

CRITICAL THINKING: PHIL 2003B

Carleton University, Philosophy Department
Winter 2026, in person course
Wednesday, 6:05-8:55 PM

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TAs: TBD
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Description: Critical thinking is the basis of good reasoning and the first line of defense against manipulation, disinformation, and other irrational persuasive techniques. This course is an introduction to the main concepts of informal and formal reasoning techniques, including the analysis of inductive, deductive and abductive arguments, as well as the identification of formal and informal fallacies. Special emphasis will be placed on practice. Open to first-year students.

Objectives: In this course students will develop and strengthen skills to identify, evaluate and construct arguments; cultivate a critical thinking practice through the study of varied examples; and understand argument as a dialogical process necessary for private and public decision making. More specifically, the aims of this course are to:

- Define what an argument is and distinguish it from non-argument
- Differentiate between valid and invalid arguments
- Investigate the relationship between truth and validity
- Identify formal/structural features of valid argumentation
- Recognize the more common fallacies to be avoided in reasoning
- Construct arguments consistent with best practices in a discipline, with special application in philosophy; apply logical reasoning to controversies in ethics, politics, science and others
- Formulate constructive responses to criticism

Required Material

1. Harry J. Gensler, *Introduction to Logic*, 3rd edition (or 2nd edition). Cost: \$87.00. Cheaper options: purchasing used copies, electronic PDF or Kindle versions, or semester leasing from the University Bookstore. The book is on reserve at the Library (free).
2. Various supplementary materials that will be posted on BrightSpace (free)

Course requirements

- Two mid-term tests (in person).
- Final exam, cumulative (in person).

It is vital to keep up with the class material, because the lessons build on each other. Attending the lectures, reviewing the posted material, paying attention, and asking questions are crucial components for success in the course.

Course format

This course features a weekly in-person lecture (Wednesdays 6:05-8:55). The mid-term tests will take place in person, during class time.

Course sections

- Foundational concepts of reasoning
- Informal and inductive reasoning
- Syllogistic logic
- Basic propositional logic

E-Mail & BrightSpace

It is your responsibility to check your Carleton e-mail and BrightSpace regularly. Important course documents, as well as the most current class schedule, are posted on BrightSpace, which is up to date until at least the next test.

I can best be reached by email, but please note that I am not permanently “on-call”. I will do my very best to answer all messages in a timely manner, but it’s advisable not to leave important messages until the last minute, to ensure they reach me on time.

Also note that more complex questions about the material covered in class or problem sets in the book are best addressed during office hours – please take advantage of those.

How to succeed in this course

- **Read and abide by the University and Departmental Policies outlined at the end of this document.**
- **Preparation** – Do the reading before you attend the lecture. I recommend that you first skim the text to get a general idea of the content, then read slowly and carefully, outlining major points and noting your questions. **For test preparation, do the practice tests in Brightspace.**
- **Attendance** – You will benefit greatly from attending the lectures, and being engaged while you are here. **Respect** – Please always be respectful and civilized toward other students and me. This includes, for example, not interrupting when others are talking, maintaining order and silence so others can make the best of their learning experience and, obviously, not displaying any sort of bigoted or discriminatory views. Always make sure you use the appropriate tone with your professor and your colleagues, whether in person or in written communication. If unsure about the right way to communicate, google it. [Here's](#) one good source.
- **Academic integrity.** Plagiarism and cheating are very serious academic offenses and are unacceptable. I expect all work to be completed independently by each student. Any work you submit and represent as your own must actually be your own. Unless explicitly permitted by the instructor in a particular course, **any use of generative AI tools** to produce assessed content (e.g., text, code, equations, image, summary, video, etc.) **is a violation of academic integrity** standards.

I reserve the right to ask students to submit evidence of their work, including rough notes, drafts, or other material as relevant to the test. I also reserve the right to require students to explain the reasoning process and the steps they took when completing the test. If I suspect a breach of academic integrity, I will send an incident report to the Dean's Office, which will determine further action, in accordance with University Policies.

Grades

Special arrangements for make-up tests must be made in advance and with proper documentation. Personal reasons will be accepted only in extremely rare cases, at the discretion of the instructor. You must contact the instructor as soon as possible if you need accommodations.

You can expect a return time for test grades of **2 weeks**. There will be **no shifting** of any portion of the grade to another assignment, as it is against this course's policies.

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.

Breakdown

Test 1: 30 % – no make-ups, unless with prior notice and documented excuse
Test 2: 30 % – no make-ups, unless with prior notice and documented excuse
Final Exam: 40 % – cumulative; any deferrals are to be requested through Registrar's Office

Schedule: Posted and regularly updated on Brightspace. Here is the tentative schedule:

Date	Do in class	Reading for Today
7-Jan	Syllabus, Pre-test, What is critical thinking; arguments, validity, soundness	
14-Jan	Syllogisms - Easier translations, star test, English Arguments, harder translations	3rd ed. 1-17; 2nd ed. 1-19
21-Jan	Syllogisms - Deriving conclusions, Venn diagrams, idiomatic. Review	3rd ed. 18-27; 2nd ed. 20-30
28-Jan	Test 1	

4-Feb	Propositional - Easier translations, simple truth-tables, equivalences, truth-evaluations, complex truth-tables	3rd ed. 112-121; 2nd ed. 118-128
11-Feb	Propositional - truth-table test, truth-assignment test; harder translations, idiomatic arguments	3rd ed. 122-135; 2nd ed. 129-142
25-Feb	Proofs - Derivations: S-rules and I-rules. Easier proofs and refutations	3rd ed. 136-156; 2nd ed. 143-162
4-Mar	Proofs - Harder proofs and refutations. Review	3rd ed. 161-170; 2nd ed. 167-175
11-Mar	Test 2	
18-Mar	Informal reasoning - informal fallacies. Inconsistency. Constructing and analyzing arguments	3rd ed. 51-74; 2nd ed. 55-79
25-Mar	Inductive reasoning - Statistical syllogism. Probability calculations. Reasoning from a sample	3rd ed. 75-90; 2nd ed. 80-95
1-Apr	Inductive reasoning - Analogical reasoning. Mill's Methods. Best explanation. Review	3rd ed. 90-98, 105-111; 2nd ed. 95-104, 111-117
	Final Exam: Apr 11-23 (TBD) https://carleton.ca/ses/exam-schedule/	

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2025-26)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. We no longer allow hard copies to be placed in the department's essay box.

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:

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as '*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*' This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source.

Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own;
- failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor.

The Associate Dean of the Faculty follows a rigorous [process for academic integrity allegations](#), including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of "F" for the course.

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the full 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](#))

Statement on AI:

As our understanding of the uses of AI and its relationship to student work and academic integrity continue to evolve, students are required to discuss their use of AI in any circumstance not described in the course outline with the instructor to ensure it supports the learning goals for the course.

Mental Health:

As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>.

Academic Accommodation:

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website

(students.carleton.ca/course-outline). Examples of special arrangements include:

- *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 [EIC](#) 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:

Jan. 5	Classes begin.
Jan. 16	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. 16	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 16-20	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 15	Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses.
Mar. 25	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. 3	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 8	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Classes follow a Friday schedule. 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. 9-10	No classes or examinations take place.
Apr. 11-23	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 23	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:
<https://carleton.ca/csas/support/>
520-3822

MacOdrum Library
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>
520-2735