PRACTICE EXAM #1

**Identification**

**(for each of the following arguments or argumentative situations identify what fallacy is being committed Note: there will be no unused fallacies from the list)**

**(hint: be sure to pick the fallacy that BEST FITS the argument. Give priority to those fallacies with more specific requirements. You must use every fallacy once!)**

**Fallacies**

1. I think we should hire Karen Cox as the new third-grade teacher. She lives here in the community, she has children in school here, she loves to work with children, and she has been active in the PTA.

**Using the Wrong Reasons**

1. I don’t see why you have criticized this novel as implausible. There isn’t a single incident in it that couldn’t have happened.

**Question-Begging Language**

1. STUDENT: The opinions of the students are completely ignored in the process of determining both curricular changes and social programs. The students should have a much greater voice in campus governance, because we have a very great stake in this institution, and we think that we have a positive contribution to make.

PROFESSOR: The faculty are the ones who need a greater voice. Professors can be fired without explanation, and they have no control over who is promoted or given tenure. Their opinions about budgetary allotments are completely ignored. Why aren’t you concerned about the injustice the *faculty* is experiencing?

**Two-Wrongs Fallacy**

1. If the faculty and staff of this college aren’t willing to endorse my reelection to Congress, it may be a long time before you get that new off-ramp that you’ve been wanting – one that leads directly from the interstate to your campus.

**Appeal to Self-Interest**

1. Many people without Ph.D.’s are much better teachers than people with Ph.D.’s. Getting a Ph.D. doesn’t make one a better teacher. Therefore, I don’t think we should hire a person with a Ph.D. to fill this position in our chemistry department.

**Genetic Fallacy**

1. SEAN: The criminal mind simply cannot be rehabilitated. The prisons are wasting time and resources.

JEANNIE: That’s not true, I know several criminals who have been completely rehabilitated as a result of their prison experiences.

SEAN: Well, then, those people must never have had a truly criminal mind.

**Drawing the Wrong Conclusion**

1. I’m sorry, Ms. Dobkins, but we cannot approve your loan application. We must assume that you don’t have good credit because there’s no record indicating that you have ever made any monthly installment or credit card payments.

**Arguing from Ignorance**

1. PROFESSOR WILSON: I think the administration is entirely justified in dismissing Professor Frederick. He’s never prepared for his lectures, he makes off-color remarks to his female students, he grades arbitrarily, and he isn’t even very friendly.

PROFESSOR DAY: I disagree. He’s very friendly to me; he says “hello” to me every time I see him.

**Trivial Objections**

1. RESORT MANAGER: I’m sorry, but you can’t bring that dog in here. We have a rule against any animals here.

MARK: But he’s my wife’s guide dog; she’s blind.

RESORT MANAGER: I’m sorry, but we have to enforce the rule or we would have a whole menagerie here.

**Rationalization**

1. Some students want our single-sex residence halls to be completely open to members of the opposite sex, twenty-four hours a day. Others want a closed-dorm policy, that is, one that makes the dorms off-limits to any member of the opposite sex, any time. Wouldn’t the best solution be to have the dorms open about twelve hours a day, perhaps from noon to midnight?

**Fallacy of the Mean**

1. PROFESSOR TAVERNER: Evolutionary development has demonstrated that only the fittest of organisms survive.

STUDENT: How has that been demonstrated?

PROFESSOR TAVERNER: Well, if organisms survive, they must be fit, right?

STUDENT: Yes, but how do you know that it is only the most fit of the organisms that survive?

PROFESSOR TAVERNER: Those creatures that have survived obviously were better fitted for survival than those that did not survive.

**Arguing in a Circle**

1. I just don’t understand why you’re opposing federal aid to parochial schools. We Catholics know how badly our schools are in need of financial resources. If this bill for financial assistance to parochial schools doesn’t pass the Congress, it will probably mean that many of our schools will have to close their doors.

**Question-Begging Definition**

1. DAUGHTER: If two people really love each other and have committed themselves to each other, I don’t see any reason why they shouldn’t live together. Tom and I really do love each other, Mother. Someday we may get married, but right now we simply want to be close to each other.

