

PHILOSOPHY 2003A: CRITICAL THINKING

CARLETON UNIVERSITY

DR. KENNETH FERGUSON

COURSE SYLLABUS

TERM:	Spring Term 2020	INSTRUCTOR:	Ken Ferguson
TIME:	N/A	EMAIL:	kenneth.ferguson@carleton.ca
LOCATION:	N/A		

CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

PHIL 2003 [0.5 credit]

Critical Thinking: 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.

DETAILED COURSE DESCRIPTION

Critical thinking may be defined, roughly, as the systematic evaluation of beliefs (claims, theories, decisions) by rational standards. No skill is more important to success, whether in university, in one's chosen profession, or simply in making reasonable, well informed decisions in the course of everyday life, than the ability to think critically and logically. It is therefore appropriate that one of your courses should be devoted to improving your critical thinking skills. This is the course.

Unfortunately, there is no mechanical set of rules that can be applied to produce good critical thinking. (If there were, you probably wouldn't need this course.) There are, however, a number of informal methods, techniques and procedures, which are very helpful in this task. Extended practice in the use of these techniques will enable you to recognize when an argument is being presented, identify precisely what the premises and conclusion of the argument are, spot any fallacies it happens to commit, and provide an overall evaluation of the argument. As a result of working with these and other methods and techniques, students will be able to greatly improve their reasoning and critical thinking skills.

Online Course

This is an entirely online, or distance, course. All course lectures will be pre-recorded, and will be available for students to access online; no in-person classes will be held. The PowerPoint slides on which lectures will be based will be posted on CuLearn, as well as all course assignments, midterms, exams, etc., and students will submit all of their required course assignments through CuLearn.

SUGGESTED TEXT

There is no text that students must acquire for this course, as readings and other materials will be available either online or on CuLearn. However, some students may find it useful to obtain the following text: *The Power of Critical Thinking*, by Lewis Vaughn and Chris MacDonald, 4th, 5th, or 6th editions (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018). This text can easily be ordered online (and may also be obtained in digital form). Note again, however, that students are not *required* to obtain this text.

HOMEWORK

Practice doing exercises is essential to success in acquiring critical thinking skills. Homework exercises will therefore be assigned for (almost) every class and will be posted on CuLearn. Although they will not be graded, students are strongly urged to do them on their own before they are discussed in the lectures.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

MIDTERMS: There will be **two midterm exams** each worth 30% of the overall grade. They will be posted on CuLearn and students will be given a specified time period within which to complete them. Although the dates are still somewhat tentative, the first midterm will be posted May 20 and will be due May 22. The second will be posted June 3 and will be due June 5. The questions on the midterms will be similar to the problems and exercises that will be assigned as homework as the course goes along.

FINAL EXAMINATION: There will be a final exam scheduled during the examination period, worth 40% of the overall grade for the course grade. The format for the final will be similar to that used for the midterms.

ACCESS TO CULEARN

Students must ensure that they have access to CuLearn for this course, as lecture slides and other information and material will be posted on it.

See the detailed list of Topics and Readings posted on CuLearn

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Summer 20)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this summer.

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 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:* 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 [EDC](#) 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.
- *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](#).
- *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 4	Classes start.	July 1	Statutory holiday, University closed.
May 11	Last day for registration and course changes for <u>early</u> summer courses.	July 2	Late summer courses begin and full summer courses resume.
		July 9	Last day for registration and course changes for <u>late</u> summer courses.
May 15	Last day for registration and course changes for <u>full</u> summer courses.		
		July 17	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 18	Statutory holiday, University closed.		
May 22	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.	Aug. 3	Civic holiday, University closed
		Aug. 7	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 9	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.		
June 16	Last day for <u>early</u> summer classes. Last day for handing in term work, subject to any earlier course deadline.	Aug. 14	Last day of <u>late</u> and <u>full</u> summer term classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for handing in term work, subject to any earlier course deadline.
June 19-25	Final examinations.		Last day for academic withdrawal from <u>late</u> summer and <u>full</u> summer courses.
June 25	Take-home examinations for <u>early</u> summer courses are due.	Aug. 17-23	Final examinations.
		Aug. 23	Take-home examinations for <u>late</u> or <u>full</u> summer courses are due.

Useful Contacts:

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
Centre for Student Academic Support:	https://carleton.ca/csas/ 520-3822
Student Support Services :	https://carleton.ca/academics/support/