Chapter 4: Answers and Comments

Answers:

I. True or False

1. See textbook.

2. False. One of the most common mistakes. The focus should be even if the premise is true, the reasoning is weak.

3. See textbook.

4. True. We could criticize the truth of the premise as well, but this would not be relevant to the focus of a fallacy of relevance.

5. True. There is nothing inherently wrong with loyalty as a behavior or an emotion. The point is there should be good reasons, which we have thought about, for our loyalty commitments.

6. FALSE! Two Wrongs is a fallacy of relevance, so the focus is not on the truth of the premise. The focus should be on the reasoning. Usually the premise is true, but irrelevant to why either item compared should be considered good.

7. See textbook.

8. False. The name-calling is always in the premise.

9. False. In our age many in-group appeals are aimed at sub-cultural groups. People who believe they are more intelligent than most, more cool, more modern, etc.

10. True.

11. True. For a complete argument analysis, these two points must be made.

12. False. It was used as an example for structuring arguments. It will be covered in Chapter 5. We will see that it is a fallacy of relevance and it always has a premise that is relevant to the conclusion.

13. False. There could be very good reasons for a particular act of loyalty.

14. True. In this chapter there will be situations where the difference between one label and another is inconsequential. More important will be the argument analysis which would be the same whether the label is Snob appeal or
15. True. There can be many arguments that have this generic problem: the premises are not on track; they are not focusing on what should be discussed. There are many fallacies of relevance that are not covered in this chapter, such as appeal to pity and appeal to force.

II. Fallacy Identification and Analysis

1. See textbook.

2. **Conclusion**: The Republicans are wrong to oppose President Obama’s health care reform efforts.

   **Premise**: Because it is no secret that the Republicans get millions of dollars in campaign donations from the medical insurance companies and these companies do not want any change to a structure that allows them to make billions of dollars a year insuring mostly healthy people and rejecting people with so-called “pre-existing conditions.”

   **Label and Description**: Ad Hominem Circumstantial. The Republican motives are attacked in the premise.

   **Argument Analysis**: Reasoning. Even if the premise is true that the Republicans have a suspect motive in resisting change because they are generally supported with campaign contributions from medical insurance companies, the relevant issue is the Obama plan and what the Republicans say is wrong about its approach. Would the Obama plan be fairer and insure more people? Or, would it be too costly and inefficient? If the Republican objections about cost and government inefficiency are wrong, what are the details about why they are wrong?

3. **Conclusion**: Vote for Bill Clinton to be president of the United States.

   **Premises**: It is time to stop living in the past and prepare for the twenty-first century. It is our time now. It is time for the generation born after World War II to be in charge.

   **Label and Description**: Provincialism. An in-group appeal (to the generation born after World War II) is made in the premises.

   **Argument Analysis**: Reasoning. Even if the key premise is true, that a younger generation is supporting Clinton, nothing is said about the qualifications of Bill Clinton as being the appropriate leader for this generation or the country as a whole. The premises are irrelevant to the conclusion. There is no discussion on
why the generation born after World War II should support or is supporting Clinton. Clinton's qualifications for being the leader of a new world order should be discussed; it should not have been assumed that because Clinton was a new face at this time that he had the domestic and foreign policy expertise to be the best leader. What are his economic policies? His foreign policies? His education policies? Even though he was a member of the generation born after World War II, he could end up embarrassing that generation.

4. **Conclusion:** Women should not be priests in the Catholic Church.

**Premises:** The mission for women in the Church has always been, and always will be, a different service. Women traditionally have the greatest power in the Church—the formation of minds and hearts in education, a ministry to the sick, and the teaching of the Church to future generations.

**Label and Description:** Traditional Wisdom. A traditional wisdom appeal in the premises (mission for women . . . has always been . . ).

**Argument Analysis:** Reasoning. Even if it is true that women have had this role in the past, there is no attempt to link the alleged past wisdom of this role with contemporary events and circumstances. Although this argument partially addresses the question of original reason for a policy—it claims that women had a positive role to play, but it does not make clear why this positive role also eliminated women from being priests—it clearly does not address the relevance of this past role to present circumstances. In other words, it does not state the full reasons women should not have been priests in the past, and it does not address the issue whether those reasons still apply today.

