

## LOGICAL STANDARDS FOR DISCUSSIONS

Question: Does it necessary follow that given our belief in free speech and everyone's right to express an opinion, that therefore all opinions and statements are of equal value? Is there a way to distinguish the quality of statements in the classroom?

- Are there standards to which we can hold our students as educated citizens, and as expected outcomes for instruction?
- Should we hold our candidates to the same standards we expect for our students?
- Remember: in our role as classroom and instructional leaders, we *must* remain non-partisan. Yet while we are not to tell students what to think, are there tools we can provide our students to help them evaluate how they think, and how they reach and verify their conclusions?

The problem of "vulgar relativity": a common misunderstanding of the concept of relativity is that "all truth is relative". This extreme misunderstanding of the concept, while often stated with the intention of being open-minded and tolerant of others, is a self-defeating concept.

- The distinction between "mere belief" and "true belief". Just adding the statement "It's true for me" does not transform mere belief into a true statement.
- "Who is to say?" and the desire to stop debate
- "This is what I feel." The focus should be on defensible positions.
- Plato's objection – in short, the position that all truth is relative must therefore itself be relative, and its proponents must therefore be willing to concede that the position that all truth is not relative is also true, a contradiction.
- If all truth is relative, what must we tolerate?

### Recognizing Types of Claims

- Empirical (fact checking)
- A priori (checking logic)
- Normative (recognizing value statements)

### Common Fallacies (not an exhaustive list)

- Ad hominem – falsely directing attention from claim evidence to person making claim
- Strawman – replacing the original claim with an extreme or exaggerated version
- Half Truth – misrepresenting a true statement by failing to state relevant facts
- Weasel Words – words meant to imply more than the truth
- Slippery Slope – falsely positing a sequence leading to an unfavorable outcome
- Red Herring – intentional diversions to redirect the argument
- False Alternative/Dilemma – when fewer alternatives are posited than actually exist
- False Disjunct – falsely arguing that no combination of possibilities can occur
- Question-Begging Arguments
  - Question-begging definitions – using definitions to rule out contrary views
  - Circular arguments – premises are not independent of the conclusion
- Genetic Fallacy – assessing the value of a position or practice based on its origins
- Bandwagon – basing truth of a position on a large number of followers
- Illicit Appeal to Authority – reliance on flawed sources

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- Appeal to Tradition - assuming long-term existence equals good or true
- Leading Question – phrasing a question to pre-determine an answer
- Bad Analogy – arguing from characteristics that are not *similar, relevant, and several*