

READINGS FOR CM220: COLLEGE COMPOSITION TWO**UNIT 4**

Part 1. THE THREE APPEALS OF THE ARGUMENT PODCAST

**Part 2. HOW TO AVOID HASTY GENERALIZATIONS AND OTHER
LOGICAL FALLACIES**



THE THREE APPEALS OF ARGUMENT PODCAST (TRANSCRIPT)

Click the link for The Three Appeals of Argument Podcast:

<https://purdueglobalwriting.center/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/31threeappeals.mp3>

Greetings everyone. This is Kurtis Clements with another effective writing podcast. In this episode, I am going to discuss the three appeals of argumentative or persuasive writing. Before I begin, I want to point out that while some make distinctions between argument and persuasion, this podcast will be using the terms synonymously.

Many college writing assignments will ask you to persuade or to argue, and while it may seem relatively easy to express your view on an issue, doing so effectively actually takes skill and careful planning.

To this end, you will want to utilize a thoughtful combination of the three appeals of persuasive writing--logos, ethos, and pathos. Haven't heard of logos, ethos, or pathos? Well, if you were a Greek some three thousand years ago, you would likely have grown up with these terms, for it's at that time that Aristotle first shared his ideas on persuasive rhetoric. But the truth is you've probably been exposed to Aristotle's ideas for effective persuasion even if the language used to talk about such techniques was different.

Logos is simply an approach to argument that appeals to the readers sense of logic. When using this appeal the writer uses examples, facts, statistics, expert testimony, and/or personal experiences. Here's a brief example from a paper arguing for public smoking bans:

Few would disagree that smoking cigarettes is harmful to one's health. Smoking can cause cancer and emphysema. Smoking is known to cause heart disease. Smoking also contributes to birth defects. Smoking cigarettes is so harmful to one's health that the Surgeon General of the United States has a warning on every package of cigarettes informing consumers of the hazards of using the product. If smoking cigarettes is bad for the smoker then it must be bad for anyone inhaling the smoke-whether a smoker or not. This is why some states have laws against smoking cigarettes in a car with minors or not allowing smoking in restaurants: inhaling second-hand smoke is also not healthy for an individual. Since it's hard to dispute the harmfulness of cigarette smoking and smoke, then it stands to reason the public should be protected from the dangers of this product by not allowing individuals who choose to smoke to do so in public places.

Whether you agree or disagree with what the writer is trying to argue in this example, it's hard to dismiss the logic the writer uses. Right?

Another of the three appeals is ethos. **Ethos** is an approach to argument that attempts to show the writer as a fair-minded, concerned, and reliable individual. It's the reader's sense of the writer as trustworthy and credible that makes what he/she says convincing. One way writers generate ethos is by offering a level-headed discussion of the topic and using sound reasoning.

In an argumentative essay, if the writer bashes the “other side” without tact, then the writer’s credibility--ethos--will sink. To this end, always avoid name-calling or any kind of direct put-down of the other side. If, for example, you find fault with a position, refute that position and carefully develop your rationale. Instead of writing that anyone who does not like black licorice is narrow-minded, write something like this: Granted, while black licorice is not for everyone and may very well be an acquired taste, those who enjoy black licorice really enjoy black licorice and represent the kind of people who march to the beat of a different drummer.

Ethos is also created when the writer is an expert and/or the writer uses evidence from reliable sources--and thus the writer comes across as someone fair-minded and deserving of respect. If you were writing a paper in favor of a vegetarian diet and used evidence from sources such as

The Vegetarian Digest, The Journal of Vegetarianism, and Paul McCartney (the ex-Beatle and a famous vegetarian), how much ethos do you think you would have in the eyes of a carnivorous audience? The sources may very well contain reliable information, but they are also all clearly biased, right? What if you were going to make the same argument, but you used evidence from the Journal of American Medicine, The Harvard Medicine Review, and the Surgeon General of the United States, how much ethos would you have?

The last of the three appeals of argumentative writing is pathos. Pathos is an approach that appeals to the audience’s emotions. The idea is to stir up the feelings of readers as a way to gain their support for what the writer claims to be true about a subject.

Let’s say you were writing an essay on the need to adopt and enforce a national mandatory seatbelt law. To stir the emotions of readers in an attempt to convince your audience that what you have to say has merit, you could use pathos in this way:

Teddy Bero wasn’t wearing a seatbelt when the car he was driving skidded on an icy road and hit a utility pole; Bero was catapulted through his front windshield and died of blood loss from a severed jugular vein. The coroner reported he had no other injuries besides minor abrasions. Bob Nettleblatt wasn’t wearing a seat belt when a car rear-ended him at a stop sign. Nettleblatt slammed his head into his front windshield and required 137 stitches to close up the laceration; investigators at the scene said if he had been wearing a seat belt, he would have been virtually unhurt from the 2-mph rear end collision.

When you are writing to persuade, you need to recognize that in order for you to argue your position successfully, you need to balance the way you appeal to your audience. While it may be easy to appeal to your audience emotionally, getting readers weepy-eyed or boiling with rage, you need to ask yourself if that is the best way to make your case, if, in the end, using emotionally-charged content will ultimately help you win over your audience. Most arguments use some emotion, but the use of such content needs to be kept in check, and the way that is done is by using what Aristotle thought to be the most effective appeal--logos, an appeal to your audience’s sense of reason. Beyond this you need to consider your ethos – the sense of you as a fair-minded, credible writer. If you rely exclusively on emotional content, do not recognize that opposing views exist, or commit one or more logical fallacies, you will not have much ethos, and without ethos your argument will fall on deaf ears. A well-structured persuasive essay will utilize all three appeals in appropriate doses.



