10 Logical Fallacies: An error in reasoning

*Please note this is a short list of possible fallacies. You will only encounter the following ten fallacies on exams in this class, but you may encounter many more in other situations (such as everyday life).

1. **Appeal to Fear:** The arguer attempts to persuade by invoking feelings of insecurity and fear.
   Example: Insurance advertisements that use pictures of homes destroyed by fires to sell policies. (Consumers are scared of losing everything, so they will purchase insurance.)

2. **Ad Hominem:** This is an attack on the character of a person rather than their opinions or arguments.
   Example: *Jack: You should stop smoking - it's bad for you.*
   Jill: Look who's talking! You smoke three packs a day! (Does Jill's statement prove that smoking is not bad?)

3. **Either Or (False Dilemma):** Suggesting only two solutions to a problem when other options are also available.
   Example: *America—love it or leave it!*

4. **False Analogy:** Comparing two things that are not similar enough to compare.
   Example: *That political leader is the Jesus Christ of the 20th century.*

5. **Slippery Slope:** The arguer claims that a sort of chain reaction, usually ending in some dire consequence, will take place, but there's really not enough evidence for that assumption. The arguer asserts that if we take even one step onto the "slippery slope," we will end up sliding all the way to the bottom; he or she assumes we can't stop halfway down the hill.
   Example: *If you go to the night club tonight, before you know it you will meet with some undesirable young man and he will make you pregnant.*

6. **Non Sequitur ("Does not follow"):** One point or argument does not follow logically from the preceding one, i.e., no logical relationship exists between two or more supposedly connected ideas.
   Example: *He has my vote for senator, because he has the best run campaign. (What does a campaign organization have to do with qualifications?)*

7. **Straw Man:** In the straw man fallacy, the arguer sets up a wimpy version or misrepresents the opponent's position and tries to score points by knocking it down. But just as being able to knock down a straw man, or a scarecrow, isn't very impressive, defeating a watered-down version of your opponents' argument isn't very impressive either.
   Example: *What I object to most about those people who oppose capital punishment is that they believe that the lives of convicted murderers are more important than the lives of the police and prison guards who protect us. But, obviously, since the lives of those who protect us are of the greatest value, no one should oppose capital punishment.*

8. **Red Herring:** Partway through an argument, the arguer goes off on a tangent, raising a side issue that distracts the audience from what's really at stake. Often, the arguer never returns to the original issue.
    Example: *The level of mercury in seafood may be unsafe, but what will fishers do to support their families?*

9. **Begging the Question (Circular Reasoning):** Basically, an argument that begs the question asks the reader to simply accept the conclusion without providing real evidence; the argument either relies on a claim that says the same thing as the conclusion, or simply ignores an important (but questionable) assumption that the argument rests on.
    Example: *Nudity should be banned on television because society needs laws to prevent the deliberate display of naked flesh on our television sets.*
    Cell phone use while driving should be banned because cell phones should not be used when driving.

10. **Hasty Generalization:** This fallacy is committed when a person draws a conclusion about a population based on a sample that is not large enough. The person claims that something is always the case, when in fact only a small amount of evidence is available.
    Example: *"My roommate said her philosophy class was hard, and the one I'm in is hard, too. All philosophy classes must be hard!" Two people's experiences are, in this case, not enough on which to base a conclusion.*

Logical Fallacies   Name:_____
Practice Sheet   Date:_____ Block:_____

Part I: Identify each of the following logical fallacies. Each fallacy will only be used twice.

Appear to Fear	Non Sequitur
Ad Hominem	Straw Man
Either Or (False Dilemma)	Hasty Generalization
False Analogy	Red Herring
Slippery Slope	Begging the Question

	1. "You may think that he cheated on the test, but look at the poor little thing! How would he feel if you made him sit it again?"
	2. If we ban Hummers because they are bad for the environment eventually the government will ban all cars, so we should not ban Hummers.
	3. Even though it's only the first day, I can tell this is going to be a boring course.
	4. We can either stop using cars or destroy the earth.
	5. Green Peace's strategies aren't effective because they are all dirty, lazy hippies.
	6. The level of mercury in seafood may be unsafe, but what will fishers do to support their families?
	7. Employees are like nails. Just as nails must be hit in the head in order to make them work, so must employees.
	8. Since I'm not lying, it follows that I'm telling the truth.
	9. If I make an exception for you then I have to make an exception for everyone.
	10. Senator Jill: "We'll have to cut education funding this year." Senator Bill: "Why?" Senator Jill: "Well, either we cut the social programs or we live with a huge deficit and we can't live with the deficit."
	11. "You know, Professor Smith, I really need to get an A in this class. I'd like to stop by during your office hours later to discuss my grade. I'll be in your building anyways, visiting my father. He's your dean, by the way. I'll see you later."
	12. Tens of thousands of Americans have seen lights in the night sky which they could not identify. The existence of life on other planets is fast becoming a certainty.
	13. Bill says that we should give tax breaks to companies. But he is untrustworthy, so it must be wrong to do that.
	14. Fred, the Australian, stole my wallet. Thus, all Australians are thieves.
	15. Chocolate is healthful because it's good for you.
	16. Senator Jones says that we should not fund the attack submarine program. I disagree entirely. I can't understand why he wants to leave us defenseless like that.
	17. Goodyear tires. Because you have a lot riding on your tires.

	18. Dogs are animals. Fluffy is an animal. Therefore, Fluffy is a dog.
	19. People from Quebec want to secede from Canada to get their own currency. Don't they realize money isn't everything?
	20. No one objects to a physician looking up a difficult case in medical books. So no one should object to nursing students, when taking a logic exam, being permitted to use their reference materials.

Part II: Each of the following fallacies thinks they are the best. Read their reasoning and write the name of the fallacy in the blank. You will only use each fallacy once.

Ad Hominem
Begging the Question
Non Sequitur
Red Herring
False Dilemma (Either Or)
Slippery Slope

21. I've found that either you think _____ is the best fallacy, or you're a terrorist.

22. _____ is the best fallacy and is capable of proving anything. Since it can prove anything, it can obviously prove the above statement. Since it can prove the first statement, it must be true. Therefore, circular reasoning is the best fallacy and is capable of proving anything.

23. _____ is the best logical fallacy, and if you disagree with me, well, you're an idiot.

24. _____ is the best fallacy because none of my meals so far today have involved asparagus.

25. If you don't like _____ arguments, you will do poorly in class, drop out of school, commit crimes, go to prison, and die of AIDS.

26. They say that to prove your fallacy is the best requires extraordinary evidence, because it's an extraordinary claim. Well, I'd like to note that "Extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence" is itself an extraordinary claim. _____