MOTHER: The way I see it, you’re just looking for an excuse to go to bed together. Your whole attitude about this thing makes sex something cheap!

**Attacking a Straw Man**

1. I think that we ought to give the Teacher of the Year award to Professor Raley. Ever since his wife died last year, he just hasn’t been the same. I think that this award would really lift his spirits. He always seems so sad. I think this year has been hard for him. And he’s not really that bad a teacher.

**Manipulation of Emotions**

1. David says to his colleague Richard: “When are you going to show some moral courage and boycott Wal-Mart?”

**Appeal to Force or Threat**

1. The way I see it, we must either spend enough money on our football program to make us competitive with some of the better teams in this region or simply drop the program altogether.

**False Alternatives**

1. The voters of Massachusetts overwhelmingly defeated a proposed gun-control law in the state, which proves that gun control is not a good idea.

**Fallacy of Composition**

1. The University of Virginia is one of the best universities in this country, so it must have an outstanding philosophy department. Why don’t you apply to do graduate work in philosophy there?

**Fallacy of Division**

1. Don’t tell me how to raise my children! I don’t care how much you’ve studied child psychology; if you don’t have any children of your own, you can’t possibly understand kids.

**Ignoring the Counterevidence**

1. PROFESSOR TO STUDENT: Why should we meet to discuss your grade on your last test? I read it very carefully, and the grade I gave you is the grade that you deserved. I don’t need to hear about how I might have misunderstood you.

**Is-Ought Fallacy**

1. Do you really expect me to dignify your comments against my proposal by responding to them? They simply confirm what I’ve always thought about you, anyway. Your thinking is shallow, naïve, and uninformed. And I feel that you’re wasting my time.

**Poisoning the Well**

1. According to our judicial system, a person is innocent until proven guilty. Hence, the investigation of William Smith, the president’s security advisor, was simply an effort by the media and the Senate to damage the reputation of an innocent man.

**Misuse of a Principle**

1. CHALLENGER: That’s why you should vote Democrat in this years election. A better deal: better skills, better jobs, better wages.

INCUMBENT: Nice slogan Papa John.

(NOTE: this is a true story)

**Resort to Humor or Ridicule**

1. I wasn’t invited, but I wouldn’t have gone anyway. I just don’t care to spend my time with such snobs. Besides, I’ve already been skiing twice this winter.

**Abusive Ad Hominem**

1. TONYA: Just stop yelling at me! The only way that we’re ever going to solve any problem is to sit down and talk calmly about it. Screaming at me won’t help in any way!

MARK: Well, you don’t yell! You just cry all the time! Do you think that’s any better!

**Red Herring**

1. I didn’t lie to you; I merely stretched the truth a bit.

**Distinction Without a Difference**

1. But, officer, you shouldn’t give me a parking ticket for parking here! People park here all the time and never get tickets. I myself have been parking here for several months. No one pays any attention to the “No Parking” sign in this alley.

**Appeal to Common Opinion**

1. Tal, you can’t be serious about going to Annapolis! Our family has always been army – your brother, your father, your uncles, and even your grandfather. All of them, as you well know, went to West Point.

**Appeal to Tradition**

1. MARSHA: If that were a child of mine, I would have given him a good spanking rather than just sitting down and talking with him about his behavior as you did.

DAVID: Why do you think that your method is better?

MARSHA: I just think that if you spare the rod, you spoil the child.

**Fallacy of Popular Wisdom**

1. Your honor, Dr. Chamberlain is a respected psychiatrist and has been a friend of the defendant’s family for many years. She is in a unique position to be able to testify as to the state of the defendant’s mental health at the time of the crime.

**Appeal to Irrelevant Authority**

1. ELIJAH: Don’t you have any other houses in our price range to show us?

REAL ESTATE BROKER: I’ve shown you everything in town that is available. Well, there is one other *tacky* little house that we could look at…if you want.

**Complex Question**

1. No, I don’t want my boy to join the Boy Scouts. Did you know that the Boy Scouts were organized as a paramilitary organization? They even trained the young boys in accordance with a military scouting manual. The word *scouts* in Boy Scouts literally refers to military scouts. None of my children is going to join such an organization with my blessing.

**Equivocation**