

University of Guelph
Department of Philosophy
Fall 2013

PHIL *2100-01 Syllabus

Professor: Dr. Victoria I. Burke
Lecture Times: 2:30-3:20 PM MW
Lecture Location: MCLN 102
Office Hours: 10:00-11:00 AM MWF
Office Location: MacK 339 (Office Wing)
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Critical Thinking

Course Objectives & 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 ultimate objective of the course is practical: to help the student develop useful tools for reasoning in any context.

Required Texts:

1. *The Pocket Guide to Critical Thinking* (4th edition), Richard Epstein.
2. *How To Think About Weird Things* (7th edition), Theodore Schick Jr. and Lewis Vaughn.

Distribution:

9 Assignments: average of 9 Assignments = 50%

Tutorial Participation: 20%

Final Exam: 30%

Participation Marks: Participation points are awarded for students who actively make themselves known in tutorials and lectures through verbal contributions and questions.

Deadlines: An assignment will be due every week for nine weeks, beginning week September 16, 2013. The assignments will be posted on the course link website at least one week in advance. The student should fill in the assignment, print it out, and hand it in to the TA during tutorials the week of the designated deadline. Each student is permitted an allotment of two late assignments, submitted late for any reason. Late assignments beyond the two allotted will incur a penalty of 5% per day for every day the assignment is late. Students should reserve their late days for an emergency. Assignments will not be accepted via email or fax, and university regulations regarding late work during the final exam period will be strictly observed. Students may not ask the instructor or the TA to invigilate the final exam at a different time than the exam sitting scheduled by the registrar.

Late Assignments: Late assignments may be handed in to the tutorial leader directly or to their department mailbox. Do not attempt to give assignments to the professor. Assignments are not to be submitted to front office staff at the philosophy department. The TA will have an office and mailbox. Write the date and time you drop the paper off on the paper. If the date and time you indicate is inconsistent with what we know about the time we pick the paper up, and the dates and times we check the mailbox, the late penalty will be assessed on the basis of the time we pick the paper up. Put the paper directly into the mailbox without disturbing the office staff. To avoid confusion, it is advisable to upload your late assignment into the designated folder in the dropbox, which time-stamps the date and time of submission.

Dropbox: The dropbox is intended for *late* assignments only. Assignments are due in *hardcopy* form in tutorials the week of the deadline. This is to facilitate grading by the TAs, who will need to annotate the marks directly on the paper, and calculate the grade from there. If you have a late assignment, you can upload it to the dropbox for the purpose of a time-stamp, but you will still need to submit it in hardcopy for to the TAs for marking.

A Note on the Textbooks: The most recent editions of the two textbooks have been ordered for PHIL*2100-01 F13. Publishers make money by reissuing new editions of textbooks, sometimes with minor incremental changes, sometimes with major changes. The two textbooks for this course have gone through multiple editions in the past ten years. Since I have not taught this course every year, I am not in possession of every edition of these textbooks. The page numbers from the multiple editions that I *do* have access to are listed on the syllabus (for students who want to buy used copies of older, cheaper editions on the used book market). It should be presumed, that the older editions are not quite as good as the latest editions (analogous to a used car that is not quite as good as the latest model). I do not have time to track and itemize the differences between different editions for students, or to offer advice on the advisability of purchasing older editions. The last time I taught this course was with the 3rd Edition of PGCT and the 5th Edition of the WT book. This means that the lectures and assignments are going to be weighted toward the content in these editions with minor adaptations to accommodate the current editions determined as the course progresses.

Email: Philosophical questions about content will not be answered on email by either the professor or the TA.. Students must avail themselves of lecture and tutorial time, or office hours in order to have their questions about content answered. TAs are not paid for email time with students, and they are not required to answer student questions on email. Only short administrative questions will be answered on email by the professor. You can expect a response in 48 hours.

Desire2Learn Site: This class will have a Desire2Learn website, where all powerpoint presentations, handouts, and assignments will be posted. Students may access the site through Courselink, and are required to check the site regularly for announcements. Student grades for the assignments will also be posted on the courselink site.

Readings and Lectures: Students should read the assigned material prior to class, and should bring the texts to class as class may involve careful and close examination of the readings.

Note on Assignment Integrity: The assignments are not intended to be group assignments. Each student is required to do the assignment on their own and submit it to the TA. Sometimes students in the sciences find that bewildering, since in the sciences assessments are often made, say, on group lab work. Indeed, even out in the real world a pharmaceutical company might get FDA approval for a drug that was developed by a team of scientists. But this is not the expectation of classes in the humanities, where we need to be able to assign a grade individually that indicates a general assessment of the extent to which the students has absorbed the course material. So, students may meet to discuss the concepts, but must do the assignment on their own. It is also in the student's interest to do this because it will better prepare them for the final exam, where students will not be able to work as a group..