5. **Conclusion:** Martha Stewart should not go to jail.

**Premises:** As the head of Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia this company could be harmed significantly and lead to the lay-offs of some 500 jobs. At a crucial time in which the economy is just now recovering from a severe recession, every job counts. Corporate executives are crucial figures in the company and we have to look at the bigger picture. The good of the whole should be considered.

**Label and Description:** Irrelevant Reason. The premise about job layoffs is not relevant to the conclusion.

**Argument Analysis:** Reasoning. The statement in the premise about job layoffs is irrelevant to whether Stewart broke the law or not and should or should not be punished. The key issue is the evidence of her guilt or innocence. Did she receive illegal insider stock information that allowed her to sale her stock in InClone before it lost a lot of value? Was it just a coincidence that she sold her stock when she did? Should rich people be treated special just because they provide jobs to people in building and financing businesses?
6. **Conclusion**: Supporters of the Space Station Freedom are wrong about there being any scientific justification for a permanently manned space station.

**Premises**: What is really at stake for the fifty senators who have signed a letter endorsing the Space Station is pork barrel projects for their states. Each of the senators has a number of businesses in their states with space-station contracts.

**Label and Description**: Ad Hominem Circumstantial. The motives of the fifty senators are being attacked in the premises rather than a discussion of the relevant reasons the senators may have for supporting the Space Station.

**Argument Analysis**: Reasoning. Even if it is true that all fifty senators have suspect motives—being in favor of the Space Station because in general their districts plan to benefit economically and they in particular with greater reelection prospects -- the Space Station may be a good investment for the country. To know, we must discuss the relevant issues. What is the Space Station for? What is its scientific justification? Will it be a good economic investment? Can the country afford it at this time, even if it does have scientific and economic justification?

7. **Conclusion**: Support O.J. Simpson. (He should be found innocent.)

**Premises**: He has done a lot for young black Americans. As a football player he proved that nice guys can finish first. As an actor and salesman for Hertz he showed black children what they can accomplish no matter what their present circumstances are. The majority of the people in this country believe that he is innocent, and 70% of the trial lawyers interviewed believe that he will not be convicted.

**Label and Description**: Irrelevant Reason (Appeal to Popularity, Authority, Provincialism?). Clearly the premises are irrelevant to the conclusion. There are also majority, authority, and in-group (black Americans) appeals in the premises.

Here is a good example of how the premises can be shortened and used to focus on one label or another. If Appeal to Popularity is used, then all we need as a premise is the “majority of the people” appeal as a premise. If Authority, then we use the statement about lawyers as a premise. If Provincialism, then the reference of what he has done for black people as a premise. Note that most important would be the AA and it would be the same no matter which of these labels is used.

**Argument Analysis**: Reasoning. Even if it is true that O.J. has done a lot as a role model for black Americans and even if it was true that a majority of people think he is innocent (probably not true) or that lawyers in general think he is innocent, there is no discussion of the evidence presented by the prosecution. The prosecution believed that samples of his blood were found at the murder site, and
that the victims' blood was found in his car, on his sock, and at his home. The
defense claimed that the blood collection techniques used by the police were
sloppy and hence the evidence contaminated. The prosecution claimed that even if
the collection techniques were not perfect, there would be no way to get the
DNA readings that they did unless O.J. was the murderer. There is no discussion
of these relevant issues. What is the evidence for or against his guilt?

8. Hard one to structure, although for most students the label jumps out. Need to
follow the recipe for guidance on the conclusion and premise.

**Conclusion:** John is wrong about abortion.

**Premise:** He is a male chauvinist.

**Label and Description:** Ad Hominem Abusive. There is name-calling in the
premise.

**Argument Analysis:** Reasoning. Name-calling is not relevant to whether or not
John has a reasoned position on abortion. Attention has been shifted away from
the reasons John is against abortion. For the given conclusion, his reasons for
being against abortion need to be discussed. Even if he really is a male chauvinist
(then a circumstantial appeal), he could be right about abortion. To conclude that
his argument is unsound, the details of his argument need to be analyzed. Is the
fetus a live human being? Is abortion murder?