Please keep in mind that writing an argumentative essay requires, as I am sure you recognize, careful thought and preparation. You have to keep in mind that you are expressing an opinion that your audience does not share (or does not feel strongly about) and your purpose is to convince your audience that your opinion is valid. To do this you need to structure your argument effectively and appeal to your audience in ways that will best help your case.

Thanks for listening, everyone. Happy writing.

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HOW TO AVOID HASTY GENERALIZATIONS AND OTHER LOGICAL FALLACIES

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Fallacies are errors in reasoning (deliberate or not) that weaken an argument and, of course, the quality of the essay that contains the argument. Fallacious arguments seem dishonest whether or not the writer intended them to be. While fallacies may sound logical, they are far from it! To avoid using logical fallacies you must be able to understand and identify logical fallacies, so let's take a look at the following list of common fallacies, with examples.

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HASTY GENERALIZATION

Hasty generalizations are committed when a person draws a conclusion about a population based on a sample that is not large enough. A hasty generalization usually rests behind a stereotype—that is, a person or event is treated as typical of a whole class. For example, while it may be true that, based on your personal experience, that the only native Russians you know personally do not speak English very well, that is no basis for asserting that all Russians do not speak English very well.

Example of a Hasty Generalization

- Thomas failed at his first attempt to fix my computer network. Computer programmers don't know what they're doing.

Rationale for Avoiding This Logical Fallacy

- Give Thomas another chance or two before condemning him and the whole profession of computer programming. One piece of evidence against one person is not enough to support a generalization about an entire profession.

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AD HOMINEM (PERSONAL ATTACK OR NAME CALLING)

"Ad Hominem" is Latin for "against the man" or "against the person." This fallacy is committed when an argument is rejected on the basis of some irrelevant fact (a personal attack or name calling, most often) about the person presenting that argument.

Example of an Ad Hominem Attack

- Senator Johnson's new tax bill has some good points, but I oppose it. Johnson has been divorced five times and he may be charged with fraud in the future.

Rationale for Avoiding This Logical Fallacy

- How does Johnson's personal life relate to his tax legislation? Sometimes, imperfect people have innovative ideas that may be worth considering. Moreover, personal attacks and name-calling distract from the topic or issue at hand.

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FALSE AUTHORITY (ERRONEOUS APPEAL TO AUTHORITY)

This fallacy is committed when an argument depends on an authoritative person who is truly not an expert on the issue in dispute. The fact that a high-energy physicist won the Nobel Prize is no reason to attach any special weight to her views on the causes of cancer or the legalization of marijuana.

Example of False Authority

- "I'm not a doctor but I play one on T.V. Use this aspirin."

Rationale for Avoiding This Logical Fallacy

- How can an acclaimed actor be an expert on aspirin? Simply because someone is famous or plays a doctor on television does not make that person credible or qualified to speak about a topic or idea he or she has no direct experience with, especially if said actor is being paid to endorse a product or stance.

This fallacy can be corrected if it satisfies the following:

1. The claim being made by the person is within his or her area(s) of expertise.
2. There is an adequate degree of agreement among the other experts in the subject in question.
3. The person in question is not significantly biased.
4. The area of expertise is a legitimate area or discipline.

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SLIPPERY SLOPE

This argument claims that one event, action or idea will inevitably lead to another, usually with terrible consequences. Often we encounter this mode of argument in the public debates over handgun control, censorship, etc. This fallacy implies that the first step necessarily leads to the second, and so on down the slope to disaster.

Examples of a Slippery-Slope Argument

- If we let students wear T-shirts with obscene messages on them, the next thing we know they'll be smoking marijuana behind the gymnasium.

- “We have to stop the tuition increase! The next thing you know, they’ll be charging \$40,000 a semester!”

Rationale for Avoiding This Logical Fallacy

- Someone who puts forth a slippery slope claim sees one change as inexorably leading to a more drastic, horrible change when, in fact, the two events may be unrelated, or one event may not necessarily have a catastrophic result.

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CIRCULAR REASONING (BEGGING THE QUESTION)

This fallacy attempts to support a statement by simply repeating the statement in different or stronger terms. In this fallacy, the reason given is nothing more than a restatement of the conclusion that poses as the reason for the conclusion.

Examples of Circular Reasoning

- George Bush is a good communicator because he speaks effectively.

Rationale for Avoiding This Logical Fallacy

- Notice how the writer draws a conclusion from the assumption he/she has already made. The writer claims “George Bush is a good communicator”; yet, their reason to support that claim is that “he speaks effectively.” Isn’t the writer’s reason the same as the claim being made? Therefore, the writer needs to explain and prove what makes George Bush an effective speaker and a good communicator.

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EITHER-OR SIMPLIFICATION (FALSE DICHOTOMY)

Either-or arguments falsely claim that there are only two sides of an argument or two possible outcomes. This type of argument is also known as a false dichotomy.

Example of An Either-Or Simplification

- We should build the new house using an original plan, or we shouldn’t build it at all.

Rationale for Avoiding This Logical Fallacy

- Such a pair of choices leaves no room for other options. The dilemma presented is a false one because there almost always are more than two options in any given situation.

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