expert" on this topic. (Basically, just say how you learned about it).
2. Now, formulate five (or more) fallacious arguments (or "ways of reasoning") that somehow relate to this topic. These fallacies should include:
 - a. A fallacy of **affirming the consequent** (see chapter 3).
 - b. A fallacy of **begging the question** (see chapter 3).
 - c. A fallacy of **hasty generalization** (see chapter 4).
 - d. A fallacy of **argument from ignorance** (see chapter 4).
 - e. A **causal fallacy** of some type (see chapter 4). (Examples include gambler's fallacy, slippery slope, and post hoc).
 - f. (Optional) other fallacies of your choice.
3. Each fallacy should have at least TWO premises, and should be put in "standard form" (see below).
4. After each fallacy, explain WHY it is fallacy, and how it could be changed/improved.

Reminder: Standard Form

To put an argument in standard form, you should do the following:

1. Identify the conclusion and write it down on its own line. Write down the premises above the conclusion in whatever order is most natural. Include any implicit content (content that the arguer hasn't stated explicitly but is nevertheless part of the argument).
2. Express each premise or conclusion as a simple, declarative sentence. It is often helpful to break complex sentences into multiple simple statements. You might need to replace pronouns (like "it" or "he" or "they") with regular nouns, to make everything perfectly clear.
3. Include all and only that content relevant to the argument. Indicator words should not be included, nor should rhetorical devices (e.g., "Everyone knows that...").
4. It is often helpful to reword for clarity. When doing so, however, be sure to follow the **principle of charity**, which requires that you try and make the argument as convincing as possible (even though the arguments for this assignments are going to be bad ones, all things considered).

Project Requirements

1. The project should be between **500** and **1000 words**. I won't penalize you for going over, though please make an effort to be concise as possible, given the material. Make things "as simple as possible, but no simpler."
 - a. A-level essays are often (though not always!) closer to 1,000 words than 500.
2. Material I've provided you with in our "textbook" (which contains both my lecture notes and other readings) can be cited informally by identifying the chapter, page, and author (if needed). If you

choose to use outside resources, please use a standard citation style (such as APA, MLA, or Chicago), and provide a full citation. As a rule, **no more than 15%** of your paper should be quotes.

3. Please don't use the words or ideas of others without proper attribution. Please see the syllabus for details on plagiarism and academic integrity policy. I regularly use www.turnitin.com to check for plagiarism or related issues.
4. Essays that reproduce the handouts will not receive good grades. Nor will essays that simply "give your thoughts" on an issue (without demonstrating knowledge of the class material, and the ability to apply it to novel cases). Since the project is meant to help you understand the class material, you should try to use your own words and examples to explain what you've learned.
5. Please submit your essays as MS Word files. I will grade them on a **first-submitted, first-graded** basis.

Grading Rubric

The project is worth FIVE points. Your grade will depend on how well you do each of the following:

1. How well are you able to **explain** and **apply** the relevant course material? By the end of the essay, the reader should come away with a clear idea of what you've learned in the class, and how it applies to whatever problem/issue you are writing about.
2. To what extent does your essay offer a coherent and creative response to the problem/question? In an argumentative essay, for example, you should make an (evidence-based) **argument** for a **thesis** and be sure to consider any potential objections fully.

Factors such as your paper's **structure** (e.g., intro/body paragraphs/conclusion) and **language** (e.g., grammar, style) are important to the extent they influence the above. The grading criteria are as follows:

Grade	Description
0	No answer was submitted or evidence of plagiarism.
3 or below (D or F)	Fails to meet minimal requirements regarding content (e.g., addresses a related question) or word count. Essays that simply report what you "believe" or "feel" without providing an <i>argument</i> may receive grades in this range.
C (3.5 points)	It meets minimal requirements regarding both content (it offers an answer to the assigned question and attempts to defend this answer) and word count. However, there may be some significant errors or omissions when explaining relevant class material or providing a detailed, complete response to the question.
B (4 points)	Fully meets content and word count requirements and provides satisfactory explanations of most major arguments and concepts from class. There are no significant errors in argumentation or explanatory gaps. However, explanations/examples/arguments may, at points suffer from a lack of clarity or completeness compared to A essays.
A (5 points)	Meets and exceeds minimum requirements. The essay's treatment of course material shows a complete mastery of the relevant content and provides a creative, well-thought-out response.

I will grade essays in the order they are submitted (first-come, first-serve).