

PHIL 004: Critical Reasoning

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Carolyn Dicey Jennings, cjennings3@ucmerced.edu, Office Hours: after class, SSM 257A

Umesh Krishnamurthy, umeshkrish37@gmail.com, Office Hours: arrange by email

REQUIRED TEXT

Tracy Bowell and Gary Kemp, *Critical Thinking: A Concise Guide*, 4th edition (Routledge, 2015).

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Critical reasoning is a practice of questioning the claims of others. This practice of questioning improves our understanding of these claims, and the reasons given for them. It also improves our ability to persuade others through reasoning. Students will first learn to identify what logicians call “arguments,” separating the major claim of the argument from the reasons provided for that claim. Then, students will learn to assess arguments, which will include the review of common fallacies of reasoning. **By the end of the course students will be better equipped to analyze and assess the reasoning of others in a variety of contexts.** Note that this course covers informal logic only (i.e. concepts instead of symbols). Formal logic is covered in PHIL 005: Introduction to Logic.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students are expected to be able to:

CLO 1. Identify arguments and their structure (e.g. distinguish premises from conclusions).

CLO 2. Assess arguments for validity, recognizing common fallacies in reasoning.

CLO 3. Identify common argument structures (e.g. modus ponens).

All three CLOs help students to achieve **Philosophy Program Learning Outcome 1: Logic**, Identify and assess the logic of arguments.

This course also helps students achieve the **UC Merced Guiding Principles of *communication, decision making, and development of personal potential***. On *communication*: Critical reasoning allows one to better understand a key form of communication—argument. Learning the skills of critical reasoning should also enable students to improve their own communication. On *decision making*: Critical reasoning helps one to make decisions in the face of argumentative pressure, since it helps one to analyze and assess those arguments. Finally, these skills should allow one to better achieve one’s *personal potential*.

Finally, this course helps students achieve the **WSCUC Core Competencies of *Information Literacy, Quantitative Reasoning, and Critical Thinking***. On *quantitative reasoning*: Critical reasoning includes the understanding of probability, especially as it is used in inductive reasoning, which is a key part of quantitative reasoning.

GRADING PROCEDURES

1. **Participation (10%)**: Students are expected to attend every lecture and discussion. There are 23 scheduled lectures (excluding quiz days). If a student is on time for 20 of these lectures, they will earn 8% of the final grade from attendance alone. For every additional missed or late lecture, the student will earn one fewer percentage point. Students can earn two additional percentage points by answering questions in class, worth 1% of the final grade per class in which the student answered a question.

2. **Homework Exercises (32%):** Students will be expected to turn in homework exercises at the beginning of their scheduled discussion for that week, for each of 8 total chapters in the required text book. See the detailed schedule below for details on these assignments. Each set of exercises will be worth 4% of the final grade. Students should plan to set aside a few hours each week to complete these exercises, which will be graded during discussion.
3. **Quizzes (30%):** The course will include three quizzes, each worth 10% of the final grade. The dates of these quizzes are listed on the detailed schedule, below. These quizzes will cover material in the weeks directly preceding the quiz. The format of the quizzes will be similar to that of the homework exercises.
4. **Poster Presentation, Description, and Critiques (28%):** Instead of a final exam or paper, each student will be responsible for a poster presentation, poster description, and two poster critiques. In the final three days of class students will simultaneously present their posters around the room, with between 10 and 15 poster presentations per class meeting. Those students not presenting in a specific class meeting will be expected to observe the different presentations and gather materials for their critiques. The poster and the presentation of the poster will be worth 10% of the final grade. An accompanying 2-3 page description of the material covered in the poster will be worth 10%. Finally, each of two 1 page critiques of other students' posters will be worth 4%. Students may earn extra credit by responding to these critiques in writing, for up to an additional 2% of the final grade. The format and topic of these presentations will be covered in discussion on the dates provided in the detailed schedule, below.

RESOURCES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

Academic Support: For free academic support, go to the Calvin E. Bright Success Center located at KOLLIG 222 or email learning@ucmerced.edu.

