

**Time Needed:** 120 minutes

**Supplies:**

- [Duke TIP Argument Fallacies Infographic](#)
- [Duke TIP Argument Fallacy Skit Rubric](#)
- Space for performance
- Optional: art supplies such as construction paper, glue sticks, tape, and markers for making props

**Content Objectives: Students will know:**

- The definitions of a variety of argument fallacies

**Skill Objectives: Students will be able:**

- To define a variety of argument fallacies
- To brainstorm and create real-world examples of argument fallacies
- To identify argument fallacies in real-world examples

**Essential Understandings: Students will understand:**

- Use of argument fallacies results in faulty reasoning.
- Being able to avoid argument fallacies in your own work will allow you to create stronger arguments.
- Being able to identify argument fallacies in the arguments of others will allow you to better address opposing positions in your own work and strengthen your own arguments.

**Essential Question: Students will explore:**

- What are the implications of various argument fallacies?
- How do we identify argument fallacies in seemingly credible arguments?
- What happens when argument fallacies go undetected or unchallenged?

## Activities

### *Pre-work:*

Students should read the **Duke TIP Argument Fallacies Infographic** prior to class. Ask students to bring in their own examples (researched or generated on their own) that meet the definitions.

### *Introduction (5 minutes)*

- Ask students why it is important to be able to spot faulty reasoning. How might that skill help them in other classes? In their lives and future careers?
- Share the Essential Questions and Understandings for this lesson.
- Preview lesson activities.

### *Content Review (15)*

- Ask students to share examples of new fallacies that fit the Duke TIP Argument Fallacies Infographic categories.
- Clarify any misconceptions about the various fallacies.
- Ask students to share which are most fascinating to them, and why.

### *Prompt and Skit Preparation (40-50)*

- Tell students that today they will prepare and perform a five-to-ten-minute skit that demonstrates a particular argument fallacy. Their goal: How do we best inform the public in a commercial not to spread the virus of fallacy? If students do not know what a PSA is (Public Service Announcement), explain how that purpose intersects with this task.
- Point to the Essential Questions once again to help direct their work in the skits, and keep them visible during group work.
- Review the Duke TIP Argument Fallacy Skit Rubric.
  - Tell students what percentage of the score depends on group dynamics. If it is later in the year, and students have had experience with a range of collaborations, you can devote a larger portion of the score rating received for the Group Dynamics criterion. Ideally, all students in the skit should contribute an approximately equal amount to both the preparation and the performance. Unless

### **Argument Fallacy lesson**

there are special circumstances, all students should perform an approximately equal amount of time in their skits.

- Break the class into triads or quads, either by assignment or student choice, depending on class dynamics and teacher preference. Ask students to select a Skit Director who will take the vote on the preferred fallacy and then be responsible for making sure there is equitable distribution of labor and participation in the skit.
- Groups should be given a few minutes to reach consensus on the preferred fallacy to represent. Only one group may claim each fallacy. For fun, tell students: “Bonus points if you can argue for your top choice by using a fallacy! (Just don’t keep doing it, okay?)” If pressed for time, assign the remaining fallacies to groups who have not chosen.
- Give students the remainder of the class period to develop and practice skits. The teacher should check in with each group periodically, to ensure that they have an appropriate understanding of their topic and to provide guidance as the students’ ideas develop. The teacher may provide art supplies for students who wish to create simple props for their skits.

*Skit Performance and Critiques* (30-60 minutes, depending on class size and skit length)

During the next class period, each group should perform their skit for the entire class. Once each skit is performed, the class should identify what argument fallacy was demonstrated.

If time, and if this is a formative assessment, lead a critique of each skit. Ask for

- clarifying questions (what did the audience not understand?),
- warm feedback per the rubric standards (specifics, using rubric language, of what worked well),
- cool feedback (specifics, using rubric language, of what could be improved) per the rubric standards,
- and clarify the fallacy if any misunderstandings were demonstrated by the skit.

*Class Reflection* (5-10)

Once all skits are performed, ask the class to vote for their favorite skit or to individually express their votes. The winners may be awarded extra credit, if appropriate, or simply the laurels of winning.

*Extension Activity* (20-30)

Have each student write a short reflection on the skit group dynamics and content mastered. This reflection should consist of a few paragraphs, in which the student addresses any of the following questions, per your goals and standards for students:

### **Argument Fallacy lesson**

- What was my group's original plan for the skit? How did it turn out? How do I account for the differences between their original plan and its execution?
- What ratings would I give our group in the rubric criteria?
- How well did the group function? What was my individual contribution? How did the other group members contribute?
- What did I learn about my group's fallacy by creating and performing a skit about it that I did not realize from reading about it?
- What did they learn from watching the other groups' skits? Was there another group whose skit was particularly helpful in explaining an argument fallacy?
- What lessons about either argumentation, composition, or group work will they take from this assignment?

Alternately, the teacher may enact this reflection as a class discussion, either with the class as a whole or through small group discussion.

### Assessment

- If this is your students' first skit, treat it as a formative assessment, with no point values. Then design another skit activity in a future unit using the same rubric, with edits to the Content Comprehension & Communication section.
- You might assign points most heavily to one section or another, depending on your course standards and the time of year.
- Use the reflective questions to challenge your students to think more deeply about what they would want to accomplish next time.
- As this is a group assignment, it is important to assess the work at a group level. Drawing upon the teacher's own observations during class as well as the students' reflections, use the Duke TIP Argument Fallacy rubric to assess each group's performance.