9. **Conclusion:** It is right for the U.S. to export military arms to other countries.
(There is nothing wrong with the U.S. being the leading exporter.)

**Premises:** Russia and China export arms. Almost all industrialized nations support
their balance of trade bottom line with arms exports while simultaneously using
these shipments as an instrument of influence and foreign policy. If we don't do
it, someone else will.

**Label and Description:** Two Wrongs Make a Right—Common Practice. Other
questionable practices (the exporting of arms by other countries) are cited in the
premise to justify the U.S. role.

**Argument Analysis:** Reasoning. The mere fact that other countries export arms
does not justify what they are doing, and thus would not be relevant to the issue of
whether it is right for the U.S. to do the same thing. It may be true that we have
no other choice, but this needs to be discussed and justified. Are there alternative
foreign policies? Is it right for other countries to export arms? Is the general
practice of exporting arms, even though common, a wise practice in terms of the
world's long-term interests? In short, a discussion is needed on why other
countries export arms and whether the reasons apply to the U. S.
Students will often ask about the difference between Popularity and Common Practice. Although they are similar—both appeal to something a majority is doing and the appeal is irrelevant to what is being discussed—popularity uses a premise that says the behavior is good as well as common, whereas common practice says the behavior is suspect but can be done because it is common.

10. See Textbook.

11. **Conclusion**: God does not exist.

**Premises**: Thoughtful, intelligent, and modern people do not believe in such an outdated belief. Only people with low IQs believe in God.

**Label and Description**: Provincialism. An in-group appeal is made in the premise (people who fancy themselves as modern and intelligent).

**Argument Analysis**: Reasoning. Even if it were true that so-called modern and intelligent people do not believe in God, this is, of course, irrelevant to whether God exists and whether or not arguments exist justifying a reasonable faith in God. Modern versions of the design and cosmological arguments (The Anthropic Principle, for instance) exist and could be part of a relevant discussion of the merits of believing in God's existence. Does big bang theory add credibility to the belief in God? Does our current understanding of the laws of nature support an argument from design? Most importantly, for the attribution of this label, is the fact that the reasons are not discussed that so-called modern and intelligent people have for not believing in God. Intelligent people are capable of having bad arguments for their beliefs.

Note: Some students will try Ad Hominem abusive for this one.

**Conclusion**: People who believe in God are wrong.

**Premise**: People who believe in God are stupid.

More interpretive, but it works. The AA would make the same points.

12. **Conclusion**: President Bush is wrong about his justification for war with Iraq.

**Premises**: Lots of very bad things are happening in the United States. Bush’s real motive is to distract the American people with a smokescreen to cover up his poor leadership on real problems. [Example on how to paraphrase and shorten the premises.]

**Label and Description**: Ad Homemin circumstantial. Attacking Bush’s alleged motive in the premises rather than an examination of his reasons for the war in Iraq.
Argument Analysis: Reasoning. Even if it is true that Bush’s motives for war with Iraq were suspicious, the relevant reasons he gave for the war should be the focus. Was Saddam Hussein a threat to the United States? Did he possess weapons of mass destruction? Could these weapons be given to terrorists to attack the United States? Was it a good idea to attempt to establish by force a democracy in the heart of the Middle East?

13. Conclusion: Vote for Frank Fasi for mayor.

Premise: Everybody is voting for Frank Fasi for mayor.

Label and Description: Appeal to Popularity. An appeal to Popularity ("everybody is") occurs in the premise.

Argument Analysis: Reasoning. Even if it is true that a majority is voting for Frank Fasi, the reasons why this majority is voting for him needs discussion. The relevant matters of Fasi's qualifications and stances on the issues need to be analyzed. Have the individuals within this majority analyzed Fasi's stances on the issues, and if so, what do they like about his positions?

14. Conclusion: Vote for the City Charter proposals.

Premises: State Representative Domingo and Senator Basil support the proposals. They were on the committee that proposed the amendments and they have been in government for many years.

Label and Description: Appeal to Authority. An appeal to Authority is made in the premise (Domingo and Basil).

Argument Analysis: Reasoning. Even if it is true that these government representatives have lots of political experience and are for the Charter proposals, their reasons need to be discussed. What are the details of the proposals? What changes do they make? What is the justification for the changes? What do those who oppose the changes have to say?

