

PHIL 2003 A – Critical Thinking**Winter 2020****Instructor:** Christopher McGrath**Email:** christopher.mcgrath@carleton.ca**Office Hours:** Tuesday and Thursday, 16:00-18:00 **Office:** 3A56 Paterson Hall**Lectures:** Tuesday and Thursday, 14:30-16:00 **Classroom:** TBD**Course Description:**

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.

The purpose of this course will be to help students develop a foundation in critical thinking, by acquiring an understanding of its nature, significance, and basic concepts - and, importantly, by acquiring a practical ability to apply its fundamental principles. In this context, "critical thinking" refers to the basic cognitive skills involved in identifying and assessing information, which then also provide the foundations for forming both good arguments of one's own and good criticisms of others' arguments. As "basic cognitive skills", these are principles which are applicable to any field of study, as well as to intellectual tasks in general – whether writing informative content, reading informative content, assessing political claims, or just arguing with friends.

The course will be divided into three general units, and then a fourth, concluding unit which will involve a summation of major lessons learnt throughout the term. The first unit will offer an extended introduction to critical thinking, beginning with a discussion of its nature and significance, and continuing by introducing a logical understanding of "argument" - which, we will see, is a notion that occupies a central place in critical thinking. The second and third units cover the two crucial steps needed to assess an argument – that is, to determine whether it's any good! Unit two will focus on understanding inferences. In the first half of this unit we will introduce basic formal logic to help clarify deductive reasoning and the criterion of a well-formed inference. After this, we will discuss non-formal methods for understanding and assessing non-deductive forms of inference. In unit three we will shift our focus to a second part of arguments, the premises. Our focus here will be on understanding the bases we can have for accepting a premise other than its being argued for. This will involve a brief introduction to epistemology, then discussions of observation, testimony, definition, and other sources of information that can be used in arguments. The emphasis will be on learning to assess appeals to such sources, to determine whether a given premise is acceptable. In the fourth unit we will put together the major skills developed so far in the term, so that we conclude with a systematic method for assessing, forming, and critiquing arguments – as well as understanding how arguments can be integrated into larger spaces of debate and into argumentative writing.

Throughout the semester, the class will rely not only on the lectures and assigned readings, but also on exercises assigned and reviewed in class, that will be essential for students to acquire not just an understanding of but the ability to actually use the principles of critical thinking.

Schedule of the Lectures:

Lecture topics may be adjusted pending our ability to adequately get through the material in class. But the initial plan is as follows:

| # | Date | Topic |
|---|---------------|---|
| Unit One – Introduction to Critical Thinking | | |
| 1 | Jan 07 | Introduction to Logic |
| 2 | Jan 09 | Introduction to Reasoning |
| 3 | Jan 14 | Introduction to Arguments I – Parts and Identification |
| 4 | Jan 16 | Introduction to Arguments II – Standardizing and Diagramming |
| 5 | Jan 21 | Introduction to Inferences |
| 6 | Jan 23 | Enthymemes and the Principle of Charity |
| 7 | Jan 28 | Test #1 |
| Unit Two – Assessing Inferences | | |
| 8 | Jan 30 | Deductive Inferences I – Propositional Logic |
| 9 | Feb 04 | Deductive Inferences II – Propositional Logic (cont'd) |
| 10 | Feb 06 | Deductive Inferences III – Propositional Logic (cont'd) |
| 11 | Feb 11 | Non-deductive Inferences I – Inductive and Statistical Reasoning |
| 12 | Feb 13 | Non-deductive Inferences II – Causal Reasoning |
| | Feb 18 | No Class – Fall Break |
| | Feb 20 | No Class – Fall Break |
| 13 | Feb 25 | Non-deductive Inferences III – Abductive and Analogical Reasoning |
| Unit Three – Assessing Premises | | |
| 14 | Feb 27 | Introduction to Epistemology |
| 15 | Mar 03 | Test #2 |
| 16 | Mar 05 | Background Beliefs, Granted Claims, and Complex Arguments |
| 17 | Mar 10 | Observation and Testimony |
| 18 | Mar 12 | Meaning and Ambiguity |
| 19 | Mar 17 | Definitions |
| 20 | Mar 19 | Other Sources of Belief |
| 21 | Mar 24 | Test #3 |
| Unit Four – Putting It All Together | | |
| 22 | Mar 26 | Assessing, Forming, and Critiquing Arguments |
| 23 | Mar 31 | Debate and the Burden of Proof |
| 24 | Apr 02 | Writing an Argumentative Paper |
| 25 | Apr 07 | Concluding Remarks |

