Logical Fallacies: Short Cuts in Logic
Adapted by the Writing Center from Professor Mageean's Handout

Fallacies of Sequence (Inductive Fallacies):

1. **"Non Sequitur"**: "It does not follow."—Posits a cause-and-effect relationship which has no logical connection.

   EXAMPLE: "Our product is so good, it was even given away in celebrity gift bags."

2. **"Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc"**: "After this, therefore because of this." This fallacy assumes a caused-and-effect relationship between two events *IN THE PAST* which occurred closely to each other but which may not have been *necessarily* related to each other.

   EXAMPLE: "Since Governor Smith took office four years ago, unemployment among minorities has decreased 7%. I think Governor Smith deserves to be re-elected for reducing unemployment among minorities."

3. **"Slippery Slope"**: Projects *INTO THE FUTURE* an inevitable cause-and-effect connection between a series of events which may not occur at all.

   EXAMPLE: "They'll start putting 'Parental Advisory' stickers on CD's; then they'll start burning books; then they'll repeal the First Amendment and we'll end up with government 'thought control' just like in George Orwell's *1984."*

Fallacies of Premise (Deductive Fallacies):

4. **"False Dilemma"**: "Excluded middle" or "Either /Or Fallacy—Assumes that there are only two possible choices ("Either *this* or *that*") when there are other choices available.

   EXAMPLE: "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists."—spoken by Dick Cheney. This assumes that there isn't a third option, such as "I am against the terrorists, and I am against your way of handling this problem because I don't think it will work in making our nation safer. I think there are better ways of fighting terrorism than yours."

5. **"Begging the Question"**: "Circular Argument"—Posits as granted that which is in question: simply restates the question under debate in different words as if it were a settled conclusion.

   EXAMPLE: "Ronald Reagan was a good communicator because he was able to speak well to people."

6. **"Appeal to Inappropriate Authority"**: This fallacy appeals to an authority who is not a qualified expert on the issue.

   EXAMPLE: "As a great scientist, Albert Einstein would have opposed animal experimentation if he were alive today."

7. **"Ad Populum"**: "Bandwagon Argument" or "Appeal to the Crowd"—Equates popularity/quantity with quality.

>> **EXAMPLE:** "Every morning, ten million people brush their teeth with *Crest* toothpaste—more use than any other brand of toothpaste. *Crest toothpaste is the best you can buy!"*

8. **"Ad Misericordiam"**: "Appeal to Pity"—This fallacy exploits feelings of sympathy to override or ignore logical considerations.

   > **EXAMPLE:** "You've got to give me an 'A' in this class, or else my GPA will dip below 2.0 and I'll lose my scholarship."

9. **"Ad Ignorantiam"**: "Argument from Ignorance"—This is an argument based on *LACK* of evidence (or denial evidence exists). A variant of the "False Dilemma" fallacy, this fallacy assumes that a claim is true because it has not been proved false (or, just the opposite, assumes that a claim is false because it has not been proved true).

   > **EXAMPLE:** "Genetically engineered food is safe because it has not been proved to be dangerous to our health."

   OR: "Genetically engineered food is dangerous because it has not been proved to be safe to eat."

10. **"Two Wrongs Fallacy"**: "Tu Quoque"—Argues that "Two wrongs make a right."

    > **EXAMPLE:** Prince Charles criticized McDonald's for selling "fattening" food to the English. McDonalds replied by comparing their food to such high calorie British favorites as Roast Beef and Ale. But just because traditional British dishes are fattening and high in calories doesn't make McDonald's offerings any the less fattening or high in calories.

11. **"Argument by False Analogy"**: This fallacy compares two things or events which resemble each other superficially, but which are dissimilar.

    > **EXAMPLE:** "We shouldn't send troops to fight in Kuwait because it will be just another Vietnam War."

12. **"Guilt by Association"**: "Stereotyping" discredits a person's claim because of the people with whom he or she associates.

    > **EXAMPLE:** "You're a Republican, so you must support all of George Bush's policies on the detention and torture of suspected terrorists."

13. **"Ad Hominen Attack"**: "Mudslinging"—Ignores the topic under debate and instead attacks the opponent's character on some irrelevant personal issue.

    > **EXAMPLE:** "My opponent, Senator Jones, was a conscientious objector during the Vietman War. Therefore, his proposal to cut the new submarine program should not be seriously considered."

14. **"Strawperson Argument"**: A strawperson arguments distorts the opponent's argument to such a point that no one could agree with it.

    > **EXAMPLE:** "My opponent, Senator Jones, voted against funding the new submarine program because he wants the United States to be totally defenseless and vulnerable to enemy attacks."