

**CARLETON
UNIVERSITY**

**PHIL 2003:
Critical Thinking**

**Course Syllabus
Fall Term 2018**

**Professor
Ken Ferguson**

**kenneth.ferguson
@carleton.ca
(613) 520-2110
Paterson Hall**

**Office Hours:
Wed/Fri:
10:00 – 11:00**

Class Time

**Tues/Thursday:
4:05 – 5:25**

**Location:
TBA**

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 techniques, you should be able to greatly improve your reasoning and critical thinking skills.

REQUIRED TEXT

A course pack, with the title *Philosophy 2003: Critical Thinking*, has been prepared by the Instructor.

This course pack can be purchased at **Haven Books**, located at 43 Seneca Street, (613) 730-9888. Additional readings will be online.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be two in-class tests, each worth 30% of the overall grade, and a final exam worth 40% of the grade. The final will be held during the exam period. More details will be provided later about the content of these exams, but, in general, the questions on them will be similar to those assigned in class as homework.

HOMEWORK

Practice doing exercises is essential to success in this course. Homework exercises will therefore be assigned for (almost) every class. Although they will not be graded, students are strongly urged to do them on their own before they are done in class.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance will not be taken, as it is not feasible in a class of this size. However, regular attendance in class is very important and students are fully responsible for material they miss due to absence.

OUTLINE OF TOPICS

(Note: See CuLearn for a more detailed list of Topics and Readings.)

I. Barriers to Critical Thinking

II. Analyzing and Reconstructing Arguments

- a) Claims, reasons, arguments
- b) Premises and conclusions
- c) Logical indicators
- d) Recognizing arguments
- e) The logical structure of arguments
- f) Dependent versus independent support
- g) Structure diagrams

III. Evaluating Sources of Belief

- a) A priori knowledge
- b) Background belief and Information
- c) Testimony – relying on experts
- d) Personal experience and observation

IV. Informal Fallacies & Other Errors

- a) Cognitive Biases
- b) Informal fallacies?
- c) Illicit Rhetorical Devices

V. Deductive Reasoning

- a) Concept of validity
- b) Distinction between deductive and inductive arguments
- c) Inference rules and deductions

VI. Critical Thinking and the Media

- a) Influences over the media
- b) Bias and slanting in the media
- c) The problem of fake news

VII. Explanation and Conspiracy Theories

- a) Inference to the best explanation
- b) Criteria for evaluating explanations
- c) What are conspiracy theories?
- d) What's wrong with conspiracy theories?

VIII. Scientific Reasoning and Pseudoscience

- a) Scientific methods of inquiry
- b) Theory testing and evaluation
- c) Nature of pseudoscience
- d) Fallacies of evidence

IX. Inductive Reasoning

- a) Induction by Enumeration
- b) Sampling and statistics
- c) Arguments from analogy
- d) Causal Reasoning
- e) Mill's methods and causal fallacies

X. Moral and Legal Reasoning

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2018-19)

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 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:

Sept. 5	Classes start.
Sept. 18	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. 8	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 22-26	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 23	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. 7	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. 7	Classes begin.
Jan. 18	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. 18	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 18-22	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 26	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. 9	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. 12-27	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 19-21	Statutory holiday. University closed. No examinations take place.
Apr. 27	All take-home examinations are due on this day.

Addresses:

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

