

## **CRITICAL THINKING: BE AWARE OF WHAT YOU READ!**

Many things that you read will be biased in one way or another. That does not mean that the information has no value; it simply means that you need you be aware of the author's point of view. You may come across the following logical fallacies in your readings. When you see flaws in reasoning, take extra caution!

### Hasty Generalization

Whoever is not with us is against us. (President Bush)

Whoever is not against us is for us. (Mark 9:40)

### Non Sequitur (Does not follow)

All the library books on fairness and equality are checked out, so there are more people treated equally in the world.

### False Analogy

Since we won the war, we should bring peace to other parts of the world.

### Either...Or Fallacy

Either you believe this policy is right or the country will suffer.

### False Cause (Post Hoc)

Since the new mayor took office, the economy has boomed. The mayor has done a great service to the economy.

### Circular Reasoning

We should treat everyone equally because everyone should be equal.

### Bandwagon Appeal

Everyone knows that no one wants the country to do this.

### Argument to the Person (Ad Hominem)

You fought this law in the past so your argument no longer has any value.

### Red Herring

They are attacking our policy because they don't want to hear what we have to say.

### Biased Language

This political philosophy is evil.

This list of common fallacies comes from:

Hacker, Diana. A Writer's Reference. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999.

The examples are original for this class.

## **Evaluation Criteria**

Flaws in reasoning are not the only things to consider when evaluating an information source. Consider the following elements:

### **Authority:**

- Who wrote this information?
- What information can you find on the author?
- What make the author an authority?

### **Currency:**

- When was the information written?
- Have events happened recently that would make the information incorrect?

### **Accuracy:**

- Is the information presented in a grammar-correct format?
- Are sources of information quoted and referenced?

### **Point of View/Bias:**

- What is the purpose of the information?
- Is the author trying to sway the reader in one direction or another?
- Are all sides of an issue covered?
- Is only one perspective given?
- How does the source handle conflicting information/other points of view?

### **Audience:**

- Who is the intended audience for the information?

### **Argument:**

- Is the information well written?
- Are there errors in logical arguments?
- Are all the points mentioned in the information relevant to the argument?

### **Conclusions:**

- Considering the entire picture, is this a quality source of information?
- Does the information support the argument that you are supporting?

**Remember:** no source of information is perfect. Look at the entire picture when you are deciding whether to use an information source!