15. Conclusion: Abortion should be legal.

Premises: Any modern woman ready to enter the 21st century knows that it is her right to have abortion on demand. The antiquated arguments of the anti-abortionists are no longer worth considering. It is our time now and time for a new philosophy of justice.

Label and Description: Provincialism. An in-group appeal is made in the premise (modern woman, our time now, etc.).
Argument Analysis: Reasoning. Even if it is true that the so-called modern woman is in favor of abortion, the reasons for this position are not discussed. What are the relevant reasons for being for abortion? Should the fetus not be considered a human being? Are there constitutional reasons in favor of abortion? And so on?

16. Conclusion: Republican economic proposals (Contract with America) are wrong, or will be bad for the country.

Premises: It is no secret that the Republican Party is the party of the rich and that the majority of Republican voters are wealthy and will benefit the most from tax cuts. The economic policies of the Republicans are simply a disguise to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

Label and Description: Ad Hominem Circumstantial. Circumstances (the Republican Party has many members who are rich) and motives (proposals are a disguise) are appealed to in the premises.

Argument Analysis: Reasoning. Even if it is true that the Republican motives may be suspect, the Contract with America could be good for the entire country. The Republican motives are irrelevant to whether the proposals will work. The proposals themselves should be discussed in detail. The Republicans could be right even if they are clearly biased. Will massive elimination of government programs help or hurt the country? Will significant tax cuts for the rich and upper middle class produce more jobs?

17. Conclusion: Support the Latino American Sotomayor for Justice Project. (Or, support Sotomayor for the Supreme Court.)

Premises: It is time for some Latino justice in this county. It is time for some Latino representation on the Supreme Court. Almost 30 million Americans list their ancestry as Latino as of 2006. If confirmed Judge Sotomayor will be the first Latino American on the Supreme Court.

Label and Description: Provincialism. There is an in-group (Latino American) in the premise.

Argument Analysis: Reasoning. Even if it is true that Sotomayor will be the first Latino American on the Supreme Court, the relevant issues are not being discussed. What are her qualifications? What judicial experience does she have? Does her qualifications and judicial experience warrant an appointment to the Supreme Court?

18. Conclusion: Vote for Bush

Premises: This is our election. The president has made it clear that he is not going
to let Europeans decide what is right for America and he is not going to let the United Nations decide how to use American troops. Who cares what the rest of the world thinks. As an American your vote counts for America, not France and not Germany.

**Label and Description:** Appeal to Loyalty. There is an appeal to being a loyal American in the premise.

**Argument Analysis:** Reasoning. Even if Americans should support American opinions in general, being loyal to letting U.S. citizens decide their own elections is not the relevant issue. What is at issue is whether Bush should be president. What are his qualifications? How did he run the country his first four years? By the time of this election, Bush had invaded two Muslim countries (Afghanistan and Iraq). Was this the right thing to do for the country? How was the economy? Had Bush handled the economy well during his first four years? That many European countries opposed his reelection was not relevant also for opposing or not opposing Bush. What were the issues raised by the European opposition (shared by some U. S. voters as well) and would they be good reasons for not voting for Bush?


20. **Conclusion:** Continuing to federally subsidize tobacco growers is the right thing to do.

**Premises:** Sugar growers in Hawaii and milk producers in Minnesota receive federal help.

**Label and Description:** Two Wrongs Make a Right. An appeal is made in the premise to other questionable practices.

**Argument Analysis:** Reasoning. Even though it is true that milk and sugar growers receive federal support, these practices in general are controversial and need justification. Consumer groups claim that federal price supports cost consumers billions of dollars a year in higher prices and amount to welfare for the rich. Supporters claim that we must defend these industries against unfair foreign competition, and eventual foreign domination. Accordingly, what are the specifics? Why is it right to support sugar growers and milk producers? Do the reasons that may support these farmers also apply to tobacco? Even if there are good reasons to support sugar and milk producers, do the same reasons apply to a more dangerous product such as tobacco?

21. **Conclusion:** We should support stem cell research.