Assessment:

Students' performance in the course will be assessed by four equally-weighted tests, three held in class and one held during the final exam period. The first three tests will be non-cumulative, each covering the material from only one unit. The final test will cover the material from unit four, however this material will require applying some material from each of the previous units, so although unit four will provide the relevant preparation for this test, there is in this sense some cumulative material covered in

it. The tests will consist of exercise or short-answer style questions, of the same format encountered in classroom exercises.

25% - Noncumulative Test #1 on Unit I, held in class on Jan 28.

25% - Noncumulative Test #2 on Unit II, held in class on Mar 03.

25% - Noncumulative Test #3 on Unit III, held in class on Mar 24.

25% - Summative Test #4 on Unit IV, held during the final exam period.

Readings:

Readings for most classes will be assigned from MacDonald and Vaughn's *The Power of Critical Thinking* (5th Canadian Edition), Oxford University Press. This text will be available in the university bookstore as well as through other sources for academic books. If students have an earlier edition of this text, they may consult with me to make sure the assigned readings correctly line up across the editions. For some classes, additional readings may be provided by posting them online via the course website.

Class Expectations:

To keep up with the class work, students are expected to attend the lectures and complete the readings in a timely fashion. To be awarded marks in an assessment, students are required to be present on the scheduled day to write each test, or to formally request rescheduling at the earliest reasonable notice only on the basis of a documented or comparably reasonable excuse for being unable to write the test on the scheduled day. In addition, an important part of this course is mastery of fundamental skills in critical thinking, which will be trained through exercises assigned as part of the readings and reviewed in class. It is expected that students will keep up with these exercises in addition to the regular reading.

To facilitate engaging the class material and preparing for the tests, brief summaries of the major points discussed in class will be provided on the course webpage. However, these will not serve as an adequate alternative to attending the lectures, and will include only the major points students are expected to remember, without the explanation of them provided during the scheduled lectures.

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2019-20)

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 Final Exams:

If you miss a final examination (formally scheduled or take-home) because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral. You must apply within 3 working days after the scheduled date of your formally scheduled exam or within 3 working days after the due date of a take-home exam. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information: <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv2/#2.5>

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. <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Academic Accommodation:

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

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. carleton.ca/pmc

Pregnancy 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: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

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: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

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 is 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. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: students.carleton.ca/course-outline

Important Dates:

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| Sept. 4 | Classes start. |
| Sept. 17 | Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses. |
| Sept. 30 | Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript. |
| Oct. 14 | Statutory holiday. University closed. |
| Oct. 21-25 | Fall Break – no classes. |
| Nov. 22 | Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period. |
| Dec. 6 | Last day of fall term classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. 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 a fall term course. |
| Dec. 9-21 | Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week. |
| Dec. 21 | All take-home examinations are due. |
| Jan. 6 | Classes begin. |
| Jan. 17 | Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term. |
| Jan. 31 | Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript. |
| Feb. 17 | Statutory holiday. University closed. |
| Feb. 17-21 | Winter Break – no classes. |
| Mar. 24 | Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period. |
| Apr. 7 | Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses. |
| Apr. 10 | Statutory holiday. University closed. |
| Apr. 13-25 | Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week. |
| Apr. 25 | All take-home examinations are due on this day. |

Addresses:

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| Department of Philosophy: | 3A35 Paterson Hall www.carleton.ca/philosophy 520-2110 |
| Registrar's Office: | 300 Tory www.carleton.ca/registrar 520-3500 |
| Academic Advising Centre: | 302 Tory www.carleton.ca/academicadvising 520-7850 |
| Writing Services: | 4 th Floor, Library http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/ 520-3822 |
| MacOdrum Library | http://www.library.carleton.ca/ 520-2735 |