

Chapter 5: Rhetoric, the Art of Persuasion

Euphemism: A neutral or positive expression used in place of one that carries negative associations.

Example: “Detainee” makes the word “Prisoner” sound better than what it is.

Dysphemism: Opposite of a euphemism.

Example: “Eating animal flesh” sounds worse than eating meat.

Weaselers: They are often inserted into claims in order to try and protect the claim from criticism by watering it down somewhat.

Example: “Up to” is a common weaseler.

List of common weasel words

- Helps, supports, is useful (friendly, but no real value added)
- Better, improved, gains (does not say how much)
- Acts, works, effective, efficient (action, but no quantitative value)
- Seems, appears, looks, is like (gives impression, not real change)
- Many, most, virtually, almost all ('lots' but no real quantity)
- Up to, from, at least, as many as (talk about the best case)

Downplayers: Downplayers attempt to make someone or something look less important or less significant

Example: “Don’t mind what Mr. Liedtke says, he’s just another educator.”

“President Chavez only won by 6 votes.”

Both examples are trying to discredit the people.

Rhetorical devices II

Stereotypes: A cultural belief or idea about a social group’s attributes, usually simplified or exaggerated. It can be positive or negative.

- Example: “**Black kids don’t know their fathers.**”
- Example: “**Black men have big dicks**”
- Both examples are stereotypes and we can see how they can be perceived as both positive and negative.

Innuendo: Uses the power of suggestion to disparage (say something bad about) someone or something. Innuendos rely on neutral (even positive) phrasing to insinuate something derogatory.

Example: Ladies and gentlemen, I am proof that at least one candidate in this race doesn’t make stuff up.

Loaded questions: Implying something without coming out and saying it.

- Loaded questions can be a form of an innuendo if they're implying something negative.
- Example: "Why do you have a little penis?"
- Answering that question would imply that you know that your pee pee is little.

Ridicule and sarcasm: widely used to put something in bad light

Hyperbole: overdone exaggeration often used to sway a person in a certain direction. Make them feel some type of way.

Rhetorical definitions: employ rhetorically charged language to express or elicit an attitude about something. Example: "Defining abortion as the murder of an unborn child"

Rhetorical analogy: Likens two or more things to make one of them appear better or worse than another.

We must be careful though in how we compare the things.

- Make sure the items are comparable
- Example: comparing apples and oranges makes sense but comparing apples to trucks does not make sense.
- Make sure the same standard of measurement is used when comparing the items.
- Example: you can't say 20 grams of weed weighs more than 2 kilograms of cocaine. Just because 20 is greater than 2 does not mean it is right.

Proof surrogates: suggesting there is evidence or authority for a claim without actually citing the authority or evidence.

Common examples are: "**It's obvious that...**" "**Everyone knows that...**" "**Studies suggest...**"

All of these are surrogates because they lack proof.

Demagogues fan the flames of the fanaticism and use extreme rhetoric to propagate false ideas and preposterous theories.

4 rhetoric techniques used by demagogues are:

- **Otherizing:** Divides people into two groups - us and them.
- **Demonizing:** Trying to induce loathing of someone or something by portraying the person or thing as evil.
- **Xenophobia:** The fear or dislike of what is foreign or strange.
- **Hate mongering:** Try to stimulate an audience's fear, resentment and hatred.

Chapter 6: The Red Herring Fallacy (Relevance)

Fallacy: a mistake in reasoning, an argument that doesn't really support or prove the contention it is supposed to prove.

Example: "You tell me it's dangerous to drive while texting, but I have seen you doing it."

This is an example of a **relevance fallacy** because whether or not the other person texts while they drive does not prove or support the fact that texting while driving isn't dangerous.

Argumentum Ad Hominem

Translates to "argument to the person". It is when you dismiss an argument by dismissing the person.

Poisoning the well: Trying to get us to dismiss what someone is going to say by talking about the person's consistency or character or circumstances.

Example: "Don't think too much about what Najwa is going to say. She's a Sens fan and Sens fans are going to be biased towards their team"

- Even though Najwa hasn't even said anything, the person making this claim is hoping that we are not thinking critically and that we dismiss whatever Najwa is going to say.

Guilt by Association: occurs when a speaker or writer tries to convince us to dismiss a belief by telling us that someone we don't like shares that belief.

Example: If we assume that everyone hates Christian (or Christian according to Najwa), we can use **guilt by association by saying** "You like Monsters instead of 5 hour energy? That sounds just like Christian."

- We are not directly attacking Christian but we're trying to get you to not take the same stance as him because we assume that you dislike him.

