

PHIL 145 CRITICAL THINKING

COURSE OUTLINE

Semester: Spring 2021

Course weight: .5 (half a credit)

Type of contact hours: remote delivery, due to the pandemic, with two 1-hour optional synchronous workshops/Q&A periods a week

Professor: Bruno Tremblay

Department: Philosophy (St. Jerome's / University of Waterloo)

Office hours: additional, one-on-one virtual meetings can also be set up upon request

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Short Calendar Description

“An analysis of basic types of reasoning, structure of arguments, critical assessment of information, common fallacies, problems of clarity and meaning.”

General Description

The general purpose of the course is to learn how to think more critically. The word “critical” in critical thinking does not refer to being in a state of crisis or to being negative, but rather to our capacity to appreciate and judge both things and what we think and say about them. Indeed, to appreciate or judge something is to see it for what it is and not for what it is not, and in order to do so one must be able to discern or distinguish (“kritikos”, in Ancient Greek) the true from the false, the proven from the non-proven, the certain from the uncertain, the valuable from the non-valuable, the valid from the non-valid, the substantial from the superficial, or even the real from the merely apparent. Critical thinking is in a sense the point of our whole intellectual education and getting better at it is the work of a lifetime. As such, critical thinking certainly encompasses more aspects than what one single 12-week course can cover, and consequently we will focus on only some of them in particular. Since it is through reason that we think critically and since argument is the main tool of reason in its effort to discern or judge, our course is organized around the very notion of argument (aptly also called “reasoning”).

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should:

- A. understand what an argument is and be able to identify one in speech and writing;
- B. understand some of the main ways of forming arguments;
- C. evaluate better the strength or weakness of arguments;
- D. be more aware of 1) the importance of clarity and definition when using words, and 2) the exact meaning and immediate implications of the statements we make.

Required Text

D. Kelley and D. Hutchins, *The Art of Reasoning. An Introduction to Logic*, 5th edition, W.W. Norton, New York, 2014, New York, 663p. + appendices.

Previous editions of the textbook, which had less sections and were authored by D. Kelley alone, will NOT do.

Hard copies or (cheaper) e-books can be purchased at or through the UW bookstore. (Be careful when you visit the store or its website: there is another section of PHIL 145 being taught this Spring and it does **NOT** use the same textbook.) Purchases at/through the UW bookstore come with a code giving access to *Inquizitive*, a learning tool located on the publisher's website. Students are encouraged to use the tool on their own if they find it useful, but that will not be a mandatory component of the course and students who can find a used copy **of the fifth edition** (which will likely **not** come with an access to *Inquizitive*) may use it if they so choose.



Methodology

At the very beginning of most weeks, students will be assigned a chapter of the textbook to read and exercises to complete. In the middle of the week (usually on Wednesdays), the instructor will hold two one-hour, synchronous, virtual meetings — one in the morning (10:00-11:00 am) and one in the afternoon (2:00-3:00 pm). Those workshops or Q&A periods are optional and will be an opportunity to review specific points of the theory covered in the weekly reading or to tackle particular exercises that were found challenging. (One-on-one virtual meetings at other times during the week can also be set up upon request.)

The chapters of the chosen textbook are quite full in terms of explanations and exercises and in general we will proceed at a relatively high pace during the term. In order to allow students to take a breath and to have more time to prepare for Tests 1 and 2, no new reading/set of exercises will be assigned in Weeks 7 and 12, even though regular workshops/Q&A periods will take place in those weeks.

See the detailed Course Schedule, available on the LEARN site.

Evaluation

The breakdown of the course evaluation is as follows:

1. Ten multiple-choice quizzes (10 x 5 marks or 5% of final grade = 50 marks or 50% of final grade), lasting up to 15 minutes each, to be written with no aid and scheduled toward the end of most weeks (usually on Fridays). Their aim is to verify the students' understanding of the material covered in the reading and the exercises previously assigned (usually at the beginning of that week) and possibly worked on with the instructor during the middle-of-the-

week workshops/Q&A periods. Quizzes have to be written at the time of your choice within a set 24-hour period, on LEARN. (N.B. An extra, eleventh quiz will actually take place on July 30th. If a student happens to write all 11 quizzes, only the best 10 results will be retained at the end of the term. **This also allows for any quiz missed due to illness or any other valid, documented reason.** Should a student miss more than 1 quiz for a legitimate and documented reason, however, make-up quizzes or some other solution will be arranged.)

2. A first test (25 marks or 25% of final grade), concerning the content covered since the beginning of the term. No aid. This test will last for up to 90 minutes and will have to be written on LEARN, at the time of your choice within the two-day period of June 24th-25th.
3. A second test (25 marks or 25% of final grade), concerning the content covered throughout the whole term, although some emphasis will be put on the material covered after Test 1. No aid. This test will last for up to 90 minutes and will have to be written on LEARN, at the time of your choice within the two-day period of August 4th-5th.

For the dates of the quizzes, see the detailed Course Schedule, available on the LEARN site.

Course Schedule

A detailed course schedule can be found on the LEARN site.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

UW policy regarding illness and missed tests:

[The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations](#) state that:

- A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “[University of Waterloo Verification of Illness](#)” form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or on the link provided above. If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

Professor’s policy on late assignments/essays, make-up tests, and plagiarism:

Handing in late assignments: unless arrangements are made with the professor beforehand or an official doctor’s note is provided, 10% of the total will be deducted per day.

Make-up tests: there will be no make-up tests for quizzes, tests, and exams missed for non-valid and non-documented reasons. Travel, excessive workload, defective alarm clocks, minor colds, a late bus, etc., are not considered to be valid reasons.

Plagiarism: students who are caught plagiarizing will automatically fail the evaluation in question and may fail the course. (Plagiarism, according to Webster’s: the use or close imitation of the language and/or thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.)

Academic Integrity: To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.

[Academic Integrity Office \(UW\)](#) : A resource for students and instructors.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 71 \(Student Discipline\)](#).

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Students who decide to file a grievance should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 70 \(Student Petitions and Grievances\)](#). For more information, students should contact the Associate Dean of St. Jerome’s University.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline or University of Waterloo Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, read [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals](#).

Note for Students with Disabilities: The [AccessAbility Services \(AS\) Office](#), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.