

LA Mission College
Spring 2014

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Office IA29 Office hours: MW 1:40-3:40; T 4:50-6:50

Philosophy 5: Critical Thinking and Composition
0411 MW 12:15- 1:40 INST 1002

Course Description

Philosophy 5 will improve your skills in critical reasoning and in the writing of critical essays. Classroom discussions, small group presentations, and individual assignments will explore techniques of argument analysis and evaluation.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course the student will have the following skills:

- A. Identify the structure of an argument;
- B. Evaluate deductive arguments for validity and inductive arguments for strength;
- C. Differentiate among various informal fallacies.
- D. Compose a cogent argumentative essay.

Course Objectives

In a society where career changes are commonplace and where political policies, consumer products, and religious dogmas are persuasively advertised, the skills of careful, critical analysis are increasingly required. By successfully completing the Logic in Practice course you will be better equipped to confront the complex issues that each of us faces as working professionals and citizens. You will learn to identify fallacious arguments, to recognize the underlying logical structure of complicated chains of reasoning, to evaluate argument patterns using Venn diagrams and truth tables, to assess the strength of inductive arguments, and to construct cogent arguments of your own.

Required Text

Invitation to Critical Thinking, 6th ed. Vincent Barry and Joel Rudinow.
Philosophy 5 lecture notes, posted on my college web page.

Course Requirements

Attendance and participation in class discussions; homework assignments; participation and performance in critical exchange presentation (= team debates on contemporary social controversies); three analytic essays; paper and presentation on a pseudoscience topic; argument journal; fallacy journal; three exams.
(See course schedule for assignment information.)

Evaluation

Class participation and homework: 10%
Critical Exchange presentation: 10%
Argumentative essays: 30%
Pseudoscience and fallacy projects: 10%
Exam 1: 10%
Exam 2: 10%
Final Exam: 20%

Schedule*

2/10 Course introduction, why critical thinking?

2/12 Ch. 1 What is critical thinking? Barriers to critical thinking. Homework exercise: p 36, world view; self-deception, authority (1.31; 1.32; 1.33)

2/19 Ch. 2 Functions of language. Definitions. In class exercise: 2.8-2.10 (pp. 56-57)
HW due: Ex. 1.34 p.36.

2/24 Facts and values; For discussion: What role should reason and critical thinking play in resolving moral disputes? Ch. 3, Arguments, premises and conclusions. In class exercise: Identifying premises and conclusions.

2/26 Identifying arguments. Group exercise in identifying arguments. Reconstructing arguments.

3/3 Ch. 4 Casting arguments.

3/5 Exam 1.

3/10 Ch. 6, Deduction, validity, and soundness. Categorical Logic.

Essay 1 due: Issue Analysis Paper. Write a 3-5 page paper explaining why reasonable people disagree about some particular issue. The paper should summarize the strongest arguments on each side of the issue. Do not take sides, simply explain the controversy.

3/12 Venn Diagrams

3/17 Venn Diagram review.

3/19. Ch. 7 Truth Functional Logic

3/24 Truth Tables.

3/26 Truth Table Review Collaborative exercises in deductive logic.

4/2 Ch. 8,9, Induction

4/14 Ch. 10, Evaluating Premises (**Argument Journal Due- Find examples of four arguments in printed media. For each argument identify premises and conclusions, explain whether the argument is inductive or deductive and briefly evaluate**)

4/16 Exam Review

4/21 Exam II

4/23 Here be Dragons- documentary.

4/28 Film 12 Angry Men. Pt. 1.

Essay 2 due: Critically analyze an argument found in a printed editorial. (3-5 pages, provide a copy of the passage critiqued). The issue should be the same as your essay 1 topic. Find someone who disagrees with your position on the issue and critique their argument

4/30 12 Angry Men Pt. 2. Written assignment: View the film *12 Angry Men*. Discuss (in a 250 word paper) how the bias of some jurors interfered with their ability to view the case objectively and how other jurors used inductive and deductive reasoning to find flaws in the prosecution's case. (Due 5/12)

5/5 Language fallacies, fallacies of relevance, ch. 11

5/7 Fallacies of evidence, ch. 12.

5/12 Fun with fallacies! **Fallacy Journal due** (The fallacy journal should contain examples of seven fallacies found in printed media – not examples from logic web sites!- with a brief explanation of each fallacy). Fallacy show and tell.

