In his book *Introduction to Logic,* Harry Gensler focused on misleading and illogical arguments in the chapter labeled “Fallacies and Argumentation.” This chapter is focused almost solely on recognizing and defining all the possible types of fallacies found in arguments than imparting Gensler’s stance on any particular philosophical issue. After reading through this chapter a few times I was able to pinpoint a claim made by Gensler that he undoubtedly believes and applies to everything, “Inconsistency is the most important fallacy –the most deceptive error of thinking” (Gensler, 69). He thinks this is the most important variable in an argument because it is a precursor to any conclusion that a person can come to; the premises, stated or implied, must be consistent and coincide with one another to sufficiently support any conclusion. Gensler considers why inconsistency is such a prevalent problem when it is easily identifiable and can demolish any conclusion or belief associated with said inconsistency. He goes on to state that the reason for the presence of most inconsistencies is due to various beliefs being active at different times in any given person’s mind. It is difficult to notice and avoid inconsistency when you do not have all of your thoughts written down to compare next to one another, which is why Gensler focuses so intently on the structure and fallacies of arguments. If more individuals know how to organize an argument, with consistent premises and a conclusion inline with those premises, then inconsistency will not be as widespread an issue. The other fundamental reason Gensler believes inconsistency to be the most vital fallacy is due to the widely accepted principle of universalizability. “Universalizability: Whatever is right in one case also would be right in any exactly or relevantly similar case, regardless of the individuals involved” (Gensler, 72). Gensler gives the Good Samaritan parable as an example of this principle and the roots, and significance, it shares with inconsistency. If you believe something under a certain set of circumstances, then, in order to preserve consistency, you must believe that same concept under other circumstances. No matter how minute an inconsistency may seem to appear, it is never a small concern and must not be overlooked because it will never lead to a logical argument. Despite his strong belief regarding the importance of consistency, when I was reading and analyzing Gensler’s writing I came across something that created inconsistency in his own writing. One of the fallacies that was analyzed in this chapter was *hasty generalization*, or stereotyping. Just pages later, when Gensler stated his view on the importance of consistency, he followed with, “students writing on philosophical issues for the first time often express inconsistent views” (Gensler, 69). Later on in the text, when examining the construction of an argument, he stated, “many of your fellow students probably don’t even know what an argument is” (Gensler, 74). Although these statements used the words “often” and “probably” they were still generalizations about students as a group and therefore do not line up with the author’s views on avoiding fallacies and maintaining consistency. Consequently, I started to vaguely question the consistency Gensler’s fallacy explanations in this text.

My view on logical arguments and consistency line up very closely with Gensler’s statement on the importance of recognizing inconsistency. I too believe that a claim that any person asserts must have reasons that connect and comply with one another. Without reliable premises, that also flow in a logical manner, a conclusion is useless and remains an illogical claim. It is easiest to discover inconsistency within one’s own beliefs if the thoughts are written down so they can be analyzed simultaneously. It is, undeniably, very difficult to consider multiple thoughts at one time, which could cause inconsistency to be more easily overlooked. Without any sort of education in philosophy and the various forms of fallacies, it can be difficult to discover these fallacies in your own reasoning. Before I learned about fallacies in philosophy I would not have been able to identify some arguments as illogical due to errors, but inconsistency is much more relative to common knowledge than the majority of the other subsets of fallacies. It is here that I disagree with Gensler. As a student, I believe that a majority of my peers are aware of inconsistency and, even if present in their own beliefs, will exempt these inconsistent views when discussing philosophy as to maintain a consistent argument, at least consistent from an outsider’s view. Most people do not like to admit that beliefs they hold are wrong and non-compliant with each other so, in my opinion, it is much easier to identify these inconsistencies privately and restructure your thoughts to become consistent and logical. Until this is done, a logical conclusion and argument can not be created. The structure of a logical argument is definitely based in the consistency of the premises. With that being said, I also believe that entertaining inconsistency in your beliefs at some point is necessary to learn, as well as to reform your beliefs to achieve a more well-rounded view of the world from a philosophical standpoint.

Reference:

Gensler, H. (2001). Fallacies and Argumentation. In Introduction to Logic (2nd ed.). Retrieved February 12, 2016.