Course Schedule

WEEK 1

September 9: Claims

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 1 + 2, pp. 1-8 4th Edition; Chapter 1 pp. 2-10 3rd Edition

September 11: Claims (cont'd)

WEEK 2

September 16: Argument I

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 3+ 4, pp. 9-16 4th Edition; Chapter 2 pp. 12-18 3rd Edition

*Assignment Week 1 Due in Tutorials

September 18: Argument I (cont'd)

WEEK 3

September 23: Argument II & Authority on the WWW

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 5, pp. 17-26 4th Edition; Chapter 2.2 pp. 19-25 3rd Edition

*Assignment Week 2 Due in Tutorials

September 25: Argument II & Authority on the WWW (cont'd)

WEEK 4

September 30: Argument III

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 6, pp. 27-36 4th Edition; Chapter 2.4 - 2.5 pp. 28-36 3rd Edition

*Assignment Week 3 Due in Tutorials

October 2: Argument III (cont'd)

WEEK 5

October 7: Argument IV

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 7, pp. 37-41 4th Edition; Chapter 2.6 pp. 37-40 3rd Edition

*Assignment Week 4 Due in Tutorials

October 9: Argument IV (cont'd)

WEEK 6

October 14: Thanksgiving Holiday (no class)

October 16: Reasoning With Special Kinds of Claims I

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 8 + 9, pp. 42-46 4th Edition; Chapter 3.1 pp. 42-51 3rd Edition

WEEK 7

October 21: Reasoning With Special Kinds of Claims I (cont'd)

*Assignment Week 5 Due in Tutorials

October 23: Reasoning With Special Kinds of Claims II

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 10 + 11 + 12, pp. 49-68 4th Edition; Chapter 3.2 pp. 52-62 3rd Edition

WEEK 8

October 28: Reasoning With Special Kinds of Claims II (cont'd)

*Assignment Week 6 Due in Tutorials

October 30: Reasoning With Experience: Analogies

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 15, pp. 83-89 4th Edition; Chapter 4.1 pp. 63-68 3rd Edition

WEEK 9

November 4: Reasoning With Experience: Analogies (cont'd)

*Assignment Week 7 Due in Tutorials

November 6: Reasoning With Experience: Generalizing

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 16, pp. 90-100 4th Edition; Chapter 4.1 pp. 63-68 3rd Edition

WEEK 10

November 11: Reasoning With Experience: Generalizing (cont'd)

*Assignment Week 8 Due in Tutorials

November 13: Possibility

Read Textbook: Chapters 1 & 2 of the WT 7th Edition; Chapters 1 & 2 of WT 4th Edition; Chapters 1 & 2 of WT 5th Edition

WEEK 11

November 18: Possibility (cont'd)

*Assignment Week 9 Due in Tutorials

November 20: Truth

Read Textbook: Chapters 5 & 8 of the 7th Edition; Chapters 3 & 4 of WT 4th Edition; Chapters 5 & 8 5th Edition**WEEK 12**

November 25: Truth (cont'd)

November 27: Knowledge and Science

Read Textbook: Chapter 4 & 7 of the 7th Edition; Chapters 5 & 7 of WT 4th Edition; Chapters 4 & 6 5th Edition

*Last Day of Classes

Final Exam Date and Time:**Friday December 13 @ 08:30AM - 10:30AM (2013/12/13)****Room TBA**

FINAL EXAM: PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING REGULATION FROM THE UNDERGRADUATE CALENDAR: "Students are advised that the Final Examination schedules are available for Fall Semester by mid-August, for Winter Semester by mid-December, and for Summer Semester by mid-April. Students are required to consult the final examination timetable in order to avoid conflicts in examination times when adding courses. Written approval must be obtained from the dean or director and the instructor-in-charge of the course to register in courses that have conflicting examination times."

The Final Exam for PHIL*2100-01 will not be re-scheduled or given at an alternative time; students may not ask the professor or the TA to invigilate the exam for them at an alternative time and date.

E-mail Communication

As per University regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester Fall 2013 courses, without academic penalty, is Thursday October 31. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities that involve, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c14/c14-strightsrespon.shtml>

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins 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. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>

If you find yourself in difficulty, contact the undergraduate advisor in your program, or the BA Counseling Office: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/baco/contact.shtml>