

CRITICAL THINKING

Problem Set #2: Argument Parsing

Although I strongly suggest that you write out answers to all these problems, you do not have to turn in any written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to do these types of problems, for questions on the weekly quizzes and exams will primarily be drawn from the problem sets. The solutions to these problems will be provided, so you can check your own work and seek help from me as necessary.

We will devote considerable time to these types of problems during the next in-class workshop. In order to make that workshop productive, please make a solid start on them. That way you can use the workshop to address the difficulties you are facing.

I have included an advanced logic puzzle for your own entertainment.

Instructions

Each of the following problems presents an argument. For each argument, (1) underline and denote with a CI any conclusion indicators, (2) circle and denote with a PI any premise indicators, (3) circle and denote with a C the argument's main conclusion, and (4) underline and number each premise.

Problems

1. Rene hates Julia, and she always upsets him, so he should avoid her.
2. Daddy loves me, for my momma tells me so.
3. Spiderman is a better superhero than Superman because kryptonite can't hurt him, and he doesn't have a Lois Lane around to mess things up.
4. "Whether our argument concerns public affairs or some other subject we must know some, if not all, of the facts about the subject on which we are to speak and argue. Otherwise, we can have no materials out of which to construct arguments."
[Aristotle, *Rhetoric*]
5. If guns are outlawed, then only outlaws will have guns. Don't outlaw guns.
6. If someone says something that offends me, I should have the right to stop that kind of speech. After all, words can assault people just as weapons can.
7. "Citizens who so value their 'independence' that they will not enroll in a political party are really forfeiting independence, because they abandon a share in decision-making at the primary level: the choice of the candidate."
[Bruce L. Felknor, *Dirty Politics*]
8. If someone says something that offends me, I cannot and should not try to stop them from speaking. After all, in America, speech—even offensive speech—is protected.
9. "Piercing car alarms have disturbed my walks, cafe meals or my sleep at least once during every day I have lived in the city; roughly 3,650 car alarms. Once, only once, was the wail a response to theft. . . . Silent car alarms connect immediately to a security company, while the noisy ones are a problem, not a solution. They should be banned, finally."
[Letter to the editor, *New York Times*]
10. "If history is a gauge, the U.S. government cannot be trusted when it comes to sending our children to war. It seems that many years after Congress sends our children to war, we find out that the basic premise for the war was an intentional lie."
[Letter to the editor, *L.A. Daily News*]
11. Faster-than-light travel is not possible. It would violate a law of nature.
12. You have neglected your duty on several occasions, and you have been absent from work too many times. Therefore, you are not fit to serve in your current capacity.
13. The flu epidemic on the East Coast is real. Government health officials say so. And I personally have read at least a dozen news stories that characterize the situation as a "flu epidemic."
14. "Current-day Christians use violence to spread their right-to-life message. These Christians, often referred to as the religious right, are well known for violent demonstrations against Planned Parenthood and other abortion clinics. Doctors and other personnel are threatened with death, clinics have been bombed, there have even been cases of doctors being murdered."
[Letter to the editor, *Arizona Daily Wildcat*]
15. Witches are real. They are mentioned in the Bible. There are many people today who claim to be witches. And historical records reveal that there were witches in Salem.
16. Vaughn's car is old. It is beat up. It is unsafe to drive. Therefore, Vaughn's car is ready for the junkyard.
17. "[T]he Religious Right is not 'pro-family' Concerned parents realize that children are curious about how their bodies work and need accurate, age-appropriate information about the human reproductive system. Yet, thanks to Religious Right pressure, many public schools have replaced sex education with fear-based 'abstinence only' programs that insult young people's intelligence and give them virtually no useful information."
[Rob Boston, *Free Inquiry Magazine*]
18. "[Francis Bacon] is the father of experimental philosophy. . . . In a word, there was not a man who had any idea of experimental philosophy before Chancellor Bacon; and of an infinity of experiments which have been made since his time, there is hardly a single one which has not been pointed out in his book. He had even made a good number of them himself."
[Voltaire, *On Bacon and Newton*]
19. "Is there archaeological evidence for the [Biblical] Flood? If a universal Flood occurred between five and six thousand years ago, killing all humans except the eight on board the Ark, it would be abundantly clear in the archaeological record. Human history would be marked by an absolute break. We would see the devastation wrought by the catastrophe in terms of the destroyed physical remains of pre-Flood human settlements. . . . Unfortunately for the Flood enthusiasts, the destruction of all but eight of the world's people left no mark on the archaeology of human cultural evolution."
[Kenneth L. Feder, *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries*]

Problem Set #2: Argument Parsing (Continued)

20. "Subjectivism claims that what makes an action [morally] right is that a person approves of it or believes that it's right. Although subjectivism may seem admirably egalitarian in that it takes everyone's moral judgments to be as good as everyone else's, it has some rather bizarre consequences. For one thing, it implies that each of us is morally infallible. As long as we approve of or believe in what we are doing, we can do no wrong. But this cannot be right. Suppose that Hitler believed that it was right to exterminate the Jews.... But what ... Hitler did was wrong, even if [he] believed otherwise." [Theodore Schick, Jr., *Free Inquiry Magazine*].

Note: There may a lot of exercises here. Do not feel obligated to do all of them. I often assign many exercises so that you have plenty of opportunities to practice the skills these exercises are trying to impart. I suggest doing just enough of them so that you are confident that you could use these skills on a quiz or an exam.

Logic Puzzle

The piloting crew on the Qatar Airways flight to Washington, D.C. consists of the pilot, the co-pilot, and the navigator. Their names listed alphabetically are Ayah, Hafsa, and Rayhan. Among the cabin (non-piloting) crew on this plane, there are also three flight attendants with corresponding names, Ms. Ayah, Ms. Hafsa, and Mr. Rayhan. The following facts are known:

1. Mr. Rayhan lives in Doha.
2. The pilot lives halfway between Doha and Medina.
3. Ms. Ayah earns exactly qr 80,000.00 a year.
4. Hafsa once beat the co-pilot at tennis.
5. The pilot's next-door neighbor is one of the three flight attendants mentioned, and this neighbor earns precisely three times as much money as the pilot.
6. The flight attendant living in Medina has the same name as the pilot.

Questions: What is the pilot's name? What is the co-pilot's name? What is the navigator's name?

These questions have definitive right answers that can be fully justified without any guessing.