

RHE 321
Principles of Rhetoric

Thanks to Heather Ordover & Mike McGuire
University of Arizona



A Closer Look at Logos

Syllogisms, Enthymemes, and other methods of
rhetorical reasoning

What is a syllogism?

- A specific method of logical deduction (moving from the general to the particular)
- Every syllogism contains at least three parts:
 - a major premise (global assumption)
 - a minor premise (specific claim)
 - a conclusion
- It's kind of like simple math...

If $A = B$ and $B = C$, then $A = C$

An example of a syllogism

all humans are mortal (major premise)



Socrates is human (minor premise)



Socrates is mortal (conclusion)

A visual representation

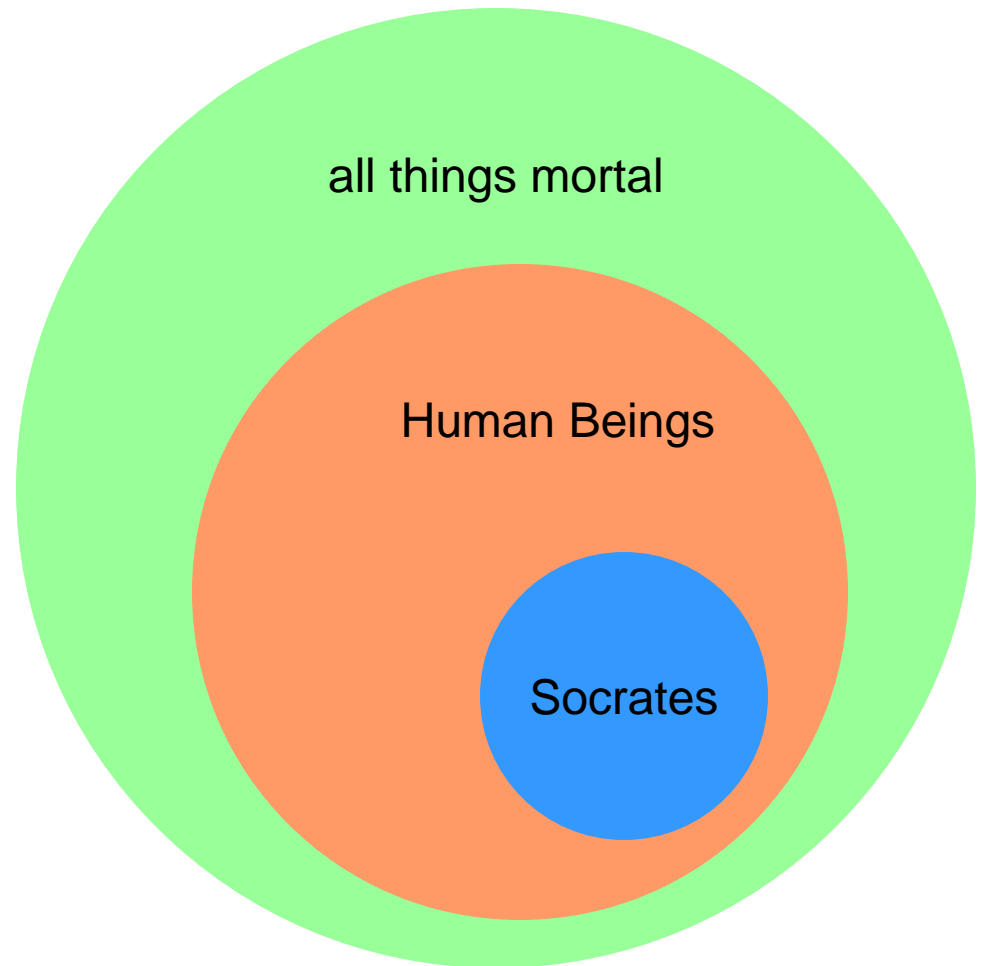
all humans are mortal



Socrates is human



Socrates is mortal



An example of a syllogism

all mammals have hair (major premise)



fish do not have hair (minor premise)



fish are not mammals (conclusion)

