The Bad Argument Assignment

Use this worksheet to frame your Bad Argument Assignment. It will help you organize your thinking and avoid common mistakes. To get an idea of how this might look when you are done, see the examples on the Assessment page of the classes.vole.org website.

# Assignment Authors:

List all *and only* those people who made substantive contributions to completing this assignment. State each person’s contributions. (Neither just being present nor merely typing what others say is a substantive contribution.)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name | Contribution |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

# Source:

Give the URL for the original source. If it is a video or audio source, give the timestamp for the relevant portion.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

# Conclusion:

State the conclusion of the argument you are targeting. Many passages contain more than one bad argument – pick one and don’t get distracted by other stuff. If your conclusion is more than a short, precise sentence, something’s probably gone wrong. If you use words like ‘because’ or ‘since’, you are probably packing in more than the conclusion.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

State whether the conclusion is explicitly stated in your source or is implicit / unstated. If it is unstated, justify your interpretation of the conclusion and be very careful not to exaggerate what the author is committing to.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

# Relevant Text:

Transcribe, or copy and paste, the relevant text (and only the relevant text) of your target argument. Cut any irrelevance, repetition, and window-dressing from the original source.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

# Kind of Argument:

Sate whether your target argument is intended to be purely deductive (like a mathematical proof) or something else. Perhaps it’s an inductive argument (identifying trends or extrapolating from empirical evidence), an analogy (if A and B are relevantly similar, then what goes for A should also go for B), an inference to the best explanation (the best explanation of the paw prints on the counter and the tooth marks in the chicken is that the cat dunnit), a preponderance of evidence (there are considerations both ways, but on balance…), or some other kind of argument.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

# The Essence:

Explicitly set out each step of your target argument: Assumptions, connecting moves, and conclusion.

* Add lines if needed. If you need more than a couple extra, be suspicious that you don’t have a clear argument.
* For each assumption, state whether it is explicit in the source or is a hidden assumption. If it is hidden, justify reading it into the argument.
* For each connecting move and the conclusion, state which prior steps the move relies on and what (if anything) is supposed to justify the move. If a move has no justification, flag it as such. Remember, for non-deductive arguments, it’s unlikely the author is claiming full-blown proof: more likely they are claiming considerations that ‘give some evidence for’, or ‘are a reasonable explanation of’, or something cautious along those lines.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. |  |  |
| 2. |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |

# The Problem:

## If your argument is deductive:

Is it valid or invalid? State and justify your answer. (If it’s invalid, the faulty step should have been flagged in The Essence – you will explain the error of reasoning here.)

|  |
| --- |
|  |

If your argument is valid, you must think it is unsound because it relies on a faulty assumption. State which assumption(s) you are attacking and justify your answer.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

## If your argument is not deductive:

Explain the problem.

|  |
| --- |
|  |