

5 Logical Fallacies from the Second Clinton Trump Debate



Chiasma

Follow

Oct 12, 2016 · 4 min read



Getty Images News | Chip Somodevilla

A logical fallacy is a flaw in reasoning that lead to false assertions. Let's look at 5 logical fallacies from the second presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump held on Tuesday, October 4, 2016.

Red Herring Fallacy

“**Y**es, I'm very embarrassed by it. I hate it. But it's locker room talk, and it's one of those

things. I will knock the hell out of ISIS. We're going to defeat ISIS. ISIS happened a number of years ago in a vacuum that was left because of bad judgment. And I will tell you, I will take care of ISIS." Donald Trump on the 2005 video that was released prior to the debate.

A red herring fallacy is when one misleads or distracts from the main issue. In the example given, Donald Trump uses a red herring, the fight against ISIS, to distract from the main point which is about the comments he is heard saying on a recording from 2005. The example is also a form of appeal to ridicule by using ISIS to make his taped comments appear unimportant/ridiculous in comparison and appeals to emotion.

Appeal to Emotion (fear)

"So I believe that this election has become in part so — so conflict-oriented, so intense because there's a lot at stake. This is not an ordinary time, and this is not an ordinary election. We are going to be choosing a president who will set policy for not just four or eight years, but because of some of the important decisions we have to make here at home and around the world, from the Supreme Court to energy and so much else, and so there is a lot at stake. It's one of the most consequential elections that we've had." Hillary Clinton.

An appeal to emotion is the manipulation of emotion in order to win an

argument. In this example, Hillary Clinton creates a false sense of urgency and fear as support for her point that this election is different. The examples she uses do not prove that point: the person will be elected for 4 years; the appointment of a new Supreme Court judge is not something exceptional as Obama, Bush and Bill Clinton appointed two judges each; and energy has been on the table for at least the past two decades. This example also contains a circular argument fallacy since the main point, this election is important, is true by definition since all presidential elections are important.

Ad Hominem

“It was locker room talk, as I told you. That was locker room talk. I’m not proud of it. I am a person who has great respect for people, for my family, for the people of this country. And certainly, I’m not proud of it. But that was something that happened. If you look at Bill Clinton, far worse. Mine are words, and his was action. His was what he’s done to women. There’s never been anybody in the history politics in this nation that’s been so abusive to women. So you can say any way you want to say it, but Bill Clinton was abusive to women.” Donald Trump

An Ad Hominem is attacking the opponent’s character, personality, race, or family rather than the content of the argument. In this example, Donald Trump attacks Bill Clinton, his opponent’s husband, instead of answering to the argument levied against him on the comment he made about how he treats women. Ad hominem fallacies are also a form of red herring. This example also contains a “Tu Quoque (you too) fallacy” by claiming that if

Bill Clinton did something similar or worse, then what Trump did would be “not so bad”.

Ignoratio Elenchi (Or Missing the Point)

“TRUMP: Oh, you didn’t delete them?

CLINTON: It was personal e-mails, not official.

TRUMP: Oh, 33,000? Yeah.

CLINTON: Not — well, we turned over 35,000, so...”

Ignoratio elenchi is when a person presents an argument that might or might not be true but does not address the point being made. In this example, Donald Trump is questioning Hillary Clinton about the 33,000 emails that were deleted from her private email server. She answers by saying that they handed over 35,000 emails. Independently of the whether this is true or not, this does not address the 33,000 deleted emails and misses the point being made.

Fallacy of the Single Cause

“We have to get rid of the lines around the state, artificial lines, where we stop insurance companies from coming in and competing, because they want — and President Obama and whoever was working on it — they want to leave those lines, because that gives the insurance companies essentially

monopolies. We want competition. You will have the finest health care plan there is. [...] You're going to have plans that are so good, because we're going to have so much competition in the insurance industry." Donald Trump on what is wrong with Obamacare and how his plan will be better.

Fallacy of the single cause or causal oversimplification is when it is assumed that there is a single (or few in some cases) cause for an outcome when the topic is much more complex. In this example, Donald Trump makes the point that by removing border laws on insurance companies, competition will result in the finest health care plan there is which is an oversimplification of a much more complex problem (different incomes, different pathologies, price of healthcare...). It is important to note that during the whole exchange on the topic, this was the only argument made. Therefore, rendering a possibly valid argument an oversimplification. The example also includes overstatements which are not a logical fallacy but a literary device often used in politics.

[Politics](#)[Donald Trump](#)[Logical Fallacies](#)[Critical Thinking](#)[Hillary Clinton](#)