A visual representation

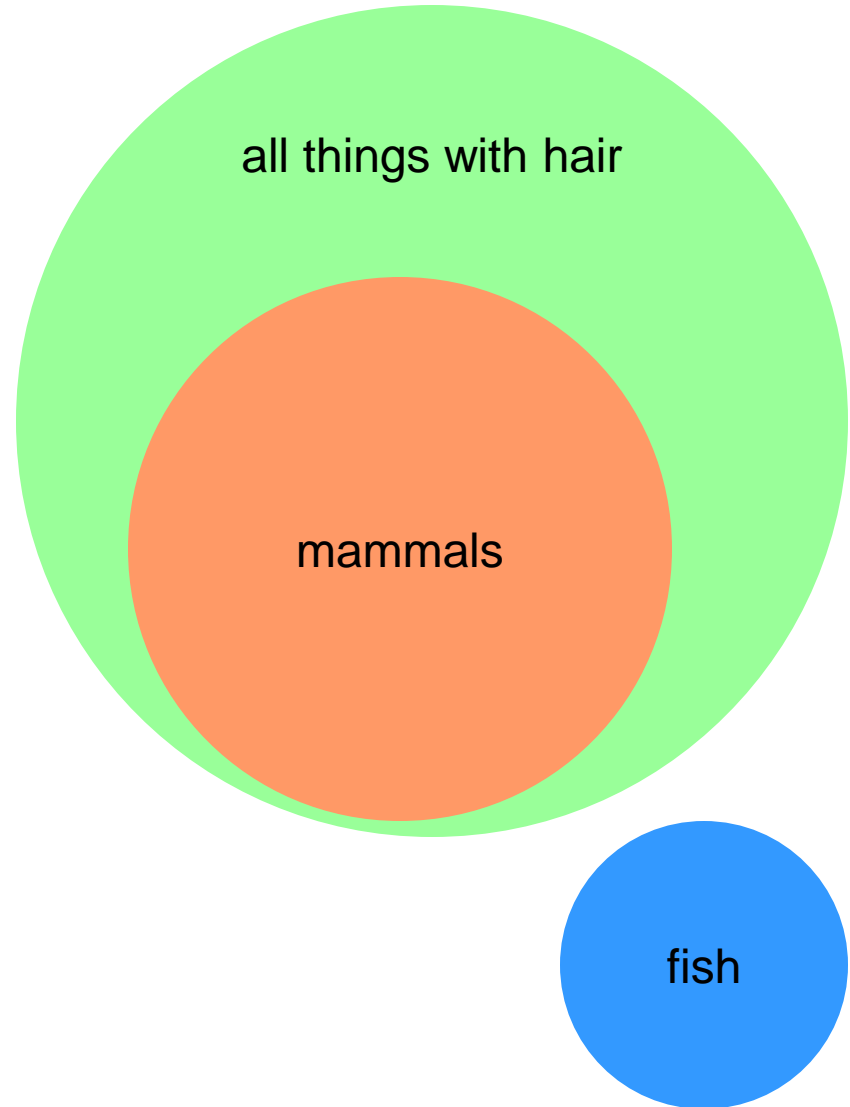
all mammals have hair



fish do not have hair



fish are not mammals



A visual representation

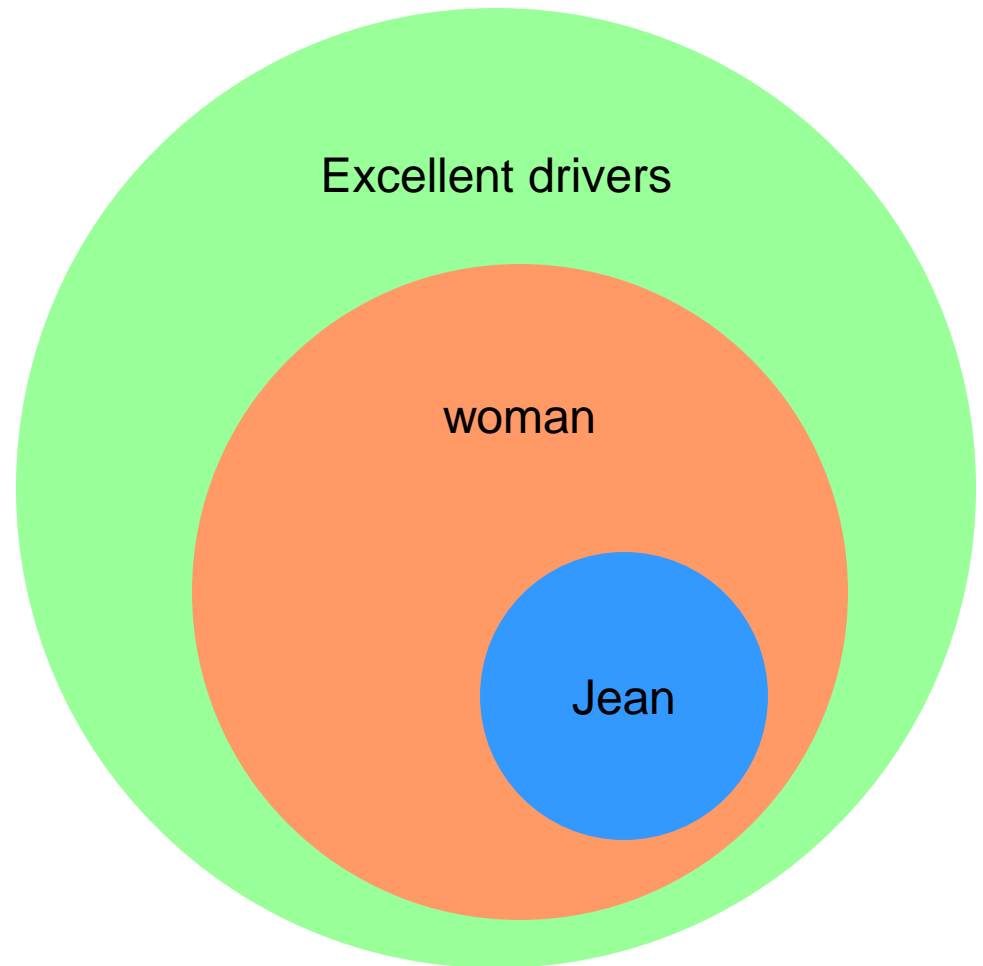
All women are excellent drivers.