**Premises:** More than four thousand scientists—including forty-eight Nobel Prize winners and one hundred and twenty-seven members of the National Academy of
Sciences have announced their support for federal funding of stem cell research.

**Label and Description:** Appeal to Authority. There is an appeal to authority in the premise (scientists, Nobel Prize winners, National Academy of Sciences).

**Argument Analysis:** Reasoning. Even if the premise is true that these experts endorse stem cell research, the relevant focus should be on these experts’ reasons. Questions have been raised about the morality of using stem cells since they involve creating embryos and then destroying them. Is the research moral? What are the issues? Why do these experts believe that the research is moral and beneficial?

22. **Conclusion:** Senate members are wrong to support a bill that would involve surveying adult sexual behavior.

**Premise:** The real motive for the survey was to support the left-wing, liberal argument that homosexuality is normal.

**Label and Description:** Ad Hominem Circumstantial. Possible motives of supporters are attacked in the premises rather than an analysis of the bill itself.

**Argument Analysis:** Reasoning. Even if it were true that supporters had an agenda to promote tolerance of the homosexual lifestyle, the bill may still have had merits, such as providing information that could be used to prevent the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. To know, we should discuss the specifics of the bill. Helms has shifted attention away from the relevant issues that should be discussed and attacked the supporters of the bill. What was the bill for? What are the reasons for the bill? Why are these reasons misguided?

23. **Conclusion:** The U.S. should not rush into making deep cuts in defense spending in spite of the disintegration of the former Soviet Union.

**Premises:** We owe a strong defense to the many dedicated American men and women past and present who fought and died for their country.

**Label and Description:** Irrelevant Reason or Loyalty. The premise is irrelevant to the conclusion, or loyalty is appealed to in the premise. (We can pick just one and do about the same analysis.)

**Argument Analysis:** Reasoning. The loyalty of past and present men and women is irrelevant to whether we should continue to be loyal to present defense decisions. Even if it is true that people were loyal to past U.S. causes, this is not relevant to whether the current level of defense spending is justified. Current expenditures should be examined in detail and decisions made whether particular military items are still needed in the light of changes in the world. Otherwise, current practice might be an act of disloyalty to the men and women who
sacrificed so much in the past. Past sacrifices were made with the hope that some day more of our resources could be spent on education, health care, and infrastructure. That time might be now. If the military and security threats were different than in the past, were these new costly projects needed?

24. **Conclusion**: The way the Israelis treat the occupied Palestinians is not wrong.

**Premises**: The United States confiscated the land of Japanese citizens during World War II, and they were also made to live in concentration camps. Furthermore, the U.S. treated the American Indians poorly and confiscated their land for pioneer settlements.

**Label & Description**: Two Wrongs Make a Right. Other wrongs are appealed to in the premises.

**Argument Analysis**: Reasoning. Although the actions by the U.S. referred to in the premises are true, no discussion has taken place justifying those actions or relating that justification to what the Israelis are doing. Attention has been shifted away from the primary issue: is it true that Palestinians are made to live in virtual concentration camps, have no political rights, have little freedom of movement, and that their land is repeatedly confiscated for Israeli settlements, and do such actions have any justification? What justification did the United States have for its action and does this justification also apply to Israel’s actions?

25. **Conclusion**: The arguments of those who oppose Clarence Thomas for the Supreme Court are wrong (don't measure up).

**Premises**: Look at his opponents: Senator Ted Kennedy was thrown out of Harvard as a college student for cheating and left the scene of a terrible accident at Chapiquiddick, Senator Joseph Biden was found to have plagiarized a speech when he attempted to run for president, and Senator Alan Cranston has been implicated in the Savings and Loan scandal.

**Label and Description**: Ad Hominem Circumstantial. Attacking in the premises the personal circumstances of those who oppose Thomas for the Supreme Court.

**Argument Analysis**: Reasoning. Even if the premise claims are true, they are irrelevant to the conclusion. Rather than an analysis of the arguments of Kennedy, Biden, and Cranston, their personal transgressions are cited. The possible poor track records of those who oppose Thomas are not relevant to the main issue—whether Thomas is qualified to be on the Supreme Court. The details of Kennedy's, Biden's, and Cranston's reasons for opposition to Thomas should be discussed. What are Thomas’s qualifications? Do they measure up to what is best for the Supreme Court?
26. **Conclusion**: Vote for Obama.

