

# PHIL\*2100 Course Outline: Fall 2015

## General Information

**Course Title: Critical Thinking**

### **Course Description:**

An argument is a set of statements (the *premises* of the argument) that is intended to provide rational support for some further statement (the *conclusion* of the argument). We use arguments to convince ourselves and others that some view or position is rationally supported. The purpose of a critical thinking class is to make you better at identifying, analyzing, criticizing, writing about, and constructing arguments. The core text for this course is *The Pocket Guide to Critical Thinking*. It provides the basic tools for recognizing, analyzing, and criticizing arguments. The other course text is *How To Think About Weird Things*. The authors of this book focus on various pseudoscientific topics in order to emphasize where people tend to go wrong when they come to believe weird things (e.g. that a flashing light is an alien UFO; that the world was created 8000 years ago, that truth is what you believe is true, that there is nothing special about science as opposed to, say, astrology). The course ranges widely over a number of important philosophical topics: truth, knowledge, scientific method, bad reasoning. It also introduces important and useful concepts in the psychological study of reasoning as well as logical concepts. The course is lecture-based, with plenty of opportunity for students to raise questions and to *engage in argument*. Tutorials, described below, occur once a week, at various times. Lectures and tutorials differ in their goals and purpose: lectures are designed to introduce students to basic concepts in a somewhat decontextualized way; tutorials are designed to give students a chance to critically assess longer pieces from magazines, the internet, academic writing, etc. The ultimate objective of the course is practical: to help the student develop useful tools for reasoning in any context.

**Credit Weight: 0.5**

**Academic Department (or campus): Philosophy**

**Semester Offering: F15**

### **Class Schedule and Location:**

**LEC Mon, Wed**

**04:30PM - 05:20PM MCKN, Room 117**

### **Instructor Information**

**Instructor Name: Don Dedrick**

**Instructor Email: [ddedrick@uoguelph.ca](mailto:ddedrick@uoguelph.ca)**

Office location and office hours: Rm 329 MacKinnon Bldg

## **GTA Information**

Please see your Courselink page for this course.

## **Course Content**

### **Specific Learning Outcomes:**

*Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:*

1. Distinguish arguments from non-arguments
2. Identify different argument types
3. Understand and apply basic logical concepts
4. Utilize strategies appropriate to different argument types in order to evaluate arguments
5. Understand basic issues and concepts in the psychological study of reasoning  
More effectively distinguish science from pseudo science
6. Recognize a range of mistakes in reasoning - the “fallacies”

### **Lecture Content:**

#### **Week 1**

##### **Claims and Definitions**

PGCT, Chapters 1 & 2

Tutorial #1

#### **Week 2**

##### **Introduction to arguments**

PGCT Chapters 3 & 4 [very important chapters!]

Tutorial # 2

#### **Week 3**

##### **Introduction to arguments (continuation of week 2)**

PGCT Chapters 3 & 4 [very important chapters!]

Tutorial # 3

#### **Week 4**

**Evaluating premises**

PGCT Chapter 5

Tutorial # 4

#### **Week 5**

**Repairing arguments**

PGCT Ch 6

Tutorial # 5

**No class Monday--Thanksgiving**

#### **Week 6**

**Repairing arguments (continuation)**

WT Chapter 6

NO TUTORIAL THIS WEEK

**Midterm test in class on Wed October 21**

**Assignment distributed this week (electronically)**

#### **Week 7**

**Possibility.**

WT Ch. 2

Tutorial #6

#### **Week 8**

**Personal Experience.**

WT Chapter 5.

**Midterm returned in tutorial and discussed in tutorial.** No Tutorial topic.

#### **Week 9**

**Compound claims.**

PGCT Chapter 10

Tutorial #7

#### **Week 10**

**General Claims and prescriptive claims**

PGCT Chapters 11 & 12

Tutorial #8

**Assignment Due Nov 16**

#### **Week 11**

**Knowledge and Belief.**

WT Chapter 4

Tutorial #9

Week 12 [classes M W and F]

Truth and Science

WT Ch. 8 and Ch 6 (in that order)

Tutorial # 10

**Assignment is returned in tutorial.**

There is a Friday lecture to makeup for Thanksgiving.

