



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.

Late Summer 2019
Tuesdays & Thursdays,
6:05—8:55 p.m.
240 Tory Building

Dr. David Matheson
Department of Philosophy
3A48 Paterson Hall
613-520-2600 ext. 1928
david.matheson@carleton.ca
Office hours:
Tuesdays & Thursdays,
5:00—6:00 p.m.

Overview & objectives

Critical thinkers are skilled at distinguishing good and bad reasons for belief. Critical thinkers do not just uncritically believe whatever they are prompted to believe; they consider the reasons they have been given for belief, and believe when those reasons are good but withhold belief when the reasons are bad.

The main objective of this course is to introduce you to the basic principles of good and bad reasons for belief, so that you can become a critical thinker in whatever walk of life in which you find yourself. Having accomplished this main objective, toward the end of the course we will turn our attention to a secondary objective: to consider the ways in which critical thinking can be enhanced by, and enhance, your capacity for creative thought.

Attendance, lecture schemata & text

Most of the material covered in this course will be based on my in-class lectures. Note, accordingly, that *lecture attendance is essential for this course*: you are expected to attend all the lectures and to take good notes. To assist you with the notetaking, I will post “lecture schemata” on cuLearn in advance of the associated lectures. These schemata are essentially just sets of incomplete lecture notes that you will be expected to fill in based on your lecture attendance.

Because this is university and you're all adults, I don't keep a record of lecture attendance. But don't be misled by this into thinking that you can regularly skip lectures and still do well in the course. And be forewarned: if you do skip lectures—if you miss them for anything other than a legitimate, verifiable reason (ask me in advance if you're genuinely unsure about what this

means)—you’re on your own when it comes to filling in the relevant lecture schemata: I won’t help you fill them in after the fact.

As far as texts go, only one is required, and it’s available at the University Bookstore:

Weston, A. & B. Stoyles. (2010). *Creativity for critical thinkers (first Canadian edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Evaluation

You will be expected to complete two in-class tests in the course, each worth 50% of your overall grade. The first test will be on July 16, the second on August 6. The tests will consist of a number of short-answer questions, aimed at gauging your understanding of the various principles and concepts discussed in class.

There is no final examination for this course.

Schedule

Although we will cover all the topics listed in the following schedule (in the order in which they are presented), the schedule is nevertheless tentative because we may fall behind or jump ahead, date-wise. Some topics may take more time to discuss than anticipated, others less.

July 2	<i>Introductory & argument structures</i> The importance of good reasons for belief • Arguments as reasons for belief • Detecting reasons for belief by identifying arguments • Simple & complex arguments • Arrow diagrams • Deductive & nondeductive arguments
July 4	<i>Assessing premise truth</i> Trustworthy & untrustworthy sources • Confirming & conflicting evidence • The method of counterexamples
July 9	<i>Assessing deductive arguments</i> Deductive validity & logical form • Valid forms • Formal fallacies
July 11	<i>Assessing nondeductive arguments</i> Nondeductive logical strength • Common types of nondeductive argument • Inference to the best explanation: the fundamental type?
July 16	Test 1
July 18	<i>Informal fallacies</i> Begging the question • Appeal to inappropriate authority • Hasty generalization • <i>Ad hominem</i> • <i>Post hoc</i> • Distinction without a difference
July 23	<i>Probability</i> The relevance of probability to assessing arguments • Basic insights from the probability calculus: proportionality, joint probabilities & alternative probabilities

July 25	<p><i>Dealing with expert disagreement</i></p> <p>The necessity of trusting experts • The prevalence of expert disagreement • Can a layperson ever have good reason to believe one disagreeing expert over another? • Layperson heuristics for dealing with expert disagreement</p>
July 30	<p><i>Thinking critically about moral matters</i></p> <p>Cognitivism vs. noncognitivism • Particular moral propositions and general moral principles • Arguments for particular moral propositions • Arguments for general moral principles</p>
August 1	<p><i>Creative thinking and its methods</i></p> <p>The nature and value of creative thinking • Inviting exotic associations • Going public • Comparing and contrasting • Exaggerating • Mixing and matching • Trying prevention • Thinking laterally • Seeing opportunities</p>
August 6	Test 2
August 8	<p><i>Creative thinking for critical thinkers</i></p> <p>Connecting creative and critical thinking • Generating good arguments of your own • Applying the methods of creative thinking to the assessment of arguments</p>
August 13	<i>Conclusion & review</i>

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Summer 19)

Assignments:

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- Must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips.
- Must staple the paper (there is a stapler on the essay box).
- Must include the following on the first page: student name and number; course name and number; instructor's name.
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates below.
- Assignments handed in through the essay box (just inside the glass doors, Paterson Hall, Floor 3A) must be dropped into the box by **4:15** on a regular business day in order to be date-stamped with that day's date. Assignments handed in after 4:15 or on a non-business day will be stamped as having been handed in on the next business day.
- Students are required to keep copies of their assignments. If your paper is lost at any point, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy immediately on request.

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 Examinations:

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 2.4, 2.5 and 2.5.1 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. (Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations, section 12.0, or [Academic Integrity < Carleton University](#)

Academic Accommodation:

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

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor 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:* 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 for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

Important Dates:

May 6	Classes start.	July 1	Statutory holiday, University closed.
May 13	Last day for registration and course changes for early summer courses.	July 2	Late summer courses begin and full summer courses resume.
May 17	Last day for registration and course changes for full summer courses.	July 9	Last day for registration and course changes for late summer courses.
May 20	Statutory holiday, University closed.	July 22	Last day to withdraw from late summer courses with a full fee adjustment. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
May 24	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from early and full summer courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.	Aug. 5	Civic holiday, University closed
June 11	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade for early summer courses before the official examination period.	Aug. 7	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade for late or full summer courses before the official examination period.
June 18	Last day for early summer classes. Last day for handing in term work. Last day for academic withdrawal from early summer courses.	Aug. 14	Last day of late and full summer term classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for handing in term work.
June 21-27	Final examinations.	Aug. 17-23	Last day for academic withdrawal from late summer and full summer courses. Final examinations.
June 27	Take-home examinations for early summer courses are due.	Aug. 23	Take-home examinations for late or full summer courses are due.

Useful Contacts:

Department of Philosophy: 3A35 Paterson Hall – (613) 520-2110
www.carleton.ca/philosophy

Registrar's Office: 300 Tory Building – (613) 520-3500
www.carleton.ca/registrar