



PHIL 2003: Critical Thinking

0.5 credit. Assessment of reasoning and the development of cogent patterns of thinking. Reference to formal logic is minimal. Practice in criticizing examples of reasoning and in formulating one's own reasons correctly and clearly. Open to first-year students.

Summer 2022
Tuesdays & Thursdays
6:05—8:55 p.m.
Health Sciences Building 1301

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Overview & objective

Critical thinkers are skilled at distinguishing good and bad reasons for belief. Critical thinkers don't just believe whatever they are prompted to believe; rather, they consider the reasons they've been given for belief, and believe when those reasons are good but withhold belief when those reasons are bad.

The main objective of this course is to introduce you to important principles of good and bad reasons for belief, so that you can be a critical thinker in whatever walk of life in which you find yourself. To accomplish this objective, we will consider the nature of arguments as reasons for belief and how to identify them, the assessment of arguments, the relevance of insights about probability to this assessment, and well-known fallacies of argumentation. We will also consider good and bad reasons for belief in relation to such things as expert disagreement, conspiracy theories, and moral matters, and the relationship between creativity and critical thinking.

Attendance, lecture notes & exercise sets

This fully in-person course is very lecture-focused: there is no required textbook for the course, and all the material you will be expected to learn will be presented in the lectures. Consequently, nothing is more important for your performance in the course than attending the lectures each week and taking good notes. Because this is university and you're all adults, I don't take attendance at the lectures. But don't let this mislead you into thinking that you can regularly skip the lectures and still do well in the course.

To help you take good notes, I will post my lecture slides in Brightspace before the relevant lectures. I recommend that you use these slides as the basis of your own notes—editing and supplementing them as you see fit while you listen to the lectures.

I will also post various exercise sets in Brightspace, corresponding to the weekly lectures, to help ensure that you are grasping the material we discuss in the course. The solutions to these exercise sets can be found at the end of the sets.

Evaluation

There is no final examination for this course. However, throughout the term you will be expected to take two major tests, which will be in-person and paper-based. In keeping with the main objective of the course, the purpose of these tests is to ensure that you have an adequate grasp of the principles of good and bad reasons for belief that we discuss in the course.

The tests will consist mainly of multiple-choice questions, but may include some short-answer questions as well. You will have one hour to complete the first test, which will be on July 14 at 6:05 p.m. You will have one hour and a half to complete the second test, which will be on August 9 at 6:05 p.m. The first will be worth 40% of your overall grade, the second 60%.

The second test may include some questions about material covered before the first test, but its focus will be on what we've covered since the first test.

Schedule

July 5	<i>Reasons & arguments</i>	The importance of good reasons for belief • arguments as reasons for belief • propositions as the elements of arguments Detecting reasons for belief by identifying arguments • simple & complex arguments • arrow diagrams
July 7	<i>Assessing premise truth</i>	Trustworthy & untrustworthy sources • confirming & conflicting evidence • the method of counterexamples
July 12	<i>Assessing deductive & nondeductive arguments</i>	Deductive validity & logical form • valid & invalid forms Nondeductive logical strength • common types of nondeductive argument
July 14	Test 1	
July 19	<i>Assessing deductive & nondeductive arguments (cont'd)</i>	Inference to the best explanation • competing explanations and how to assess them

July 21	<i>Probability</i>	The relevance of probability to assessing arguments • basic insights from the probability calculus
July 26	<i>Fallacies of argumentation</i>	Begging the question • appeal to inappropriate authority • hasty generalization • <i>ad hominem</i> • <i>post hoc</i> • distinction without a difference
August 2	<i>Expert disagreement</i>	The necessity of trusting experts • the prevalence of expert disagreement • whether a layperson can have good reason to believe one disagreeing expert over another Layperson heuristics for dealing with expert disagreement
August 4	<i>Conspiracy theories</i>	The nature of conspiracy theories • why the consideration of conspiracy theories can help us become better critical thinkers • some real-world conspiracy theories
August 9	Test 2	
August 11	<i>Moral matters</i>	Whether it possible to think critically about moral matters • arguments for particular moral propositions • arguments for general moral principles
August 16	<i>Creativity and critical thinking</i>	The nature and value of creativity • methods of creativity • the happy relationship between creativity and critical thinking

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Summer 2022)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* Please contact your instructor 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](#).
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC 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 your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, visit the [Paul Menton Centre website](#).
- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support
- *Accommodation for Student Activities:* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor 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.

Important Dates:

May 5	Classes start.	July 1	Statutory holiday, University closed.
May 12	Last day for registration and course changes for <u>early</u> summer courses.	July 4	Late summer courses begin and full summer courses resume.
May 19	Last day for registration and course changes for <u>full</u> summer courses.	July 11	Last day for registration and course changes for <u>late</u> summer courses.
May 20	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from <u>early</u> and <u>full</u> summer courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.	July 22	Last day to withdraw from <u>late</u> summer courses with a full fee adjustment. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
May 23	Statutory holiday, University closed.	Aug. 1	Civic holiday, University closed.
June 10	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade for <u>early</u> summer courses before the official examination period.	Aug. 9	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade for <u>late</u> summer and <u>full</u> summer courses before the official examination period.
June 17	Last day for <u>early</u> summer classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for handing in term work, subject to any earlier course deadline. Last day for academic withdrawal from <u>early</u> summer courses.	Aug. 16	Last day of <u>late</u> and <u>full</u> summer term classes. Last day for handing in term work, subject to any earlier course deadline. Last day for academic withdrawal from <u>late</u> summer and <u>full</u> summer courses.
June 18-19	No classes or examinations take place.	Aug. 17-18	No classes or examinations take place.
June 20-26	Final examinations.	Aug. 19-25	Final examinations.
June 26	Take-home examinations for <u>early</u> summer courses are due.	Aug. 25	Take-home examinations for <u>late</u> or <u>full</u> summer courses are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:
www.carleton.ca/philosophy
 520-2110

Registrar's Office:
www.carleton.ca/registrar
 520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:
www.carleton.ca/academicadvising
 520-7850

Writing Services:
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>
 520-3822

MacOdrum Library
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>
 520-2735