### Tutorial Information:

For 10 of the 11 tutorials, there will be a text to read and a few questions to answer. The text and the questions will be available at the website for this course. The 11th tutorial is devoted to returning and discussing the midterm.

You will discuss the assigned text in the tutorial. Bring the text and 2 copies of your answers to the questions to the tutorial. Hand in your answers to the tutor at the beginning of the class. He or she will grade them, and return them to you next class. The grading will be on a simplified scale: 0 or 1 = unacceptable; 2 = acceptable; 3 = very good. What the grade descriptors mean: “unacceptable” = in the judgement of the TA, no real effort is made to answer the questions; “acceptable” = questions are taken seriously and the student answers them all; “good” = student has responded thoughtfully to issues raised by the questions.

When the course is over, The TA may raise but not lower your overall tutorial grade on the basis of the quality of participation in the tutorial. The grade may be raised by up to 5 marks out of the total tutorial component. This decision is at the discretion of the TA and is not based strictly on attendance.

Example: The tutorial component of the course is worth 20 % of the final grade. The TA will calculate this component as follows: the best 5 tutorial assignments will constitute the base grade. Example: If your 5 best assignments are all “good,” then your mark is 5 times 3 (15/20). Suppose, as well, that you have contributed to discussion on a regular basis, and helped to make the tutorial good. Then, obviously, the TA will increase your mark up to a maximum of 5 marks. So if he/she increased your grade by 4, your total tutorial mark would be 19/20.

In tutorial, we are more interested in the seriousness with which you take these assignments than any specific right answers. It is true that some answers are better than others, and we will strive to find them, but we, as philosophers, exhibit significant tolerance for differences of view. We do expect those different views to be supported by reasons: an “opinion” without a reason is just a prejudice.

## Course Assignments and Tests:

Assignment or Test	Due Date	Contribution to Final Mark (%)	Learning Outcomes Assessed
Midterm	Oct 21	20	1,2,3,6
Assignment	Nov 16	20	1,2,3,4,5
Online quizzes	throughout course	15	1,2,3,4,6
Tutorials	throughout course	20	1,2,3,4,5,6
Final Exam	Dec 17	25	1,2,3,4,5,6

### Additional Notes (if required):

Please see comments on Tutorial Information, above, for more detail on Tutorial grading.

### Final examination date and time:

EXAM Thur  
08:30AM - 10:30AM (2015/12/17)  
Room TBA Room TBA

Final exam weighting: 25%

## Course Resources

### Required Texts:

1. *The Pocket Guide to Critical Thinking* (4<sup>nd</sup> edition), Richard Epstein.
2. *How To Think About Weird Things* (6<sup>th</sup> edition), Theodore Schick Jr. and Lewis Vaughn. Material available from course website, Courselink.  
You are *responsible* for gaining access to the website. No course material will be made available in paper format.

Reading # 2 is available on Course reserve.

### Other Resources:

Material available from course website on Courselink. You are *responsible* for gaining access to the website. No course material will be made available in paper format.

## Course Policies

### Grading Policies

Late assignments are accepted only with a valid explanation (medical or otherwise). Please contact the instructor as soon as you know you cannot meet a deadline. There is no penalty for late assignments. Either they are accepted or they are not.

### Course Policy regarding use of electronic devices and recording of lectures:

Electronic recording of classes is expressly forbidden without consent of the instructor. When recordings are permitted they are solely for the use of the authorized student and may not be reproduced, or transmitted to others, without the express written consent of the instructor.

## University Policies

*Please see course link website for this course for detailed information on your rights and obligations: the “eight statements”.*

### Academic Consideration

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the academic calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

[Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions](#)

### Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community, faculty, staff, and students to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring.

University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection. Please note: Whether or not a

student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:  
[Academic Misconduct Policy](#)

## Accessibility

The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact the Centre for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible.

For more information, contact CSD at 519-824-4120 ext. 56208 or email [csd@uoguelph.ca](mailto:csd@uoguelph.ca) or see the website: [Student Accessibility Services Website](#)

## Course Evaluation Information

Please refer to the [Course and Instructor Evaluation Website](#) .

## Drop date

The last date to drop one-semester courses, without academic penalty, is **Nov 6** . For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Academic Calendar: [Current Undergraduate Calendar](#)