

University of Guelph
Department of Philosophy
Summer 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).

Email: 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* (3rd edition), Richard Epstein.
2. *How To Think About Weird Things* (6th or 6th 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**

May 12-22: Claims

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 1 pp. 2-10

Exercise 1.1

Discussion 1.2

Exercise 1.3

WEEK 2

May 23-29: Argument I

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 2 pp. 12-18

Exercise 2.1

Exercise 2.2

WEEK 3

May 30-June 5: Argument II

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 2.2 pp. 19-25

Web Tutorial 3.1

Exercise 3.2

WEEK 4

June 6-12: Argument III

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

Discussion 4.1

WEEK 5

June 13-19: Argument IV

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 2.6 pp. 37-40

Exercise 5.1

Assignment #1 due

WEEK 6

June 20-26: Reasoning With Special Kinds of Claims I

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 3.1 pp. 42-51

Discussion 6.1

Exercise 6.2

WEEK 7

June 27-July 3: Reasoning With Special Kinds of Claims II

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 3.2 pp. 52-62

Exercise 7.1

Discussion 7.2

WEEK 8

July 4-10: Reasoning With Experience: Analogies

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 4.1 pp. 63-68

Discussion 8.1

WEEK 9

July 7-17: Reasoning With Experience: Generalizing

Read Textbook PGCT: Chapter 4.4 pp. 63-68

WEEK 10

July 18-24: Possibility

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

Assignment #2 due by July 24 midnight

WEEK 11

July 25-31: Truth

Read Textbook: Chapters 3 & 4 of WT 4th Edition; Chapters 5 & 8 5th Edition

WEEK 12

August 1-8: Knowledge and Science

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

Discussion 12.1

Final Exam: TBA in regularly scheduled exam period August 11-19

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).

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION

AS PER UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS, ALL STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO CHECK THEIR *UOGUELPH.CA* EMAIL ACCOUNT REGULARLY - EMAIL 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](http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml)

DROP DATE

THE LAST DATE TO DROP ONE-SEMESTER **SUMMER 2011** COURSES, WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY, IS **FRIDAY JULY 8TH**. FOR REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR DROPPING COURSES, SEE THE UNDERGRADUATE CALENDAR:
[HTTP://WWW.UOGUELPH.CA/REGISTRAR/CALENDARS/UNDERGRADUATE/CURRENT/C08/C08-DROP.SHTML](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 ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY IS DETAILED IN THE UNDERGRADUATE CALENDAR:
[HTTP://WWW.UOGUELPH.CA/REGISTRAR/CALENDARS/UNDERGRADUATE/CURRENT/C08/C08-AMISCONDUCT.SHTML](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/](http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/)