

Critical Reasoning

Instructor: Claire Pickard

1. Course Description

Critical reasoning skills can help you both in philosophical studies as an introduction to principles of logic, and also as tools for problem-solving and argumentation in other areas of your personal and professional life. This class will teach you to identify fallacies, to evaluate arguments, and to construct your own arguments. We will first look at deductive reasoning, then at inductive reasoning, and then will begin to apply what we learned to current issues and debates. Since these skills are best learned through practice, most of the class assignments will be exercise-based. At the end of the course, you will be required to write a short final argumentative essay.

2. Contact Information and Class Time

Class will meet MTWR from 12:00- 12:50 p.m. in 105 FEN

My office hours for Fall 2017 are 10am-11:50am on Mondays in SCH 232. If you cannot make that time, email me. We may be able to arrange an alternative meeting time. My email is cpickard@uoregon.edu

3. Course Requirements

Final grades will be determined as follows:

Quizzes	10 %
Homework Exercises	15%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Exam 3	15%
Final Paper	20 %

Attendance: Attendance is not mandatory for this class, although it is recommended since **Quizzes** will be given unannounced. You will not be able to make up missed quizzes without an approved and documented excuse.

Homework Exercises: Homework assignments will either be found in our textbook or as documents posted on Canvas in the “Homework” file.

Three Exams: Three exams will test your comprehension of course materials. These will be administered in class. You will be given a number of questions, similar to those on the exercise

assignments. Your two highest scoring exams will each be worth 20% of your final grade; your lowest scoring exam will be worth 15% of your final grade. You must complete the exam in the allotted time. If you are unable to complete the exam during that time due to illness or emergency, you must notify me as soon as possible (preferably before the exam) and provide documented proof that excuses your absence.

Final Essay: You will be required to write a short essay (2-3 pages, double spaced, standard margins, font Times New Roman 12) in which you will make arguments for and against a certain issue; you will need to provide main arguments, anticipate counter-arguments, and refute the latter. You will have some choice concerning the topic on which you will write. These should be submitted on the “Assignments” page on Canvas, in the box titled “Final Paper.”

4. Learning Outcomes

- **Strengthen** critical thinking skills.
- **Develop** the ability to detect and analyze arguments.
- **Construct** good arguments.
- **Sharpen** the ability to write an argumentative essay.

5. Course Policies

Incompletes and extensions will be given only in the event of documented emergencies.

Emergencies: In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances.

Sexual Violence: 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. 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 24h hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu

Accessibility: If you have a documented disability, please contact me in advance. If you need accommodations in this class, I will work with the Accessible Education Center to find a solution for you.

Academic Misconduct: 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.

External Sources: Using sources not listed on the syllabus in researching and writing your paper is fine, as long as they are both to the point, and are properly cited. And at all times, when in doubt, cite your sources! It is the best way to avoid being accused of plagiarism.

Electronics:

No electronics are permitted in class except in the case of documented disability.

6. Required Text

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

7. Assignment Schedule (*Subject to revision as we proceed, if necessary*).

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesdays will be primarily lectures, and the reading listed for that date should be done prior to class. Thursdays will be discussions, and the HW listed for that day will be turned in at the beginning of class.

Week 1 (Sep 25-28)

M: Introduction to the course.

T: Reasoning (inference, premises, conclusion) Readings: *Critical Thinking* [CT] 1.1

W: Logical strength and soundness. Readings: CT 1.2. and 1.3.

R: Meaning. Readings: CT 1.4, 2.1 - 2.4.

Due: CT 2.5: provide the answer to 1., 2., 3., 5. and 6.

Week 2 (Oct 2-5)

M: Definition. Readings: CT 2.6 –2.12.

T: Clarifying meaning / ambiguity. Readings: CT 3.1– 3.3.

W: Analytic, contradictory, and synthetic statements. Readings: CT 3.4-5.

Descriptive and Evaluative meaning. Readings: CT 3.6-7.

Necessary and sufficient conditions Readings: CT 3.8-9.

R: Exam Review

Due: Provide two of your own examples for each of the concepts discussed in CT 3.4-3.9

Week 3 (Oct 9-12)

M: EXAM 1: Meaning, Statements, and Conditions

T: Reconstructing arguments; missing premises and conclusions. Readings: CT 4.1-4.3.

Special cases: reports of arguments and explanations. Readings: CT 4.4-5.

W: The structure of arguments. Readings: CT 4.6-8

R: *Due:* “Worksheet 4.8” (all worksheets can be found in the “Worksheets” folder on Canvas)

Week 4 (Oct 16-19)

M: Assessing arguments and truth claims. CT 5.1-6.5.

T: Assessing the acceptability of premises. CT 6.6. Some fallacies: CT 6.7-8.

W: Assessing relevance; fallacies of relevance. CT 7.1-7.5

R: *Due:* “Worksheet 7.5”

Week 5 (Oct 23-26)

M: Assessing adequacy, fallacies. Readings: CT 8.1-5

T: Causal fallacies. Readings: CT 8.6-7.

W: Exam Review

R: EXAM 2: Reconstructing and Assessing Arguments

Week 6 (Oct 30- Nov 2)

M: Deductive reasoning. Readings: CT 9.1-2.

Formal validity and soundness in deductive arguments. Readings: CT 9.3-4.

T: Categorical and Hypothetical syllogisms [Readings available on Canvas]

W: Inductive reasoning. Readings: CT 10.1-4 (Inductive generalizations, statistical syllogisms, induction by confirmation.)

R: *Due:* “Syllogisms & Inductive Reasoning Worksheet”

Week 7 (Nov 6-9)

M: Analogical reasoning. Readings: CT 10.5- 6.

T: Scientific reasoning (causal reasoning). Readings: CT 11.1-2

W: Exam Review

R: EXAM 3: Inductive and Deductive Arguments

Week 8 (Nov 13-16)

M: Arguing back. Readings: CT 14.1-5.

T: Attacking different forms of inductive arguments (Readings on Canvas)

W: Irrational techniques of persuasion. Readings: CT 15.1-11.

R: *Due:* Create a short example (2-4 sentences) for each of the Irrational Techniques

Week 9 (No 20-23)

M: Writing and assessing argumentative essays. CT 17.1-4

T: Writing an outline for an argumentative essay.

W: Decide on a topic you wish to discuss in your final argumentative essay and write an outline of your main argument with supporting arguments.

R: **Thanksgiving, No class.**

Week 10: (Nov 27-30)

M: Discussion of main arguments and their supporting arguments.

T: Finding and refuting counter-arguments for your essay.

W: How to write your final essay (writing a narrative along your essay outline).

R: In-Class workshop of final papers. *Bring a draft of your paper to class.*

Final Papers due **Monday, Dec. 4 at 10:15am** on Canvas.