

CRITICAL THINKING

PHIL010 • Summer 2012 • MTWRF 2:20–3:35 • 217 Thomas

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Critical Thinking (Informal Logic) studies how arguments are formed, evaluated, and justified in real-life situations. This study includes an analysis of language, inductive and deductive reasoning, and teaches skills on how to evaluate arguments effectively in everyday situations. At the end of this course, you should be able to (1) distinguish the functions of language and its capacity to express and influence meaning, (2) identify, analyze, and evaluate a variety of different types of arguments (inductive and deductive), and (3) recognize common fallacies.

COURSE OVERVIEW

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Waller, Bruce N. 2012. *Critical Thinking: Consider the Verdict*. 6th ed. Pearson: Boston.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- **Critical Reading Skills:** Students will learn certain fundamental features of language and argument analysis, which will allow them to critically analyze texts, identify arguments, and discriminate superfluous information from key points.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students will develop a general set of skills that allow them to analyze and assess a variety of different arguments, deciding whether the arguments are properly supported, fallacious, or valid.
- **Dialogue:** Students will engage in respectful conversation with classmates.
- **Oral Expression:** Students will learn how to clearly articulate various arguments and critical thinking concepts.

COURSE WORK

- **Participation (10%):** Regular attendance is strongly linked to success in this course. Since the course is a combination of lecture and seminar format, regular and active participation is required. Although it is not essential that you have mastered the text, you are expected to have read the assignment before attending class and have made notes for which passages, terms, or arguments you think are important.
- **Three Examinations of Notebooks (15%):** While you are not required to specifically keep a notebook, you are required to keep an organized set of your work. This will be collected at specified times in the semester and reviewed mostly for *completeness*. In order to receive full points, it is not necessary that you (1) did all the exercises correctly, nor (2) that you did 100% of the exercises. A helpful guideline concerning *organization and assessment* of these notebooks will be distributed in class. The specific problem set will also be announced at the beginning of each class.
- **Three Short Quizzes (15%):** Three short quizzes are scheduled periodically throughout the semester. In order to do well on the quizzes, it is sufficient that you have developed a basic familiarity with the assigned reading and the material discussed in class. Quizzes do not require a mastery of the material.
- **Three Exams (45%):** Three exams are scheduled periodically throughout the semester. In order to do well on the exams, it is necessary that you have developed a basic familiarity with the assigned reading and the material discussed in class. However, exams require a level of understanding of the material that goes above basic familiarity.
- **Two Short Papers (15%):** You will be asked to write two, short (1,000 word) papers where you use many of the concepts and critical thinking skills you develop in this course on a topic of your choosing (e.g. critically analyzing a topic in the newspaper, on a philosophical or theological debate, etc.).

COURSE POLICIES

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The general principles and policy relating to cheating and plagiarism, which are enforced in this class, can be found in the Penn State policy on academic misconduct. *Academic Integrity*: Academic dishonesty encompasses a wide range of activities, whether intentional or unintentional, that includes, but is not limited to: all forms of fraud, plagiarism, and any failure to cite explicitly all materials and sources used in one's work. Sanctions for these activities include, but are not limited to, failure in a course, removal from the degree program, failure in a course with an explanation in the permanent transcript of the cause for failure, suspension, and expulsion. If you are unclear about whether you or someone you know is engaging in academic misconduct, read the following: [University Statement on Academic Integrity](#). For more information, see [PSU Academic Integrity](#), [PSU ITS](#), [Plagiarism Tutor](#), [Turnitin](#), [PSU Teaching & Learning with Technology](#)

GRADE ROUNDING

Grades will be rounded up from the *second* decimal point, e.g. 90.95 rounds up to 91.0 while 90.94 rounds down to 90.90. In the event that eLION does not allow for a particular grade (e.g. D+), you will simply be given the letter grade (e.g. if you have a D+ then you will receive a D, and if you have a C-, you will receive a C).