Genetic Fallacy: This fallacy occurs when someone argues that the origin of a contention in and of itself automatically renders it false.

Example: "Where on earth did you hear that? On talk radio?"

- This implies that we should reject a view because of its origin.

Straw Man

A fallacy that occurs when a speaker or writer attempts to dismiss a contention by distorting or misinterpreting it.

Example: “Belinda thinks that abortion should be legal everywhere? Great. We might as well kill every newborn around the world.”

- Belinda didn’t say that we should kill every newborn but if we distort the meaning of abortion, we are setting up a straw man.

False Dilemma (Ignoring other alternatives)

False Dilemma: A fallacy that happens when someone tries to establish a conclusion by offering it as the only alternative to something we will find unacceptable, unattainable, or implausible.

- Either or

Example: “Either we pass this course or our parents kill us”

- There are alternatives for us if we don’t pass the course. We could retake it some other time, or take a different course that could replace this course.

The Perfectionist Fallacy: The fallacy is committed when someone ignores options between “perfection” and “nothing”.

Example: “Going to the gym every now and then won’t make anyone an olympic weightlifter. Therefore, we shouldn’t go to the gym because we’re wasting time.”

- The person making this claim assumes that the only outcome of going to the gym is to become an olympic weightlifter. He has ignored **other alternatives** such as staying in shape or losing weight.

The Line Drawing Fallacy: A fallacy that occurs when a speaker assumes that there is a crystal clear line between two things or there is no difference between them at all.

Example: “You can’t say exactly when a video game is too violent; therefore no video game is too violent.”

The person has ignored that an imprecise line can be drawn here and it could have some value in assessing level of violence.

Example: “Poverty isn’t a problem in this country; after all, when is a person really poor? You can’t say exactly.”

- By saying that, the speaker is trying to get us to believe that there is no fine line between being poor and not being really poor; therefore, there is no such thing as being poor.

Misplacing the burden of proof: When people try to support or prove their position by misplacing the burden of proof, they commit this fallacy.

Example: “Philosophy shouldn’t be a mandatory first year class. I bet you can’t think of a single good reason as to why it should be mandatory.”

- Instead of me trying to prove that philosophy shouldn’t be a mandatory class, I have now placed the burden on you.

Appeal to ignorance: When someone asserts that we should believe a claim because nobody has proved it false. *This is a version of misplacing the burden of proof.*

Example: “Nobody has proved that ghosts don’t exist; therefore they do.”

Begging the question: When someone tries to support an argument by offering as evidence the same argument repackaged.

Example: “Simon isn’t allowed in our club because he breathes differently than us.”
This is simply saying that Simon isn’t be allowed in our club because of his breathing methods. It still doesn’t explain why he shouldn’t be allowed.

Example: “Obviously Sascha told us the truth about our midterm; he wouldn’t lie to us about it.”
If we aren’t sure if he told the truth, we can’t be sure he wouldn’t lie.

Appeal to Emotion

When someone supports an argument by playing on our emotions rather than producing a real argument.

Argument from outrage: Attempts to convince us by making us angry rather than by giving us a relevant argument.

Example: “Don’t you think we know Najwa is a murderer? She’s killed millions upon millions of puppies. She knows this is a serious crime in Canada, yet every summer the puppy population gets reduced by half of what it initially was. Najwa is a bad girl.”

This doesn't support the fact that Najwa is a bad girl. Instead it tries to make us angry about what Najwa's been doing to puppies.

Scare Tactics: When someone tries to scare us into accepting an irrelevant conclusion.

Example: "Gun regulation should be increased. How would you feel if your son or daughter got shot as they are getting an education."

This argument scares you into thinking that gun regulation should be increased because your children could get killed in school. This is still not a reason to increase gun regulation.

Peer pressure fallacy: By making the listener fear feeling like an outcast you are committing this fallacy.

Appeal to pity: When a speaker or writer tries to convince us of something by arousing our pity rather than by giving a relevant argument.

Example: "Sascha should give us all 90s because we stayed up late working on this bullshit."

- This doesn't really explain why we deserve 90s but rather tries to make the listener empathize with us.

Example: "Martha deserves the job. She's been unemployed for months and she could really use some money."

- This doesn't explain or support the argument that Martha deserves the job. Instead it tries to get us to believe the argument by trying to make us feel **pity** for her.

Irrelevant Conclusion: Relevance fallacies that do not fit in the above categories.

Example: "I don't think I missed too many classes to pass. My attendance has been much better lately."

- Just because your attendance has been much better lately isn't sufficient proof enough to think that you didn't miss too many classes to pass.