

PHILOSOPHY 102: CRITICAL THINKING

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Office Hours: MWF 1:00-2:00, TR 12:30-1:30

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COURSE OUTLINE

Course Description: An examination of the basic principles of critical reasoning, with an emphasis on developing various analytical skills, such as identifying the structure of arguments, utilizing the basic operations of formal logic, recognizing the deductive validity and inductive strength of arguments, detecting fallacies, and applying critical reasoning not only in everyday life but across various disciplines (e.g., in ethics, politics, science, law, art, and philosophy). This is an approved General Education course, area A3.

Course Objective: The overriding aim of this course is to develop various skills that will help you think more sensibly about the world you live in. To accomplish this we must answer the following questions: What standards should be used to separate what is true from what is not? Given the enormous amount of information with which we are bombarded, which information is reliable and which is not? Which reasons given in support of a particular assertion should count as support and which should not? While addressing these questions we will examine various kinds of arguments, looking for examples of critical thinking excellence (or its opposite). We will examine common pitfalls to clear thinking and various techniques used by others to influence our thinking. If all goes well, you should be better equipped to analyze what you hear and read, thereby becoming a more independent thinker.

Course Content: The course begins with a discussion of the nature of critical thinking and moves to a section on formal logic. We will then further develop the skills described above. Along the way we will examine a variety of topics designed to allow the student to use these skills and to grapple with some interesting and difficult issues. The best way to become a better critical thinker is to practice, practice, practice. Much of the time you spend both in and out of class will be devoted to the application of what you learn to actual problems.

Texts: **Critical Thinking**, Brooke Moore and Richard Parker, 9th Edition, McGraw Hill.

Course Requirements: There will be four exams. None of the exams are cumulative. The exams will be based on the reading assignments, practice problems, lectures, and discussions.

Course grades will be determined as follows: If you accumulate 85% or more of the total points you will have earned an A. Bs will go to those who earn 84-70% of the total points; 69-60% is a C; 59-50% is a D. The definition of each letter grade (A, B, C, D and F) is provided in the University Catalog. I would like to highlight the following points: A grade of B is not representative of average work but of highly competent, highly motivated college-level performance. A grade of C represents adequate competence. Points will be accumulated as follows: 4 exams @ 100 points each for a total of 400 points.

Notes and Suggestions: Come to class prepared for that day's discussion. The study of philosophy does not entail learning certain facts but rather learning to think, critique, and argue in a certain way. That is, philosophy is not an *academic* subject; it is an intellectual *activity*. You will learn by *doing*. You must therefore be prepared for what we are *doing* each day. It will be necessary for you to complete the assigned reading before class. But it will not be sufficient for you to do so. Allow time to think about what you have read.

In order to successfully complete this course, you must attend class. Attendance will not be rewarded, but active attendance will dramatically increase your chances of mastering the course material. This will most assuredly be reflected in the quality of your exams. Should you miss a class meeting it is your responsibility to obtain notes and the next reading assignment from fellow class members. Do not call me for this information. Never ask me if you missed anything important; the answer is always yes.

Exams will not be rescheduled without extremely compelling reasons. Hospitalization is extremely compelling. A malfunctioning alarm clock is not.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Chapter 1:	What is Critical Thinking?
Chapter 3:	Thinking Clearly
Chapter 4:	Credibility
EXAM I	
Chapter 2:	Understanding and Evaluating Arguments
Chapter 8:	Categorical Logic
EXAM II	
Chapter 10:	Inductive Arguments
Chapter 11:	Causal Arguments
EXAM III	
Chapter 5:	Non-argumentative Persuasion/Rhetoric
Chapters 6 and 7:	Fallacies/Pseudoreasoning
EXAM IV	