of no meaning in government and academia, which are themselves plagued with everyday examples of irrational thinking, unsupportable personal bias, and assumptions of immunity and, occasionally, omniscience.

Table 6 provides a basic overview of the types of logical fallacies most commonly observed in these settings and circumstances.

Table 6 Common Logical Fallacies in Politics, Network News, and other Spectator Sports

I. Fallacies of Distraction

A. False Dilemma: only two choices are given although in reality there are more than two options
B. Fallacy of Ignorance: the position that because something is not absolutely provable, it is must then be false
C. The Slippery Slope: a persuasive argument leading the audience along a series of increasingly unacceptable, although independent, consequences
D. The Complex Question: the conjoining of two unrelated points as a single proposition

II. Appeals to Motives in Place of Support

A. Appeal to Force: attempts are made to persuade listeners to agree by threats of force or retaliation
B. Appeal to Pity: attempts to persuade by claims for sympathy
C. Threat of Consequences: warning of undesirable consequences for disagreement
D. Prejudicial Language: attempts to influence by the attachment of value or moral goodness to an argument that should be neutral
E. Appeal to Popularity: an attempt to influence the listener by simply noting that the proposition is widely held to be true (and must therefore be true)

III. Deflecting Attention

A. Attacking the Person

1. A person's character is attacked in order to prejudice the audience against a proposition, although the proposition is unrelated to the proponent's character
2. A person's circumstances are noted in order to prejudice the audience against a proposition, although the proposition is unrelated to his circumstances
3. Claims are made that because a person does not practice what is preached, what is preached must be untrue

B. Fallacies of Authority

1. An person of authority is referred to, although he or she is not an expert in the area of discussion
2. Only one expert is quoted, although there are other experts in the field who disagree with the proposition
3. The authoritative position referred to was taken out of context
4. Appeal is made to an anonymous but supposedly knowledgeable authority (i.e., the authority is not identified)

IV. Style Over Substance:

A. The manner in which an argument is presented is intended to affect the credibility of the proposition or conclusion

B. The behavior of the advocate is intended to impress the audience so that it will accept the propositions without critical assessment

V. Inductive Fallacies

A. Hasty Generalization: a sample used in argument is too small to support an inductive generalization about a population

B. Unrepresentative Sample: the sample used is unrepresentative of the population as a whole

C. False Analogy: Objects or events being compared or contrasted are not adequately related to support such a relationship

D. Slothful Induction: the conclusion of a strong inductive argument is vigorously denied despite compelling evidence to the contrary

E. Fallacy of Exclusion: evidence which would change the outcome of an inductive argument is excluded from consideration

VI. Fallacies Involving Statistical Syllogisms

A. Accident: a generalization is applied when circumstance or other information suggests that there should be an exception

B. Converse Accident : an exception is applied in circumstances where a generalization should apply

C. Causal Fallacies

1. The 'Post Hoc Fallacy": because one thing follows another, it is held to cause the other; this is one of the most common errors made
2. Joint Effect: one thing is held to cause another when in fact they are both effects of another underlying cause (the "third factor effect")
3. Insignificance: one thing is held to be a cause of another, and although it contributes to the other thing, it is insignificant compared to other, more influential causes
4. Wrong Direction: the direction between cause and effect is reversed
5. Complex Cause: the cause identified is only a part of the entire cause of the effect

VII. Avoiding the Point

A. Begging the Question: the truth of the conclusion is assumed by the premises presented

B. Irrelevant Conclusion: an argument in defense of one conclusion instead proves a different conclusion

C. The Straw Man Fallacy: the author (often a politician) attacks an argument or position different from (and usually weaker than) their opponent's real argument or position

VIII. Fallacies of Ambiguity

A. Equivocation: the same term is used, often surreptitiously, with two different meanings or contexts

B. Amphiboly: the structure of a proposition is designed to allow two or more different interpretations

C. Accent: the emphasis on a word or phrase suggests a meaning that is contrary to what the proposition actually states

IX. Category Errors

A. Composition: because the attributes of one or more parts of a whole have a certain property, it is argued that the whole must have that property

B. Division: because the whole has a certain property, it is argued that one or more of the parts of the whole must have that property as well

X. Non-Sequiturs

A. Affirming the Consequent: arguments of the form

1. If A then B

2. B

3. Therefore A

B. Denying the Antecedent: arguments of the form

1. If A then B,

2. Not A

3. Thus Not B

C. Inconsistency: asserting that contrary or contradictory statements are both true (works especially well on political campaigns)

XI. Formal Syllogistic Errors

A. Fallacy of Four Terms: a syllogism has four terms instead of three

B. The Undistributed Middle: two separate categories are said to be connected because they share a common property

C. The Illicit Major: the predicate of the conclusion talks about all of something, but the premises only mention some cases of the term in the predicate

D. The Illicit Minor: the subject of the conclusion talks about all of something, but the premises only mention some cases of the term in the subject

E. The Fallacy of Exclusive Premises: a syllogism has two negative premises

F. Drawing an Affirmative Conclusion From a Negative Premise: verbal sleight of hand that subverts an argument that actually has merit, by use of verbal facility that obscures the illogic
G. Existential Fallacy: a particular conclusion is drawn from what can only be universal premises
H. Fallacies of Explanation
    1. Subverted Support: The phenomenon being explained doesn't even exist
    2. Non-support: Evidence for the phenomenon being explained is biased, either grossly or subtly
    3. Untestability: The theory or hypothesis employed cannot be tested, even in concept
    4. Limited Scope: The theory or hypothesis used explains only one thing but is implied to apply broadly
    5. Limited Depth: The theory or hypothesis used does not account for underlying causes

XII. Fallacies of Definition

A. Too Broad: The definition incorporates items which should not be included
B. Too Narrow: The definition does not include all the items which must be included
C. Failure to Elucidate: The definition is made more difficult to understand than the word or concept being defined would reasonably require
D. Circular Definition: The definition includes the term or concept being defined, within its own definition
E. Conflicting Conditions: The definition is itself self-contradictory

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The ability to identify the use of these fallacies in everyday life is a trainable capacity. Research carried out in England in the earlier part of the 20th century suggests that with the appropriate teaching methods, about three-quarters of pre-adolescent children are able to functionally employ logical reasoning techniques in novel situations. A review of the educational system in the United States, as