

PHIL120 – INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THINKING (2024)

Winter 2024, Term 1

Department of Philosophy, University of British Columbia

1. CONTACT

INSTRUCTOR

Name: Aaron Henry, PhD

Office: Over Zoom:

<https://ubc.zoom.us/j/61631323776?pwd=amg3emRuamVkUmpiejVaSFVrVzFpQT09#success>

Office Hours: Tues. & Fri. 3-4 PM

Lecture Location: IBLC 182 though lectures will also be livestreamed and recorded via Panopto

Lecture Times: Mon, Wed, Fri 12-1 PM

Email: aaron.henry@ubc.ca

E-mail policy: E-mails must be sent from your UBC e-mail address and must include the course code (PHIL120) in the subject line. E-mails are for administrative purposes only – questions about course material will be addressed during office hours. I aim to reply to e-mails within one or two business days.

TEACHING ASSISTANT

TBD

2. COURSE

OVERVIEW

This course is an introduction to critical thinking with a focus on the fundamental principles of rational argumentation. We will ask such questions as: what distinguishes arguments from other uses of language? What makes an argument good or bad, reasonable or unreasonable? And how should we go about assessing whether we should accept or reject an argument for a certain claim? In this course, you will become familiar with a handy toolkit that philosophers have developed for addressing such questions. This includes a taxonomy of standard valid and invalid argument forms, as well as some of the more common formal errors people make when constructing and responding to arguments. We will also acquire techniques for recognizing the inductive strength and plausibility of an argument's premises and for identifying the contextually most appropriate standard to use when evaluating a given argument. We will learn to distinguish an argument's logical strength from various nonrational factors that may make an argument seem persuasive, and we will consider some aspects of human psychology that predispose people to being misled by an argument's rationally irrelevant features. Throughout, we will practice with arguments that address a wide array of subject matters, from political and legal issues to religious and scientific. By practicing with such a wide array of arguments, you will develop critical thinking skills that will be useful to you in your academic, professional, and personal lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

A primary objective of any philosophy course is skill development. In this class, you will be learning how to:

- Analyze the structure of arguments using the technical concepts that philosophers have developed for understanding arguments;
- Identify common fallacies in arguments
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of arguments, while interpreting arguments charitably
- Identify how to improve arguments (when they can be improved)
- Write clearly using course terms with precision
- Apply your skills to arguments found inside and outside of course materials

EXPECTATIONS

What I expect from you:

- to keep up with the lectures and readings;
- to come to lecture on time and prepared to discuss assigned readings;
- to complete assignments on time and according to the instructions;
- to treat your peers with respect;
- to ask questions and seek help when you don't understand something and take responsibility for your own learning.

What you can expect from us:

- to promote a positive and stimulating learning environment;
- to provide support throughout the term;
- to give constructive feedback on your written work;
- to treat you with respect;
- to reflect carefully about your questions and make a serious effort to answer them.

READINGS

Hughes & Lavery – *Critical Thinking: An Introduction to the Basic Skills, 7th Edition*. Available at the UBC Bookstore. Please note that new editions of the text come with a passcode for electronic resources that may be useful to you. If you buy a used edition, you can purchase the passcode separately here: <https://broadviewpress.com/product/student-website-passcode-critical-thinking-online/>. All other readings will be available through the course website (see §4 for details)

3. ASSESSMENT

Quizzes	(20% of final)	Due: Biweekly
Midterm	(25% of final)	Due: Oct 25 th
Argument analysis	(20% of final)	Due: Dec 6 th
Final Exam	(35% of final)	TBD

4. POLICIES

COURSE WEBSITE

All announcements and course documents will be posted on Canvas. To access this site, go to <https://canvas.ubc.ca/> and login with your CWLid and password. PHL120H will appear under the “courses” portion of the welcome page, on the left hand side. Click on the link to access our site. You should check this site regularly for updates.

LATENESS

Assignments will be penalized 1/3 a letter grade for each day that they are late. Extensions may be granted if extraordinary circumstances are documented, but students should contact me to request an extension before the due date. Any assignment that is more than 5 days late will not be accepted.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of British Columbia is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. Accordingly, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or

entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. A link about Academic Misconduct: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS

The University of British Columbia is committed to accessibility. If you have a disability that may interfere with your ability to successfully take this course, then please email me in the first few weeks. You must also register with Access and Diversity, so that they can help provide support (grant extra time on exam, note taker, etc.): <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/access-diversity>

5. SUPPORT

ADVICE

It is important to keep up with the readings and to attend lectures. If you feel you need additional help with any of the course material, please don't wait to contact me.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Here is a link to information about the University of British Columbia's writing resources:

<https://writing.library.ubc.ca/>

Here are links to information about how to write a good philosophy paper:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf>

<http://catpages.nwmissouri.edu/m/rfield/guide.html>

Here is a link to information about the 'Cornell' note taking system:

<http://lifehacker.com/202418/geek-to-live--take-study+worthy-lecture-notes>

6. SCHEDULE

Please note that this schedule may change at the instructor's discretion to suit the pace of the course and the interests of the students. Please also note that all readings are to be read *before the class* that will take place on the date listed.

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
Introduction		
Week 1 (Sept 4 th , 6 th)	Formal and informal reasoning	Ch. 1 (pp. 1-14)
Meaning and interpretation		
Week 2 (Sept 9 th , 11 th , 13 th)	Meaning and definitions	Ch. 2 (pp. 15-42) Quiz 1 available
Week 3 (Sept 16 th , 18 th , 20 th)	Clarifying meaning	Ch. 3 (pp. 47-64)
Week 4 (Sept 23 rd , 25 th , 27 th)	Reconstructing arguments	Ch. 4 (pp. 67-88) Quiz 2 available

Assessing arguments		
Week 5 (Oct 2 nd , 4 th)	Strategies for assessing arguments	Ch. 5 (pp. 89-96) No class on September 30th
Week 6 (Oct 7 th , 9 th , 11 th)	Assessing truth-claims	Ch. 6 (pp. 99-126) Quiz 3
Week 7 (Oct 16 th , 18 th)	Assessing relevance	Ch. 7 (pp. 127-139) No class on Oct 14th
Week 8 (Oct 21 st , 23 rd , 25 th)	Assessing adequacy	Ch. 8 (pp. 141-160) Midterm on Oct 25th
Week 9 (Oct 28 th , 30 th , Nov 1 st)	Deductive reasoning	Ch. 9 (pp. 161-178) Quiz 4 available
Week 10 (Nov 4 th , 6 th , 8 th)	Inductive and scientific reasoning	Ch. 10-11 (pp.179-228)
Week 11 (Nov 15 th)	Inductive and scientific reasoning	
Applications		
Week 12 (Nov 18 th , 20 th , 22 nd)	Legal reasoning	Ch 13 (pp. 253-280) Quiz 5 available
Week 13 (Nov 25 th , 27 th , 29 th)	Arguing back and resisting irrational techniques of persuasion	Ch 14-15 (pp. 281-308)
Week 14 (Dec 2 nd , 4 th , 6 th)	Critiquing the media	Ch. 16 Argument analysis due