



PHILOSOPHY 115

Critical Thinking

STUDENT COURSE SYLLABUS
Fall 2021 | 5 Credits

INSTRUCTOR:

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Office Hours: Please know that I am here to help you and am eager to do so. The best way to reach me is via email. Since our course is online (during Covid) and I will not often be physically present in my office, please email me to set up a time to virtually meet for office hours. Please feel free to contact me about any questions. I'll do my best to respond within 48 hours during the work week.

Course Description

The class provides an informal, non-symbolic introduction to logic and critical thinking emphasizing real-life examples, natural language applications, and the informal logical fallacies. Students learn the concept of an argument, learn how to distinguish arguments from non-arguments, and study different patterns of argumentation. Students also learn how to critically evaluate arguments and how to construct arguments of their own. *Institutional Assessment - In addition to the content of each discipline, YVC emphasizes the development of the following three outcomes: Communication (C), Computation/Analytical Reasoning (C/AR) and Human Relations (HR). As a student, your abilities may be assessed in one or more of these outcome areas. For further information, refer to general education outcomes in the catalog.*

Course Outcomes

- Construct, defend, critically evaluate and analyze arguments.
- Identify logical relationships and apply logical reasoning in a variety of contexts.
- Distinguish arguments from non-arguments.
- Support claims with evidence.

Abilities Developed

Analytic Reasoning One: Applies learning in familiar and new contexts: Applying discipline-specific knowledge, processes, terminology, technology or conventions in various assignments, situations, or contexts.

Analytic Reasoning Two: Uses appropriate methods of inquiry/exploration to achieve a result: Using problem-solving, analysis, the scientific method, research, creative processes or other appropriate methods to arrive at a conclusion or produce a product.

Analytic Reasoning Three: Supports claims with evidence: Citing sources or using relevant data, facts, examples, or personal experience to back up a claim, thesis, assertion or conclusion.

Course Objectives

1. Identify logical fallacies and demonstrate an ability to correct or improve an argument in order to derive a conclusion (AR2).
2. Apply course material to construct and defend argumentative cases in various contexts written from different perspectives: moral, legal, scientific. Apply course material in these contexts to critically evaluate the arguments of others (AR1).
3. Apply terminology specific to logical reasoning such as induction, deduction, abduction, valid, invalid, sound, unsound, strong, weak, cogent, and uncogent to a variety of arguments in different contexts (AR1).
4. Identify the premises and conclusion of a piece of argumentative prose, develop an ability to break an argument down into its constituent parts and analyze the way the parts function in order to derive a conclusion (AR2).
5. Apply course material to distinguish between arguments and non-arguments, scientific reasoning and superstition (AR1).
6. Use evidence to support a thesis (AR3).

Course Requirements & Grading

This course includes lectures, class discussion, quizzes, and a final exam. The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule and course content according to the needs of the class.

Grading Scale:

A	93-100%	5 Discussion Posts	5 points each / 25 points total
A-	90-92.9%	4 Quizzes	15 points each / 60 points total
B+	87-89.9%	1 Final Comprehensive Exam	15 points
B	83-86.9%	Total	100 points
B-	80-82.9%		
C+	77-79.9%		
C	75-76.9%		
C-	71-74.9%		
D+	67-70.9%		
D	60-66.9%		
F	0-59.9%		

Course Assignments

Discussion Posts (5 points each | **25 points total**): Throughout the quarter there are five required discussion posts on Canvas, each including one original post and at least one reply to another original post. Original posts are due by Thursday at midnight the week they're assigned and replies are due by Saturday at midnight the same week. For each discussion, the instructor will provide a discussion prompt that includes information about what each discussion is about and the content each original post needs to include. The discussion prompts will often focus on the required course readings but might also focus on content from course lectures. Each student is to provide *one original post* (that is at least 125 words) in response to the discussion prompt and then at least *one reply* (that is a minimum of 50 words) to a fellow student's original post. The five required Discussion Posts are worth 5 points each, for a total of 25 points, which is 25% of one's overall course grade. Therefore, doing well in this course requires contributing to these discussions.

Quizzes (15 points | **60 points**): Throughout the quarter, there are four required quizzes. The course quizzes are primarily on the lecture content but might also address content in the required course reading. The four required quizzes are worth 15 points each for a total of 60 points. Each quiz is due by Saturday at midnight the week that it is assigned. The quizzes are worth the majority of each student's overall course grade, and prepare students for the final comprehensive exam. Therefore, the quizzes are vital to success in the course.

Final Comprehensive Exam (**15 points**): At the end of the quarter, there is one final comprehensive exam. It is comprehensive in that it addresses content covered throughout the whole course. It will focus primarily on content covered in lectures but will also address content in the required course reading.

Required Textbook

Herrick, P. *Think With Socrates: An Introduction to Critical Thinking*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Course Schedule

Below is the schedule of the course throughout the quarter. The instructor reserves the right to modify or change the schedule according to the needs of the class.

