Philosophy 103: Critical Reasoning

Instructor: Joshua D. Kerr
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Class meets: MTWTh 9:00 – 9:50am
Office hours: Th 10:00 – 12:00am
and by appointment

Course Description:
This course introduces basic reasoning skills that are important for any field of study or situation in which we need to argue, i.e., convince someone of something by giving good reasons. In this course you will learn how to recognize, analyze, and evaluate different kinds of arguments, as well as construct your own arguments. We will first learn to recognize arguments, then to evaluate common types of arguments and identify fallacies in reasoning, and finally to apply what we have learned to current issues and debates by writing a short argumentative essay.

The only way to learn this material is through exercises. Besides lectures in which I explain the course material, most of the class time will consist in exercises, both for analyzing arguments and for making them.

Learning Outcomes
During this course, students will
➢ Strengthen critical thinking skills,
➢ Develop the ability to detect and analyze arguments,
➢ Construct good arguments,
➢ Achieve mobility of thought, and
➢ Sharpen the ability to write an argumentative essay.

Office Hours:
My office hours will be held in Susan Campbell Hall, which is behind the museum. My office is in room is 221, which is upstairs on the second floor. I am more than happy to discuss any issues with you at any time, so please send me an email or see me after class to make an appointment if my regularly scheduled hours do not work for you.

Required Texts:
➢ Critical Thinking: An Introduction to the Basic Skills by William Hughes, Jonathan Lavery, and Katheryn Doran (Broadview Press, 2014)
Course Requirements

➤ Participation (40%). You will get participation points for completing in-class assignments and turning in short homework assignments. Participation points will be translated into grades at the end of the semester. Short homework problem may be assigned throughout the week. Homework assigned on Thursdays should be handed in on Monday prior to the beginning of class.

➤ Three Exams (40%). Three mid-term exams will test your comprehension of course materials. These will be in-class examinations. You will be given a number of questions, similar to those discussed in class. Your two highest scoring exams will each be worth 15% of your final grade; your lowest scoring exam will be worth 10% of your final grade. **You must be present for the exams.** If you are unable to make it to an exam due to an illness or other accident, you must notify me as soon as possible before the exam and provide documented proof that excuses your absence.

➤ Final Argumentative Essay (20%). Your work in the class will culminate in a final argumentative essay. You will be required to write a short essay (2-4 pages, double-spaced, standard margins, 12 point font) in which you make arguments for and against a certain issue. You will provide a main argument, anticipate objections, and refute them. Letter grades will be assigned in the typical way (100-90% = A, 80-89% = B, etc.) on a +/- scale.

Procedures and Guidelines

1. **Record-Keeping:** Please retain the original copy of all work returned to you during the term until the final course grade has been posted. In the event of any question concerning whether grades have been accurately recorded, it is your responsibility to provide these original copies as documentation.

2. **Late Work:** Handing in homework late will lower your grade. Homework that is more than a week late will not be accepted.

3. **Electronic Devices:** The use of electronic devices, such as laptops, cell phones, mp3 players, etc. during class is not allowed unless a student has a documented need for using a specific device.

4. **Plagiarism:** Students, in submitting work, certify that the work is their own original work and that all information garnered from others whether quoted, summarized, or paraphrased has been appropriately cited. Failure to acknowledge the work of others constitutes plagiarism and is a serious offense. **Normally, the penalty for plagiarism is failure in the course (“F”).** More serious penalties may also be invoked. For more information, see http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/. For official policies, see http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/. Read these policies; they are considered part of the syllabus.

5. **Accommodation:** The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this
course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

6. **Resources:** The Teaching and Learning Center provides numerous resources, including tutoring, to help UO students succeed (located in 68 PLC, tlc.uoregon.edu). The University Counseling and Testing Center provides comprehensive mental health care and testing services (located on the second floor of the University Health, Counseling, and Testing Center Building, counseling.uoregon.edu).

7. **Discrimination and Sexual Harassment:** The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Please be aware that all UO employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO’s 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.

8. **Blackboard:** Syllabus, assignments, and due dates subject to change at instructor’s discretion. Assignments and any changes to the course schedule will be made available on Blackboard.
COURSE SCHEDULE
(Tentative schedule, subject to change at instructor's discretion)

Week One
Mon: Introduction to the course. What is critical reasoning? What is an argument? (Critical Thinking [CT] 1.1)
Tues: Logical strength, deductive and inductive reasoning (CT 1.2)
Wed: Critical thinking skills, the limits and dangers of critical thinking (CT 1.4)
Thurs: Workshop and review

Week Two
Mon: The principle of charity, clarifying meaning (CT 3.1-3.2)
Tues: Reconstructing arguments, missing premises and conclusions, reports and explanations (CT 4.1-4.2, 4.4)
Wed: Workshop and review
Thurs: The structure of arguments, tree diagrams (CT 4.6)

Week Three
Mon: Workshop and review
Tues: ** IN-CLASS EXAM: reconstructing arguments **
Wed: Deductive reasoning, formal validity and soundness (CT 9.1, 9.3)
Thurs: Valid and invalid deductive forms (CT 9.4-9.5)

Week Four
Mon: Translating arguments into truth-functional statements (CT 9.2)
Tues: Workshop and review
Wed: Inductive reasoning, inductive generalizations, statistical syllogisms, induction by confirmation (10.1-10.4)
Thurs: Analogical reasoning, appeals to authority (CT 10.5, 8.2)

Week Five
Mon: Causal reasoning, Mill's methods (CT 11.1-11.2)
Tues: Workshop and review
Wed: Workshop and review
Thurs: ** IN-CLASS EXAM: deductive and inductive reasoning **
Week Six
Mon: Assessing arguments, criteria and fallacies, procedure for assessing arguments (CT 5.1-5.3)
Tues: Acceptability, some fallacies of acceptability: circular reasoning, equivocation, false dichotomy (CT 6.3, 6.6-6.7)
Wed: Relevance, some fallacies of relevance: appeal to pity, appeal to force, appeal to popularity, appeal to authority, ad hominem, straw person (CT 7.1-7.4)
Thurs: Adequacy, some fallacies of adequacy: anecdotal evidence, appeal to ignorance, slippery slope (CT 8.1, 8.3-8.5)

Week Seven
Mon: Causal fallacies: post hoc, confusing cause and effect, common cause (8.6)
Tues: More fallacies: red herring, guilt by association (15.8-15.9)
Wed: Workshop and review
Thurs: Workshop and review

Week Eight
Mon: ** IN-CLASS EXAM: fallacies **
Tues: Arguing back (CT 14.1-14.4)
Wed: Attacking inductive arguments
Thurs: Workshop and review

Week Nine
Mon: ** NO CLASS – MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY **
Tues: Writing argumentative essays (CT 17.1-17.2)
Wed: Brainstorming, thesis statements
Thurs: Supporting arguments

Week Ten
Mon: Workshop and review
Tues: Finding and refuting counter-arguments
Wed: Workshop and review
Thurs: How to write your final essay. The dangers of critical reasoning, revisited.

Finals Week:
** FINAL ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY DUE **
(Outline of final essay must be attached.)