**Category:** Finding Significance

**Title:** Logical Fallacies in the Real World

Designed by Caleb Tankersley

**Lesson Objectives:** To demonstrate how prevalent logical fallacies are in politics and media, thus demonstrating the need for clear, logical arguing skills. To give students practice with and tools for combating logical fallacies.

**Preparation and Materials:** Students will have already familiarized themselves with a variety of logical fallacies during a previous class period. They will be viewing this lesson in the context of their upcoming assignment, an analysis of a political advertisement. The above objectives give students practice in analysis as well as demonstrate the need for clear, logical argument, both inside and outside academia.

**Introduction:** This lesson is introduced early in the semester, so it creates a practical awareness as to the class’s and the assignment’s relevance to the students’ own studies and lives. Including the discussion and writing between activities, this lesson should take up a full fifty-minute class period.

**Procedures:**

1. Students begin the class by writing a journal entry. They will be presented with a question: “Should the United States go to war with Canada?” The question initially appears ridiculous, but this will play into the real-world fallacies later in the lesson. Students are asked to write a paragraph in favor of the idea. However, their paragraphs should employ three logical fallacies.

2. After the students have had some time to write these paragraphs, several volunteers will be called on to read their paragraphs out loud. We will then hold a class discussion dissecting each of the paragraph’s fallacies, why the fallacies are wrong, how we would counter the fallacies in a rebuttal, and how the writer might improve his or her argument.

3. We will then move from this somewhat ridiculous, hypothetical situation to the real-world setting of politics. We will take some topical issues of the time and watch a few videos of politicians discussing the issues. The chosen videos will fall at different points on the ideological spectrum, but all of them will include ridiculous claims and arguments. The students will then spend some time writing a short analysis of the rhetorical choices of the politicians.

4. After discussing what the students wrote, we will look at <http://www.politifact.com/> and discuss how the politicians failed in their logic and how their arguments could have been better made.

5. The students will then look at a successfully argued political point and write a short paragraph going over how this was successful. We will discuss the rhetorical choices the speaker has made in class.

**Conclusion:**

The lesson will end with a discussion of the need for sound logical arguments in a variety of aspects of life. This helps ease the students’ apprehensions concerning the assignment, recognizing clear argument as something even successful professionals struggle with. But this ultimately proves the necessity of what ENG 102 is teaching. Once students are convinced of the relevance of the advertising analysis, they will be more engaged with it, along with feeling more comfortable after some smaller-stakes practice.