Some Common Fallacies of Argument

Evading the Issue:

You avoid the central point of an argument, instead drawing attention to a minor (or side) issue.

ex. You've put through a proposal that will cut overall loan benefits for students and drastically raise interest rates, but then you focus on how the system will be set up to process loan applications for students more quickly.

Ad hominem:

Here you attack a person's character, physical appearance, or personal habits instead of addressing the central issues of an argument. You focus on the person's personality, rather than on his/her ideas, evidence, or arguments. This type of attack sometimes comes in the form of character assassination (especially in politics). You must be sure that character is, in fact, a relevant issue.

ex. How can we elect John Smith as the new CEO of our department store when he has been through 4 messy divorces due to his infidelity?

Ad populum:

This type of argument uses illegitimate emotional appeal, drawing on people's emotions, prejudices, and stereotypes. The emotion evoked here is not supported by sufficient, reliable, and trustworthy sources.

Ex. We shouldn't develop our shopping mall here in East Vancouver because there is a rather large immigrant population in the area. There will be too much loitering, shoplifting, crime, and drug use.
Complex or Loaded Question:

Offers only two options to answer a question that may require a more complex answer. Such questions are worded so that any answer will implicate an opponent.

**Ex.** At what point did you stop cheating on your wife?

Setting up a Straw Person:

*Here you address the weakest point of an opponent’s argument, instead of focusing on a main issue. Or, you imply that an opponent is arguing something that he/she is not.*

**Ex.** An instructor argues that in order to do well in a composition course, you have to work hard outside of class, and practice your writing. You respond by saying that not everyone can afford to pay a tutor.

Red Herring:

*This type of fallacy manipulates the audience by avoiding the central argument, shifting attention to an irrelevant or unrelated issue. The user of a red herring intends to distract the audience from the important issues.*

**Ex.** A teacher accused of sexually harassing a student might answer that he/she devotes many overtime hours in order to prepare her/his class material.

Lack of Contrary Evidence also known as an appeal to ignorance):

*It indicates that something must be true because it has never been proven to be false.*

**Ex.** The Bigfoot monster must exist because no one has ever proven that it doesn’t.
Ad Verecundiam ("to authority"): 

This is appealing to weak (inappropriate) authority, or arguing that we should continue doing something because it’s tradition

ex. We should get completely drunk on Canada Day because we've done it since we were teenagers. (This doesn't allow for the possibility of change/maturity.)

Begging the Question:

It is a type of circular reasoning. You use your own claim to support the claim.

Ex. "This vital legislation on Aboriginal Peoples must pass now." (Assumes that the legislation is vital.)

Non Sequitor (also known as Guilt by Association):

In this type of reasoning, the conclusion does not follow from the premises set out in the argument.

Ex. All drug dealers conduct their business in East Vancouver.

Danny conducts his business in East Vancouver.

Therefore, Danny must be a drug dealer.

From: http://www.writingcentre.ubc.ca/workshop/tools/cmnflc.htm