

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.

Winter 2023
Tuesdays & Thursdays
1:05—2:25 p.m.
231 University Centre

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Overview & objective

We are regularly called upon to assess the reasoning of others as well as to reason for ourselves. To have the skills required to do these things well is to have good critical thinking skills, and the main objective of this course is to encourage you to develop these skills.

Particular topics we will address as we pursue this objective include: the importance of good reasoning; how arguments relate to reasoning and how to detect them; useful tools for clarifying the premises, conclusions, and structures of arguments; the main criteria of a good argument and how to assess whether an argument meets them; fallacies of argumentation and reasoning; important forms of both deductive and inductive reasoning; strategies for replying to bad reasoning; irrational techniques of persuasion that sometimes masquerade as good forms of reasoning; and the application critical thinking skills to reasoning about moral matters.

Textbook

There is one required textbook for this course:

Hughes, W. & J. Lavery. (2015). *Critical thinking: An introduction to the basic skills (concise edition)*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.

This textbook is available for purchase at the University Bookstore (ground floor, University Centre; <https://www.bkstr.com/carletonstore>). Readings from the textbook that correspond to the material covered in the class lectures are referred to in the right column of the Schedule below.

Lecture attendance

I do not take attendance in this course, but don't be misled by this into thinking that you can skip lectures regularly and still do well in the course. The lectures are important not only because they contain material beyond what can be found in the textbook, but also because they enable you to engage the textbook better (e.g. by helping you appreciate what central and what is merely peripheral in it). Please keep in mind, accordingly, that lecture attendance is very important in this course.

Evaluation

Throughout the term you will be expected to take three in-person tests. In keeping with the main objective of the course, the purpose of these tests is to ensure that you are developing the relevant critical thinking skills as the course progresses.

The tests will consist partly of multiple-choice questions and partly of the kinds of questions found in the textbook's "self-test" exercises. You will have one hour to complete each test. The first will be worth 30% of your overall grade, and the remaining two tests will each be worth 35% of your overall grade.

The first test will be on January 31, the second on March 2, and the third on March 28. All three tests will take place in class on those days. The second and third tests will focus on the material covered since the previous test.

There is no additional, final examination in this course.

Schedule

Jan 10 & 12	<i>Introductory and foundational ideas</i> reasoning and arguments • detecting arguments • truth, logical strength, and soundness	Hughes & Lavery, ch. 1
Jan 17 & 19	<i>Clarifying premises and conclusions</i> definitions • ambiguity and vagueness • analytic and synthetic statements • descriptive and evaluative meaning • necessary and sufficient conditions	Hughes & Lavery, chs. 2 & 3
Jan 24 & 26	<i>Clarifying argument structures</i> missing premises and conclusions • simple and complex arguments • arrow diagrams	Hughes & Lavery, ch. 4

Jan 31 & Feb 2	<p>Test 1: Jan 31</p> <p><i>Assessing arguments</i> the fallacies approach vs. the criterial approach • three criteria of a sound argument and their corresponding assessment rules</p>	Hughes & Lavery, ch. 5
Feb 7 & 9	<p><i>Assessing premise acceptability</i> theories of truth • types of truth claim • trustworthy vs. untrustworthy sources • confirming vs. conflicting evidence • the inappropriate assumption of truth • fallacies of premise acceptability</p>	Hughes & Lavery, ch. 6
Feb 14 & 16	<p><i>Assessing premise relevance and adequacy</i> recognizing irrelevant premises • fallacies of premise relevance • recognizing inadequate premises • good and bad appeals to authority • fallacies of premise adequacy</p>	Hughes & Lavery, chs. 7 & 8
Feb 21 & 23	Winter break	
Feb 28 & Mar 2	<p><i>Deductive reasoning</i> deductive reasoning and the guarantee of truth • truth-functional statements • formal validity and soundness • some famously valid and invalid forms • the method of counterexamples</p> <p>Test 2: Mar 2</p>	Hughes & Lavery, ch. 9
Mar 7 & 9	<p><i>Inductive reasoning</i> Inductive reasoning and the likelihood of truth • the relevance of content and context • well-known types of inductive reasoning</p>	Hughes & Lavery, ch. 10

Mar 14 & 16	<i>Inductive reasoning (cont'd)</i> The special case of inference to the best explanation • principles of explanation	
Mar 21 & 23	<i>Responding well to bad reasoning</i> explaining the weakness • the method of counterexamples redux • counter-arguments	Hughes & Lavery, ch. 11
Mar 28 & 30	Test 3: Mar 28 <i>Irrational techniques of persuasion</i> loaded terms • vague terms • loaded questions • false confidence • selectivity • misleading statistics • humor • red herring • guilt by association • persuasive redefinition	Hughes & Lavery, ch. 12
Apr 4 & 6	<i>Reasoning well about moral matters</i> whether it's possible to reason well about moral matters • arguments for particular moral propositions • arguments for general moral principles	
Apr 11	Review	

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2022-23)

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 coming year.

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:* 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:

Sept. 7	Classes start.
Sept. 20	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. 10	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 24-28	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 25	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. 9	Last day of fall term classes. <i>Classes follow a Monday schedule.</i> 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. 10-22	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. 22	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 9	Classes begin.
Jan. 20	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. 20	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 20-24	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 15	Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses.
Mar. 29	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	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 12	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. <i>Classes follow a Friday schedule.</i> 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. 13-14	No classes or examinations take place.
Apr. 15-27	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 27	All take-home examinations 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