**Premises**: He will be the first African-American president. People of Hawaii and other minorities of color now have a chance to have a racial minority president.

**Label and Description**: Provincialism. There is an in-group appeal in the premise (black people and other minorities of color).

**Argument Analysis**: Reasoning. Even if it is true that Obama will be the first African-American president and it will mean a lot in general to other racial minorities, there is still the main relevant issue of qualifications and experience. What is Obama’s position on all the issues facing the country? Does he have the needed experience to face all these issues?

27. **Conclusion**: Tom Cruise's arguments for supporting concern for the environment are wrong and not worth listening to.

**Premises**: Tom Cruise is a hypocrite. He made a stock-car movie in which he destroyed thirty-five cars, burned thousands of gallons of gasoline, and wasted dozens of tires.

**Label and Description**: Ad Hominem Circumstantial. Citing in the premises the personal circumstances of Cruise.

**Argument Analysis**: Reasoning. Even if the premise is true, there are still the relevant issues of what Cruise’s concerns are and whether he has some good reasons for them. Cruise's stock-car movie is irrelevant to whether or not greater concern is needed for the environment and whether or not environmentalists have legitimate points regarding our actions. Limbaugh has shifted attention away from an analysis of Cruise's arguments and attacked him personally. Cruise might well be a hypocrite, but still have important concerns regarding the importance of the environment for the welfare of all of us. The details of Cruise's proposals and concerns need to be discussed.

28. **Conclusion**: Those accusing President Bill Clinton for having sex with a former White House intern and lying about it (perjury) are wrong. (Implied from “President Clinton is not guilty . . .”)

**Premise**: These allegations are part of a vast right-wing conspiracy by a group of people that have been out to get Clinton since he announced for his intention to run for president of the United States.

**Label and Description**: Ad Hominem circumstantial. The premises cite a conspiracy by people who have a motive to hurt President Clinton politically.

**Argument Analysis**: Reasoning. Even if it is true that right-wing political
supporters who do not like Clinton’s more liberal policies would love to see Clinton hurt politically and will do anything to see that bad things are said about Clinton in the media, there are still the relevant allegations made against Clinton that should be discussed. Did he have sex with a White House intern and did he lie about it in a court of law (perjury)? What is the evidence? Hillary Clinton has shifted attention away from the allegations and attacked the motives of those making the allegations.

29. **Conclusion**: McFarlane's charges regarding Reagan and North and their roles in the Iran-Contra affair are wrong.

**Premises**: The charges are simply a pitiful and mean-spirited attempt to glue McFarlane's broken reputation back together again.

**Label and Description**: Ad Hominem Circumstantial. McFarlane's possible motives are cited in the premises.

**Argument Analysis**: Reasoning. Even if it is true that McFarlane had an ulterior motive, this is irrelevant to his charges regarding the roles of Reagan and North in the Iran-Contra affair. McFarlane is attacked personally and attention is shifted away from the relevant issue. Did President Reagan lie? Did he know and approve of the full story? Did North lie to McFarlane and Congress? The details of the claims made in McFarlane's book need to be analyzed and discussed.

30. **Conclusion**: Richard Clarke is wrong about President Bush’s ineffective approach to fighting terrorism.

**Premises**: He has a grudge against President Bush because he wanted a more prominent position in the Bush White House. Plus he is just trying to drum up publicity for his book. His motives for attacking the President are political and financial.

**Label and Description**: Ad Hominem circumstantial. Clarke’s alleged motives are attacked in the premise.

**Argument Analysis**: Reasoning. Even if Clarke’s motives are suspect, the hugely important issue of how to best fight terrorism is not discussed. Clarke claims Bush blew it by attacking Iraq. We moved resources from Afghanistan and provided terrorists with a big recruitment victory by attacking an Islamic country that had nothing to do with the 9/11 attack on the United States. Was this right? Or, did Bush still have good reasons to also attack Iraq because it might have weapons of mass destruction that could be given to terrorists? Plus having a stable democracy in the Middle East—a good reason?