

LECTURE 9: Logical Progression and Avoiding Rhetorical Fallacies

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1. Premises and Structural Syllogisms

The strength of an academic essay depends on its logical structure. Arguments must be built using clear syllogisms, where a conclusion is logically derived from a major premise and a minor premise. For instance, if the major premise is that 'All critical writing requires evidence' and the minor premise is that 'This paragraph lacks citations,' the logical conclusion is that 'This paragraph does not meet the standards of critical writing.' Every step of an essay's argument must follow this type of clear, step-by-step reasoning.

2. Common Logical Fallacies in Academic Writing

Students must learn to spot and avoid common logical fallacies that weaken academic arguments: An **Ad Hominem** fallacy attacks a person's character instead of addressing their argument. A **Straw Man** fallacy misrepresents an opponent's view to make it easier to attack. A **False Dilemma** oversimplifies a complex issue by presenting only two options when others exist. Finally, a **Hasty Generalization** draws a broad conclusion from a very small or unrepresentative sample of data.

3. Building Inductive and Deductive Paths

Academic writing uses both deductive and inductive paths to build arguments. Deductive reasoning starts with a general, established theory and applies it to a specific case to reach a conclusion. Inductive reasoning works the opposite way: it analyzes specific observations or data points to build a broader conclusion or theory. Students must choose the right logical path based on their essay's goals and prompt requirements.

4. Fallacy Detection Drill

Students will review a set of flawed academic arguments. Working in groups, they will identify the specific logical fallacy used in each example and rewrite the sentences to create structurally sound, valid claims.

5. Tutorial Assignment

Write an argumentative response to a controversial topic in education. You must intentionally build your argument using valid deductive logic, and include a section where you identify and dismantle a common logical fallacy used by the opposing side.