Week	TOPICS	READING	DUE
1 9/20	1. Introduction & Prologue 2. Why Study Critical Thinking?	Chapter 1	
Fundamentals			
2 9/27	1. Essential/Non-essential Elements 2. Necessary/Sufficient Conditions 3. Counterexamples 4. Fundamental Laws of Logic	Chapter 2	Discussion Posts 1: on Herrick, Chs. 1 & 2
3 10/4	1. What's Logic? 2. Elements of Arguments 3. Recognizing Arguments	Chapter 3	Discussion Posts 2: on Herrick, Ch. 3
4 10/11	1. Overview of Deductive Arguments 2. Overview of Inductive Arguments 3. Overview of Abductive Arguments	Chapter 10	Quiz 1: on the fundamentals
Deductive Arguments			
5 10/18	1. Validity 2. Formal vs. Informal Fallacies	Chapter 12	Quiz 2: on argument types
6 10/25	1. Rules of Inference: Conjunction, Simplification, Addition, Modus Ponens, and Modus Tollens 2. Relevant Fallacies	Chapter 13	Discussion Posts 3: on Herrick, Ch. 13

7 11/1	1. Rules of Inference: Absorption, Hypothetical Syllogism, Constructive Dilemma, Disjunctive Syllogism 2. Constructing Arguments via Rules of Inference	Chapter 14	Discussion Posts 4: on Herrick, Ch. 14
Inductive & Abductive Arguments			
8 11/8	1. Cogency vs. Validity 2. Demonstrating Cogency (a <i>very brief</i> intro to probability calculus)	Chapter 11	Quiz 3: on validity and rules of inference
9 11/15	1. Inference to the Best Explanation 2. Theoretical Virtues 3. Principle of Simplicity 4. Relevant Fallacy	Chapter 6	Quiz 4: on inductive and abductive arguments
10 11/29	1. Informal fallacies of presumption 2. Informal fallacies of relevance 3. Informal fallacies of ambiguity	Chapters 8, 9	Discussion Posts 5: on fallacies
11 12/6	Final Comprehensive Exam		Exam

Word of Encouragement

Critical thinking applies to everything we do. If you want to become better at everything you do, become better at critical thinking. This course is designed to help you do just that. For many, this will be a challenging course. After all, critical thinking is inherently challenging. Nevertheless, this course is designed and structured so that every student who diligently puts in the hard work required will have success in the course and ultimately become a better, more logical thinker.

Students With Disabilities

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be

evacuated, please make an appointment with your instructor as soon as possible. The office location is in Sundquist Hall. Office hours vary according to clinical and classroom schedules, please call the Nursing Department at 574-4902 or the instructor's number provided on page 1 of this syllabus. General information on disability accommodation may also be obtained through Disabled Student Services located in Deccio Higher Education Building C138 or by calling 574-4961.

General Policies

Exams: Attendance is required for all scheduled exams and quizzes. Students who arrive late for an exam may not be admitted to the room and may have to reschedule to take the exam at the instructor's discretion. Students who are not in class for quizzes or who arrive after the quiz has been distributed, will be unable to take the quiz at that time and rescheduling is at the discretion of the instructor. Students who are late to exams or quizzes will complete a Performance Improvement Plan. Continuation of this problem may result in failure of the course and/or program dismissal. Students are not to leave the room during the exam. If students anticipate personal problems that might interrupt them during an exam, this should be discussed with the instructor **prior** to the beginning of the exam. If the student anticipates needing to use the restroom during testing, notify the instructor **prior** beginning of the test. Students who have emergencies that prevent them from being in class for an exam or quiz are required to notify the instructor **prior** to the scheduled exam. Re-scheduled exams must be taken within 24 hours of original time unless otherwise specified by the instructor.

Students that do not notify lead instructor of anticipated absence and do not attend required exam will complete a Performance Improvement Plan. The student that had a "no call, no show" incident may not be allowed to reschedule the exam; this will be at the discretion of the lead instructor. Continuation of this problem may result in failure of the course and/or program dismissal. Examinations may only be taken **once**, no repeat exams are offered.

Cell Phones: All cell phones are to be turned off before class begins. During exams, cell phones are to be placed in the student's purse or backpack. Students who are anticipating emergency calls should discuss this with the instructor **prior** to the beginning of class.

Course Withdrawal: In order to withdraw from this course, an instructor's signature is required. It is the student's responsibility to secure an add/drop slip from the Registrar's office and fill it out completely. If a student withdraws from the course after taking the second exam, the student will receive the grade at the time of withdrawal on his/her nursing program records. The nursing program records are taken into consideration when a student appeals to the admission and progression committee. Refer to the Nursing Program Student Handbook for further information about admission, withdrawal, and progression information.