Jeanne is a woman.



Jeanne is an excellent driver.



Feel free to challenge the major premise

What is an enthymeme?

- sometimes called a “truncated syllogism”
- a syllogism that leaves out one of its three elements: the major premise, minor premise, or conclusion goes unstated (implied)
- less formal than the syllogism and drawn from widely held community belief

An example of an enthymeme

We cannot trust this man because he has perjured himself in the past.

Enthymemes are often
“because” statements.

The syllogism behind this enthymeme...

Those who perjure themselves (major premise)
cannot be trusted.



This man perjured himself (minor premise)
in the past.



This man cannot be trusted. (conclusion)

Beware. Think Critically.

Enthymemes are sometimes used to hide the underlying assumption upon which an argument is based.

Find it and challenge it.



What are the unstated assumptions?

- I failed that course because the instructor didn't like me.

Assumption: *The instructor fails students he doesn't like.*

- I'm not surprised he made the team. After all, his mother is the superintendent of schools.

Assumption: *The superintendent gives special favors to her family*

- If I'd only taken my boss to lunch more often, I could have gotten that raise.

Assumption: *The boss denies raises to people who don't take her to lunch very often.*

True vs. valid arguments

- **true argument** = an argument with a conclusion that people commonly consider to be fact based on their worldly experience or wide-spread belief
- **valid argument** = an argument with a conclusion that logically follows its underlying assumption regardless of whether the assumption is true or not

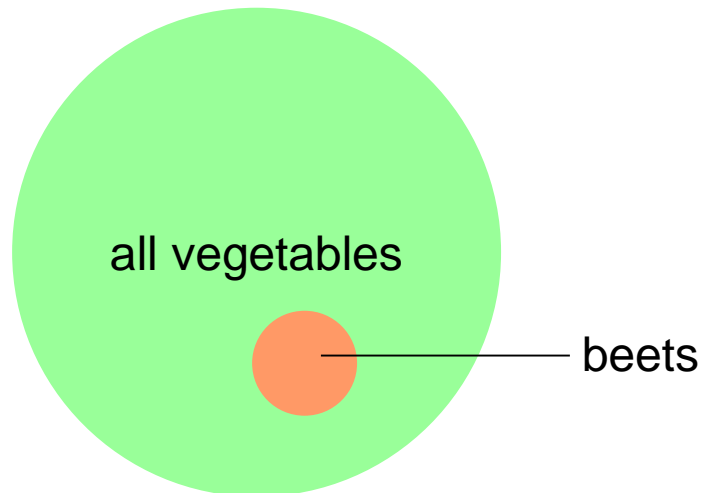
Don't let your beliefs or common knowledge
blind you to faulty logic.

Is this true, valid, or both?

- All vegetables are green.

Beets are vegetables.

Therefore, beets are green.

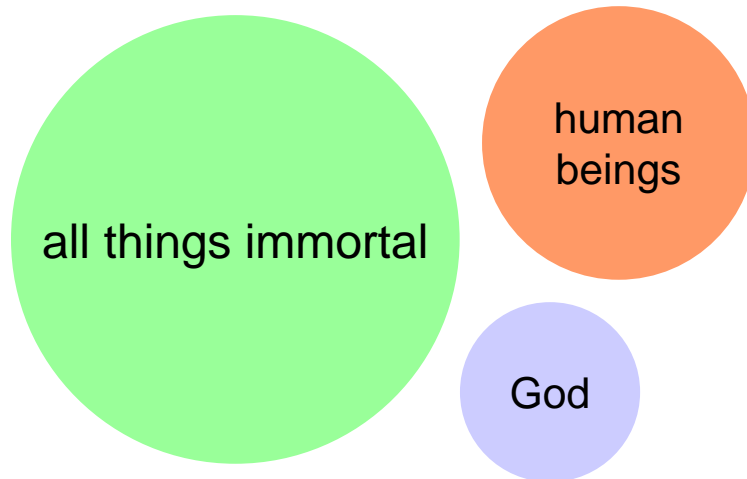


good logic, but a
faulty assumption:
valid but **not true**

Is this true, valid, or both?