A: 91–100%;	C+: 79.0–79.9	F: 0–59.9
A–: 90.0–90.9	C: 71.0–78.9	INCOMPLETE
B+: 89.0–89.9	C–: 70–70.9	DROP
B: 81.0–88.9	D+: 69.0–69.9	
B–: 80–80.9	D: 60.0–68.9	

LATE WORK

If you are planning on taking a **Test/Notebook** late, you will need to clear this with the instructor *before* the day and time of the test. If the instructor is not informed that you will be taking the test late, a grade reduction of one letter grade is incurred for every day the test is late. So if the due date is Tuesday at 3p.m. and you email me on Tuesday at 3.01p.m., you will lose a letter grade. You will not lose an additional letter grade until 3.01p.m. the next day (i.e. Wednesday).

STUDENT GUIDANCE AND DISABILITY

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the campus disability liaison as soon as possible: (name, office, telephone, email). For additional information, check the university web site for [Disability Services](#). If you are in need of psychological counseling, please do not hesitate to contact Penn State's [Counseling & Psychological Services](#) (phone: 814-863-0395). For any problem related to your studies, university policies and procedures, do not hesitate to seek the help of the [Student Affairs Services](#), your Academic Advisor, or arrange a meeting with your instructor who will help you obtain assistance through one of the above, or another, agency.

USE OF ANGEL AND EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Please check the webpage on the [ANGEL](#) website regularly. An online version of the syllabus is available there, and you will be notified of any cancellation of a course meeting there. If you need to contact me, send a well-constructed email to dwa132@psu.edu with an appropriate subject line (e.g. P120 Question) and with an appropriate address (e.g. "Dear David"). Failure to do either, or emailing me with multiple links attached ("check this youtube link") will result in your instructor deleting your email. Students are responsible for activity on their computer accounts so only send emails pertinent to the course. Also, please do not send correspondence from cellular telephones (e.g. Blackberries, etc.).

TUTORING, DROP PROCEDURES, AND INCOMPLETES

Students who simply stop attending class, for whatever reason, without officially withdrawing from the course, will receive the grade of F. If you expect a refund, be aware that the date the withdrawal form is processed by Penn State registrar's office determines the amount of refund. Consult the Register site for [drop procedures](#). Consult the Handbook for taking an [Incomplete \(D/F\)](#). Before considering dropping the course or taking an incomplete, you might consider getting additional help: [Information Literacy Tutorial](#), [University Learning Center](#), [Writing Center](#)

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

A number of factors figure into creating a healthy classroom environment. In order to facilitate such an environment, I ask you to obey the following: (1) the use of cell phones in any capacity is prohibited (please turn ringers/buzzers off, no text-messaging during class), (2) please do not begin to 'pack up' your belongings before your instructor has *explicitly* dismissed you, (3) please come to class rested, sleeping in class is strictly prohibited, (4) please do not do other work in class. If you are incapable of performing (1)–(4) or are disruptive in class, you will kindly be asked to leave the classroom.

CHALLENGE EXAMINATION

For some courses, students may request a [challenge examination](#) as a substitute for completing the usual requirements of a course. If the examination is successfully completed the credits received are described as "credits by examination" ([policy 42-50](#)).

COURSE SCHEDULE

June 27–July 6	Part I: Argument Terminology & Ad Hominems Chapter 1: Introduction, pp.1–11 Chapter 2: A Few Important Terms <i>Quiz 1</i> Chapter 3: Ad Hominem Arguments <i>Exam 1 & Exercises Notebook 1</i>
July 9–July 20	Part II: The Strawman & Analysis Chapter 4: The Strawman Fallacy Chapter 5: What's the Question? <i>Quiz 2</i> Chapter 6: Relevant and Irrelevant Reasons Chapter 7: Analyzing Arguments Chapter 8: The Burden of Proof <i>Exam 2, Exercise Notebook 2, Short Paper 1</i>
July 23–Aug 3	Part III: Burden of Proof, Language, and More Fallacies Chapter 9: Language and Its Pitfalls Chapter 10: Appeal to Authority Chapter 11: Arguments by Analogy <i>Quiz 3</i> Chapter 12: Some Distinctive Arguments and Potential Pitfalls Chapter 13: Begging the Question <i>Exam 3, Exercise Notebook 3, Short Paper 2</i>

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