



## Fallacies

### Student Handout: **Sample Fallacies and Booby-Traps**

1. Lewis Carroll, in *Through the Looking Glass*: “ ‘You couldn’t have it [jam] if you did want it,’ the Queen said. ‘The rule is jam tomorrow and jam yesterday — but never jam *today*.’ ‘It must sometimes come to jam today,’ Alice objected. ‘No it can’t,’ said the Queen. ‘It’s jam every *other* day: today isn’t any *other* day, you know.’ ”

2. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, look at the bloody clothes, the murder weapon. Imagine the helpless screams of the victim. Such a crime deserves no verdict except guilty, guilty!

3. I’m not a doctor, but I play a doctor on TV, and I wouldn’t dream of using anything but Tylenol for my toughest headaches.

4. According to Freud, your belief in God stems from your need for a strong father figure. So don’t you see that it’s silly to continue believing in God?

5. How can you possibly believe in evolution? That would mean that you believe that an elephant evolved from a mouse, and that’s just ridiculous.

6. The nuthatch was discovered by Tilly Turnow in the woods, while hopping from branch to branch of an elm tree, singing happily.

7. You can hardly blame President Clinton for having extramarital affairs. Many presidents, when faced with similar situations, have yielded to the same temptations.

8. There are more laws on the books than ever before, and more crimes are being committed than ever before. Therefore, to reduce crime, we must eliminate the laws.

9. We should pass a Constitutional amendment making it illegal to burn the American flag. Anyone who thinks otherwise just hates America.

10. Radio talk show host, on learning that an association of critical thinking professors had suggested his show as a source of fallacious reasoning: "Who are these people? They talk to maybe 30 people at a time. I talk to five million people every day. They could not begin to do what I do. They are just gnats flying around getting in the way."

11. U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn says that lesbianism is rampant in the Oklahoma schools. This must, indeed, be true, because surely the senator couldn't be mistaken about the schools in his own state.

12. Do most Americans believe in God? To find out, we asked over 10,000 scientists at colleges and universities throughout America. Less than 40 percent said they believed in God. The conclusion is obvious: Most Americans no longer believe in God.

13. Before he died, poet Allen Ginsberg argued in favor of legalizing pornography. But Ginsberg's arguments are nothing but trash. Ginsberg was a pot-smoking homosexual and a thoroughgoing advocate of the drug culture.

14. Many people criticize Thomas Jefferson for being an owner of slaves. But Jefferson was one of our greatest presidents, and his Declaration of Independence is one of the most eloquent pleas for freedom and democracy ever written. Clearly these criticisms are unwarranted.

15. Miller Lite is cheap beer, so the Guinness will be cheap, too.

16. Wife: "I see Mr. Smith is cooking out on his new barbecue grill." Husband: "So his wife finally got fed up with his unfaithfulness!"

17. Jake, Kyle and Rolf are all members of the UNCP Young Republicans, and they are all planning to be Roman Catholic priests. Emma is also a member of the UNCP Young Republicans, so she is probably planning to be a Roman Catholic priest, too.

18. I have a right to speak. What is right ought to be done. So I ought to speak.

19. Poetry is based on rhythm, and music is based on rhythm, so isn't poetry a kind of music?

20. The Soviet Union collapsed after taking up atheism. Therefore, we must avoid atheism for the same reasons.

21. You're a vegetarian? You do realize that Hitler was a vegetarian, too?

22. Most heroin users started out smoking pot. If you start smoking-pot, you'll end up a heroin user, too.

23. Really exciting novels are very rare. And since rare books are expensive, I can't afford to buy any really exciting novels.

24. Middle-class families are paying more taxes than ever.

25. The war in Iraq has been a complete success. After all, Saddam Hussein is dead, and the Iraqis had their first free election in years.