- No human being is immortal.

God is not a human being.
Therefore, God is immortal.



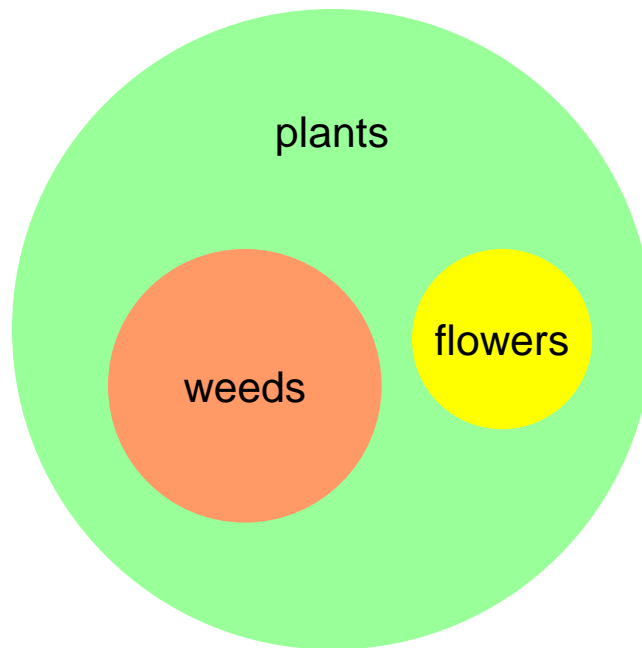
faulty logic but, according to many people's beliefs, a true statement: **invalid** argument, but a **true** conclusion (according to many people's beliefs)

Is this true, valid, or both?

- All weeds are plants.

A flower is a plant.

Therefore, all weeds are flowers.



Remember, in all valid deductive arguments the conclusion is a necessary consequence of the premises. The conclusion here does not logically follow as a necessary consequence; therefore this argument is **invalid**.



Another type of logical appeal

RHETORICAL EXAMPLES

Rhetorical Examples

Quintilian: an example adduces “some past action real or assumed which may serve to persuade the audience of the truth of the point we are trying to make.”

- To convince a friend that she should run home and let the dog out between classes, I might remind her of a past instance in which my dog peed on the carpet when I left him for too long.
- To convince the judiciary committee that the kids of gay parents are not at a disadvantage, Zach Wahls (child of lesbian couple) offers up his own considerable accomplishments.

Rhetorical Examples

- May involve reasoning only from part to part (my dog to your dog) or from a particular to a generalization (induction: Zach Wahls offers himself an example of all kinds of gay parents).
- Typically, to move from rhetorical example to full on inductive reasoning that leads to a generalizable conclusion, the rhetor needs to offer several examples to make his or her point.
- May be used to compare or to contrast with the specific case:
 - “Survivor and American Idol were rigged. So don’t expect me to watch America’s Next Top Model.” [Argument by comparison (comparing examples): If two reality shows were rigged, others will be, as well.]
 - Bumper sticker: “Nobody died when Clinton lied.” [Argument by contrary (contrasting examples): Bush administration’s untruths about WMDs in Iraq led to the death of US soldiers and Iraqi citizens, whereas, by contrast, Clinton’s lie about his sexual activity seems less objectionable.]

Rhetorical Examples



Types of rhetorical examples

- Historical examples: example drawn from history
 - “We should not invade Iraq—that will be another **Vietnam**.”
- Fictional examples: example drawn from literature, film, cartoons, fables, etc.
 - Like Wile E. Coyote, Congress repeats the same actions over and over to the same ends, learning nothing.
- Hypothetical examples (analogies): placing a hypothetical example beside a specific instance for purposes of comparison
 - L.B.J.: “You do not take a person who for years has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race, and then say, ‘you’re free to compete with all the others,’ and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates...” (argument for affirmative action)



Another type of logical appeal

ARGUMENT FROM SIGNS

Signs

Physical facts or real events that typically accompany some other state of affairs.

- Fever is a sign of illness
- Smoke is a sign of fire
- Scars are a sign of past injury

Signs

- Arguments from signs appeal to the daily experiences a rhetor shares with his or her audience.
- Trick is to convince audience that the sign **is** or **is not** inevitably connected to the state of affairs being established
 - The defendant's bloody shirt is a sign that she committed the murder OR NOT: she suffers from frequent nosebleeds
 - The cloudy sky is a sign of an impending storm OR NOT: could be air pollution
 - A friend's listlessness is a sign that he's depressed OR NOT: he's catching the flu