Students with Disabilities: Upon identifying themselves to the instructor and the university, students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodation for learning and evaluation. For more information, contact UCM Disabilities Services at SSB 230, 209-228-6996, or disabilityservices@ucmerced.edu.

Lateness Policy: Late assignments will not be accepted without prior approval by the instructor, except in the case of a verifiable emergency.

Academic Honesty Policy: Any student found guilty of cheating, plagiarism, or collusion (defined here: <http://studentlife.ucmerced.edu/what-we-do/student-judicial-affairs/academicy-honesty-policy>) will be reported to Judicial Affairs and may be given a failing grade for the course.

Laptop/Tablet/Cell Phone Policy: The use of laptops, tablets, cell phones, smart phones, or other mobile communication devices is disruptive, and is therefore prohibited during class. The only exception to this policy is to allow students to access the required readings during class. Except in emergencies or for students with prior approval from the professor, those using such devices may be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1, August 24th: Introduction and Syllabus

Discussion: Introductions

Week 2, August 29th & 31st: Introducing Arguments

Required Reading: *Bowell and Kemp* Ch. 1, pp. 1-23 (20 pages)

Due: Ch 1 Exercises 1-4, pp. 23-6
Discussion: Ch 1 Homework Review

Week 3, September 5th & 7th: Language and Rhetoric
Required Reading: *Bowell and Kemp* Ch. 2, pp. 28-59 (30 pages)
Due: Ch 2 Exercises 1-9, pp. 59-62
Discussion: Ch 2 Homework Review

Week 4, September 12th: Quiz 1
Discussion: Quiz 1 Review

Week 4-5, September 14th, 19th, & 21st: Deductive Validity
Required Reading: *Bowell and Kemp* Ch. 3, pp. 64-93 (29 pages)
Due (Week 5): Ch 3 Exercises 6-9 and 12-14, pp. 94-9
Discussion (Week 5): Ch 3 Homework Review

Week 6-7, September 26th, 28th, & October 3rd: Probability and Inductive Reasoning
Required Reading: *Bowell and Kemp* Ch. 4, pp. 101-28 (27 pages)
Due (Week 6): Ch 4 Exercises 1-6, pp. 128-31
Discussion (Week 6): Ch 4 Homework Review
Discussion (Week 7): Poster Presentation Topic and Format

Week 7-8, October 5th, 10th, & 12th: Argument Reconstruction
Required Reading: *Bowell and Kemp* Ch. 5, pp. 133-74 (41 pages)
Due (Week 8): Ch 5 Exercises 1-5, 7, & 21, pp. 174-82
Discussion (Week 8): Ch 5 Homework Review

Week 9, October 17th: Quiz 2
Discussion: Quiz 2 Review

No Class on October 19th

Week 10-11, October 24th, 26th, & 31st: Argument Assessment
Required Reading: *Bowell and Kemp* Ch. 6, pp. 184-214 (30 pages)
Due (Week 10): Ch 6 Exercises 1-8, pp. 214-8
Discussion (Week 10): Ch 6 Homework Review
Discussion (Week 11): Poster Critiques

Week 11-12, November 2nd, 7th, & 9th: Fallacies and Faulty Reasoning
Required Reading: *Bowell and Kemp* Ch. 7, pp. 219-58 (40 pages)
Due (Week 12): Ch 7 Exercises 1-5, pp. 259-62
Discussion (Week 12): Ch 7 Homework Review

Week 13-14, November 14th, 16th, & 21st: Truth, Knowledge, and Belief
Required Reading: *Bowell and Kemp* Ch. 8, pp. 264-86 (22 pages)
Due (Week 13): Ch 8 Exercises 1-3, pp. 286-7
Discussion (Week 13): Ch 8 Homework Review

No Discussion in Week 14 due to Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15, November 28th: Quiz 3

Discussion: Quiz 3 Review

Week 15-16, November 30th, December 5th, & 7th: Poster Presentations

Due (Week 16): Poster Descriptions, Critiques, and Responses

Discussion (Week 16): Course Discussion and Evaluation

