

University of Guelph  
Department of Philosophy  
Winter 2011

## PHIL 2100DE Syllabus

### Critical Thinking

Professor: Dr. Victoria I. Burke  
Office Hours: By Appointment Only

Appointments will be held in 339 MacKinnon (office wing). I am readily available to meet if you need one-on-one assistance.

Email: [vburke@uoguelph.ca](mailto:vburke@uoguelph.ca)

Online Questions:  
I will endeavor to answer every question within 24 hours.

### 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* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), Richard Epstein.
2. *How To Think About Weird Things* (5<sup>th</sup> edition), Theodore Schick Jr. and Lewis Vaughn.

3. Material available from Web CT (including this course outline, all assignments, and other material). WEB CT can be accessed from the Home Page for U. of Guelph.  
You are *responsible* for gaining access to Web CT. Assignments will not be made available in paper format.

**Distribution:**

Online Discussions: 20%

Assignment 1: 25%

Assignment 2: 25%

Final Exam: 30%

**Course Schedule**

WEEK 1

January 10-January 16: Claims

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 1 pp. 2-10

Exercise 1.1

Discussion 1.2

Exercise 1.3

WEEK 2

January 17-January 23: Argument I

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 2 pp. 12-18

Exercise 2.1

Exercise 2.2

WEEK 3

January 24-January 30: Argument II

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 2.2 pp. 19-25

Web Tutorial 3.1

Exercise 3.2

WEEK 4

January 31-February 6: Argument III

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 2.4 - 2.5 pp. 28-36

Discussion 4.1

WEEK 5

February 7-February 13: Argument IV

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 2.6 pp. 37-40

Exercise 5.1

Assignment #1 due

WEEK 6

February 14-February 20: Reasoning With Special Kinds of Claims I

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 3.1 pp. 42-51

Discussion 6.1

Exercise 6.2

Winter Break: February 21-27: No readings or assignments due

WEEK 7

February 28-March 6: Reasoning With Special Kinds of Claims II

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 3.2 pp. 52-62

Exercise 7.1

Discussion 7.2

WEEK 8

March 7-March 13: Reasoning With Experience: Analogies

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 4.1 pp. 63-68

Discussion 8.1

WEEK 9

March 14-March 20: Reasoning With Experience: Generalizing

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 4.4 pp. 63-68

WEEK 10

March 21-March 27: Possibility

Read Textbook: Chapters 1 & 2 of WT 4<sup>th</sup> Edition; Chapters 1 & 2 of WT 5<sup>th</sup> Edition

Assignment #2 due by March 27

WEEK 11

March 28-April 3: Truth

Read Textbook: Chapters 3 & 4 of WT 4<sup>th</sup> Edition; Chapters 5 & 8 5<sup>th</sup> Edition

WEEK 12

April 4-April 8: Knowledge and Science

Read Textbook: Chapters 5 & 7 of WT 4<sup>th</sup> Edition; Chapters 4 & 6 5<sup>th</sup> Edition

Discussion 12.1

**Final Exam: TBA**

**This is a sit-down in classroom final exam scheduled by the registrar. The exam will take place on the University of Guelph campus. You may take the exam at a remote testing center (please contact the Office of Open Learning for arrangements).**

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### ***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] in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. Where possible, this should be done in advance of the missed work or event, but otherwise, just as soon as possible after the due date, and certainly no longer than one week later. Note: if appropriate documentation of your inability to meet that in-course requirement is necessary, the course instructor, or delegate, will request it of you. Such documentation will rarely be required for course components representing less than 10% of the course grade. Such documentation will be required, however, for Academic Consideration for missed end-of term work and/or missed final examinations. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration. (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/co8/c08-ac.shtml>). Also see the BA Counselling Office website ([www.uoguelph.ca/baco](http://www.uoguelph.ca/baco))

### ***Drop Date***

The last date to drop one-semester Winter 2010 courses, without academic penalty, is **Friday March 11th**. 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.

### ***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 University of Guelph takes a serious view of academic misconduct, and it is your responsibility as a student to be aware of and to abide by the University's policy. Included in the definition of academic misconduct are such activities as cheating on examinations, plagiarism, misrepresentation, and submitting the same material in two different courses without written permission from the relevant instructors. To better understand your responsibilities, read the Undergraduate Calendar. (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c01/index.shtml>) for a statement of Students' Academic Responsibilities; also read the full Academic Misconduct Policy (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>). You are also advised to make use of the resources available through the Learning Commons (<http://www.learningcommons.uoguelph.ca/>) and to discuss any questions you may have with your course instructor, TA, or academic counsellor. Instructors have the right to use software to aid in the detection of plagiarism or copying and to examine students orally on submitted work. For students found guilty of academic misconduct, serious penalties, up to and including suspension or expulsion, can be imposed. Hurried or careless submission of work does not exonerate students of responsibility for ensuring the academic integrity of their work. Similarly, students who find themselves unable to meet course requirements by the deadlines or criteria expected because of medical, psychological or compassionate circumstances should review the university's regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration in the calendar (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>) and discuss their situation with the instructor and/or the program counsellor or other academic counsellor as appropriate.