

**Intro to Ethics**  
**Dr. Heather Salazar**  
**Intro to Arguments**

**A Very Basic Introduction to Arguments**

An **argument** is a one or more reasons that come together to demonstrate a thesis.

The reasons (**premises**) work together to prove or indicate the thesis (**conclusion**).

If you imagine that the reasons are true and you ask if they prove or indicate the thesis and your answer is yes, then the argument is **valid**. More precisely, it is valid if it is impossible for the premises to be true while the conclusion is false. If the argument is not valid, then it is **invalid**.

If the argument is valid, and you ask the further question whether the premises of the argument are true, and you answer yes, then the argument is **sound** or **cogent**.

In **deductive arguments** our reasons or premises are principles, and we reason from those principles to another principle for the thesis or conclusion. If a deductive argument is valid and the premises are true, then the argument is **sound** and the conclusion is definitely true.

**Inductive arguments** use evidence (facts, examples, etc.) in the premises to indicate the conclusion. If an inductive argument is valid and the premises are true, then the argument is **cogent** and the conclusion is probably true.

A **fallacy** is a flaw in an argument. For a list of fallacies and explanations, see <http://www.nizkor.org/features/fallacies/>

The most important (those that you will see in philosopher's arguments and to which you are most susceptible even when you are careful) are appeal to common practice and emotion, begging the question, false dilemma, hasty generalization, and straw man. Circularity is also an important charge of which to be aware.

**In this class:**

1. Ask what reasons support the thesis under consideration. Together, this will be the argument.
2. Be sure to be able to provide evidence from the text of your ideas.
3. Ask if the reasons prove or indicate the thesis. So, ask if the argument is valid.
4. Ask if the reasons are correct. So, ask if the argument is sound.
5. Try to think of counterexamples to the logic and the reasons to test your judgements.