



**PHIL 2003: Critical Thinking**  
**Winter Term 2013**  
**Tuesdays & Thursdays 4:05-5:25 p.m.**  
**Theatre B, Southam Hall**

**Instructor Information**

Dr. David Matheson  
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 Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:35-3:35 p.m.

**Description & Objective**

We are constantly asked to believe things, both in everyday settings and in more esoteric contexts. Sometimes what we are asked to believe strikes us as supported by good reasons, sometimes by bad reasons, and sometimes by no clear reason at all. The main objective of this course is to introduce you to some basic tools for the formation of reasonable belief, by making explicit standards that govern your intuitive competence at recognizing good and bad reasons for belief, and thereby to sharpen your skills for independent, critical thought.

**Lecture Schemata, Exercises, & Supplementary Readings**

There is no required textbook for this course; all relevant material will be presented in the class lectures. Your instructor will periodically post lecture schemata on cuLearn, to help ensure that you understand the core concepts from the lectures. These schemata will indicate the relevant core concepts, while leaving blank the details of the lecture discussions of them. Your instructor will also periodically post brief exercises related to examples discussed in the lectures, to help ensure that you can properly apply the core concepts.

*Accordingly note that class attendance for this course is essential.* Simply reading the posted lecture schemata and exercises alone will be a poor substitute for reading them in the light of the lecture discussions. You should not expect to do well in the course if you fail regularly to attend class.

The following, supplementary (but not required) readings will inform our approach to a few of the course topics. Your instructor will make these supplementary readings available to you in due time.

Goldman, A. (2001). Experts: Which ones should you trust? *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 63, 85-110.

Harman, G. (1965). The inference to the best explanation. *The Philosophical Review*, 74, 88-95.

Jackson, F. (1984). *Petitio* and the purpose of arguing. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 65, 26-36.

**Evaluation**

Your overall grade for the course will be determined by your performance on two in-class tests and a final examination, as follows:

- Test 1: 25% of overall grade
- Test 2: 25% of overall grade
- Final examination: 50% of overall grade

The in-class tests will take place on January 30 and March 6, respectively. The final examination will take place during the winter term's examination period, April 11-26.

**Calendar**

Jan 7 & 9	Why reasonable belief matters Arguments as reasons for belief Detecting arguments
Jan 14 & 16	The elements of arguments Statements and truth-values Atomic statements Molecular statements Conditional statements Disjunctive statements Conjunctive statements Negative statements
Jan 21 & 23	Identifying argument structure Complex and simple arguments Deductive and nondeductive arguments
Jan 28 & 30	Assessing arguments Soundness, premise truth, and logical strength <b>Test 1 (Jan 30)</b>
Feb 4 & 6	Assessing premise truth Trustworthy and untrustworthy sources Confirming and conflicting evidence Definitions and the method of counterexamples
Feb 11 & 13	Assessing deductive arguments Deductive validity and logical form Valid forms Formal fallacies
Feb 18 & 20 (winter break)	
Feb 25 & 27	Assessing nondeductive arguments Nondeductive logical strength and context Varieties of nondeductive argument and their pitfalls
Mar 4 & 6	Assessing nondeductive arguments (cont'd) Inference to the best explanation The most fundamental type? Data and competing explanations <b>Test 2 (Mar 6)</b>

Mar 11 & 13	Assessing nondeductive arguments (cont'd) Inference to the best explanation (cont'd) Adjudication heuristics for competing explanations
Mar 18 & 20	Informal fallacies Begging the question Appeal to inappropriate authority Hasty generalization
Mar 25 & 27	Informal fallacies (cont'd) <i>Ad hominem</i> <i>Post hoc</i> Distinction without a difference False dilemma
Apr 1 & 3	Expert disagreement The necessity of trusting experts The prevalence of expert disagreement Reasons for the layperson to trust disagreeing experts?
Apr 8	Expert disagreement (cont'd) Adjudication heuristics for trusting disagreeing experts
Apr 11-26 (examination period)	<b>Final examination (TBA)</b>

## Relevant Department of Philosophy and University Policies

### Deferrals for Term Work

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a final assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral of examination/assignment. For deferred examinations, you must apply within 5 working days after the scheduled date of your exam. To apply for deferral of a final assignment, you must apply within 5 working days of the last scheduled day of classes. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information.

### Academic Integrity

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the university's academic integrity standards, and to avoid violating and abetting other students in the violation of test and examination procedures. (See Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations, Section 14 and especially Sub-section 14.12, <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv14/>.)

### Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows.

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit

the Equity Services website: [www2.carleton.ca/equity/](http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/)

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: [www2.carleton.ca/equity/](http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/)

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your *Letter of Accommodation* at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at [www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/](http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/)

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at [www2.carleton.ca/equity/](http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/)

### Important Dates

- Sept. 5 Classes start (after Orientation events).
- Sept. 18 Last day for registration and course changes in Fall and Fall/Winter courses.
- Sept. 30 Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from Fall term or two-term courses.
- Oct. 11 University Day – no undergraduate classes.
- Oct. 14 Thanksgiving Day – university closed.
- Oct. 28–Nov. 1 Fall Break – no classes.
- Nov. 25 Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
- Dec. 9 Last day of classes, Fall term. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for Fall term courses.
- Dec. 9 Last day to withdraw from Fall term courses (academic purposes only).
- Dec. 10 No classes or examinations take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
- Dec. 11-22 Final examinations for Fall courses, mid-terms for Fall/Winter courses.
- Dec. 22 Take-home exams are due.
- Jan. 6 Winter term classes begin.
- Jan. 17 Last day for registration and course changes in Winter term classes.
- Jan. 31 Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter courses or winter portion of two-term courses.
- Feb. 17-21 Winter Break, classes suspended.
- Mar. 25 Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
- Apr. 8 Last day of Fall/Winter and Winter term classes. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for Fall/Winter and Winter term courses.
- Apr. 8 Last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter and Winter term courses (academic purposes only).
- Apr. 9-10 No classes or examinations take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.