5/14 Small group prep for critical exchange presentations

5/19 Small group prep. for critical exchange presentations

5/21 Critical Exchange Presentations

Essay 3 due: Argumentative essay on a contemporary moral or social issue. 8-10 pages. Research both sides of the issue (same issue as in essays 1 and 2) in preparing your argument. Make sure your Works Cited page includes sources that reflect differing viewpoints on the issue.

5/28 Critical Exchange Presentations

6/2 Exam Review

6/9 Final Exam 12:30- 2:30

Cheating- unauthorized material used during an examination (including electronic devices), changing answers after work has been graded, taking an exam for another student, forging or altering attendance sheets or other documents in the course, looking at another student's paper/scantron/essay/computer or exam with or without their approval is considered cheating. Any student caught cheating will receive a zero for the assignment/exam and referred to the Department chair and/or Student Services for further disciplinary action.

Plagiarism- Plagiarism is defined as the act of using ideas, words, or work of another person or persons as if they were one's own, without giving proper credit to the original sources. This includes definitions found online on Wikipedia, materials from blogs, twitter, or other similar electronic resources. The following examples are intended to be representative, but not all inclusive:

- failing to give credit by proper citations for others ideas and concepts, data and information, statements and phrases, and/or interpretations and conclusions.

- failing to use quotation marks when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, a sentence, or a part thereof
- Paraphrasing the expressions or thought by others without appropriate quotation marks or attribution
- Representing another's artistic/scholarly works such as essays, computer programs, photographs, paintings, drawings, sculptures or similar works as one's own.

First offense, you will receive a zero for the assignment in question. Any further offenses may result in expulsion from the class, as determined by the disciplinary action from the Office of Student Services.

Recording devices in the classroom- Section 78907 of the California Education Code prohibits the use of any electronic audio or video recording devices, without prior consent of the instructor. (including cell phones, laptops, MP3 players, and more)

Reasonable Accommodations: If you are a student with a disability and require accommodations, please send me a private email. The sooner I am aware of your eligibility for accommodations, the quicker I will be able to assist the DSP&S Office in providing them. For students requiring accommodations, the DSP&S Office at Mission College provides special assistance in areas like: registering for courses, specialized tutoring, note-taking, mobility assistance, special instruction, testing assistance, special equipment, special materials, instructor liaisons, community referrals and job placement. If you have not done so already, you may also wish to contact the DSP&S Office in Instructional Building 1018 (phone 818/364-7732 TTD 818/364-7861) and bring a letter stating the accommodations that are needed.

Writing Analytic Essays*

1. The point of a paper is to state and defend some thesis. The thesis may be critical (The slippery slope objection to assisted suicide fails because...), or substantive (Abortion is morally permissible in the following cases...). This is a special kind of expository writing. One kind of expository writing (text books, newspapers) is designed to convey information, and another is designed to prove a point. Philosophy papers of the first sort are generally not acceptable.
- 2.. The thesis of the paper should be carefully stated somewhere in the first paragraph of the essay. Your reader needs to know what you are arguing for.
3. Some attempt should be made, either at the beginning or the end of the paper, to say why the thesis is interesting or important.
4. It is often helpful to include a strategy paragraph before the actual argumentation begins, explaining how you plan to defend your thesis.
5. By making reference to the strategy paragraph, or to an outline, you should be able to point to any paragraph in the essay and say just what it is supposed to contribute to the defense of the thesis.

6. If you cannot defend your thesis adequately, perhaps a weaker version of your thesis can be defended. Then you can say what would need to be done in addition to what you have done to defend the stronger version.

7. A large part of the point of philosophical writing is to bring precision and clarity to abstract, vague, and slippery issues. If you sense your discussion becoming overly general or vague, you're on the wrong track. Start over. It is better to oil one small wheel than to utter incantations over the whole machine.

Grading Criteria (in order of importance.)

1. **Relevance**. If you write something down, the assumption is that you think it is relevant. Papers containing material irrelevant to the thesis defended have poor prospects.
2. **Coherence**. This takes practice. A well defended false thesis is better than an ill defended true thesis.
3. **Accuracy**. Be careful not to misrepresent or grossly misinterpret the text (if there is one).
4. **Originality**. Originality is not essential. More important is how you put the ideas to use. If you use material (ideas, strategies, whatever) that is not your own, identify that source properly.

*After a handout by R. Cummins (University of Arizona) and Frank Lewis (USC).