

Los Angeles Mission College  
Winter 2014

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### **Philosophy 6: Logic in Practice**

Section 3113, MTWR, 6:30- 9:00 PM; INST 2004

#### Course Description

Philosophy 6 improves skills in critical reasoning and in the writing of critical essays. Classroom discussions, small group presentations, and individual assignments provide practical techniques for evaluating and constructing arguments.

#### Course Objectives

By successfully completing this 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 reveal the underlying logical structure of complicated chains of reasoning, to analyze argument patterns using Venn diagrams and truth tables, and to construct cogent arguments of your own.

#### Required Text

Invitation to Critical Thinking, 6th Ed. Vincent Barry and Joel Rudinow.  
Philosophy 6 Handouts. Bookstore or download from my website.

#### Course Requirements

Attendance and participation in class discussions; reading and homework assignments; individual presentation on a pseudoscience; fallacy show and tell; critical exchange presentation (team debates on contemporary social controversies); two analytic essays; three written exams.

#### Evaluation

Class participation, pseudoscience presentation, fallacy show and tell: 10%  
Argumentative essays: 30%  
Exam 1: 15%  
Exam 2: 15%  
Final Exam: 20%  
Critical Exchange Presentation: 10%

#### Student Learning Outcomes for Philosophy 6

1. Identify the structure of an argument.
2. Evaluate deductive arguments for validity and inductive arguments for strength.
3. Differentiate among various informal fallacies.
4. Design and create cogent arguments.

*Credulous acceptance of baloney can cost you money.... But it can be much more dangerous than that, and when governments and societies lose the capacity for critical thinking, the results can be catastrophic....* **Carl Sagan**

## Schedule\*

1/6 Course Introduction and requirements. What is philosophy? Why Logic in practice?

1/7 Ch. 1 What is critical thinking? Barriers to critical thinking. Ch. 2 Functions of language; In class homework exercise: p.43, Self-deception, Authority (1.11; 1.16)

1/8 Ch. 2b Facts and values. For discussion: What role should reason and critical thinking play in resolving moral disputes? Ch. 3, Arguments, premises and conclusions.

1/9 Argument analysis. Group exercise in identifying arguments. Ch. 4, Casting arguments. Ch. 5, Reconstructing arguments.

1/13 Come prepared to share the issue you are writing about for essay 1. Exam review; **exam 1**

1/14 Ch. 6, Deduction, validity, and soundness. Categorical Logic and Venn Diagrams. **Essay 1 due:** Argumentative essay on a contemporary moral or social issue 2-3 pages. Minimum of two sources required, one that agrees and one that disagrees with your position.

1/15 Venn Diagram review. “Tag-Team” Venn Diagrams.

1/16 Introduction to Truth Functional Logic, Ch 7.

1/21 Truth Tables. Collaborative exercises in deductive logic.

1/22 Ch. 8, 9, Induction. Ch. 10, Evaluating Premises.

1/23 Bring a copy of the article you are critiquing in essay 2. Exam review. **Exam II**

1/27 Critical Thinking exercise: Judgment House documentary  
For discussion: Critical thinking and religious faith.

1/28 Film 12 Angry Men. In-class collaborative assignment on the film.  
**Essay 2 due: Essay 2 due: Critically analyze an argument found in a printed editorial. (2-3 pages, provide a copy of the passage critiqued).**

1/29 Informal Fallacies ch.s 11 &12.

1/30 **Fun with fallacies! Fallacy Show and tell: Students bring examples of fallacies to share with the class.**

2/3 Small group prep. for critical exchange presentations.

- 2/4 Critical Exchange presentations  
2/5 Critical Exchange Presentations. **Exam Review.**  
2/6 **Final Exam**

LA Mission College expects each student to maintain high standards of honesty and ethical behavior. All assignments submitted in fulfillment of course requirements are meant to be the student's own work. Group activities are to involve the efforts of each group member equally.

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.

### **Attendance Policy**

Students absent more than two sessions will be dropped from the course. Arriving late or leaving early counts as an absence on the second time it occurs.

### **Late Work**

There is a one week grace period for submitting assignments. Grades are lowered ½ grade during this period.

### **Writing Analytic Essays\***

1. The point of a paper is to state and defend some thesis. The thesis may be critical (Warren's defense of abortion fails because ... ), or substantive (Capital punishment should be abolished). 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 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.

\*Based on a handout by R. Cummins (University of Arizona) and Frank Lewis (University of Southern California).