Ambiguity:
Real life examples
Housing Market

“The average price of a new house in this neighborhood is $1 million.”

Consider this:

- Nine new homes each with price of $100,000
- One new home priced at $9.9 million.
TIM RUSSERT: But why don’t you support gay marriage?

JOHN EDWARDS: Well, I guess it was the way I was brought up.

See anything ambiguous here?
“Why don’t you support gay marriage?” is ambiguous.

It might mean:

- What CAUSED you to not support it???

Or it might mean:

- What’s your ARGUMENT for not supporting it???
Politics

Edwards used this ambiguity to avoid having to support his position with an argument!

• (Politicians use this technique a lot.)
• The U.S. Constitution!
• It has a lot of ambiguity...
• One example is the Second Amendment.
“A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the People to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.”

- Grouping ambiguity:
  - Is it a collective right or an individual right?

- Vagueness: “keep and bear”
  - Does this include bringing a gun to this class?
“A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the People to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.”

• Vagueness: “arms”:
  • Does this include surface to air missiles? Grenade launchers?

• Vagueness: “infringed”
  • Does licensing count as infringement?