

Syllabus

Philosophy 202: Critical Thinking

MWF: 10:30-11:35am

Office Hours: MW 12-1:30

Office Location:

Instructor: Erick Ramirez

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Fall 2011

Course Description

We think and we argue every day of our lives but we don't always think and argue *critically*. What's the difference? We think critically when we step back from our arguments and our beliefs and evaluate them. Being able to think critically makes it easier to make your own arguments when writing papers, to understand the arguments in other courses, and improves your ability to engage others in disagreements over ideas, values, and other issues. Here are some examples of critical thinking: "I think that I should take this course, my friends said I should, but are my friends really the best source of information for course guidance?" My professor says that most college courses are a waste of time and money because only the classes in your major matter but did she give me good reasons for thinking that a general education is a waste of time or that only major courses matter? What would be good evidence for that?" Why are these examples of critical thinking? Both examples look for reasons to support a conclusion and both try to figure out whether those reasons are good ones. In this course we will figure out what makes something a good or bad reason or a strong or weak argument. We will look at how our biases (some of them unconscious) affect the way that we form beliefs. We will also try to figure out how to be able to better understand the structure of arguments so we can evaluate them on their own terms and without bias. Not all arguments are valid and not all reasons are good ones. In this course we'll learn why.

Grades

There are a total of 1000 points possible in the course. You will receive homework, quizzes, and exams back with a point value that represents your score. Letter grades will not be calculated until the end of the quarter in order to allow for some curving. Students **must** take both exams in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation:	10%
Homework:	10%
Quizzes:	20%
Midterm I:	25%
Final Exam:	35%

Course Materials

We will be using Moore & Parker, *Critical Thinking*, 10th ed. (McGraw-Hill, 2012) as our textbook for the course. This is a **required** textbook, all readings and most assignments will come directly from this text. The book is available at the Bronco Bookstore and online at various retailers. Please make sure **bring the textbook with you** to lectures.

There may be another book, *How to Think about Weird Things*, also listed under this course at the bookstore as a required text. **It is not**. Although the book is useful as a supplement it is entirely optional to purchase. I will not be selecting any readings or assignments from it.

Homework

At least once a week I will assign homework either from the exercises in the Moore and Parker book or from other sources. These assignments will **not** be accepted late. Homework can be submitted either as a typed and printed page or handwritten (as long as it is legible).

Homework is worth a total of 10% of your course grade. You will receive full credit on a homework assignment if it is fully completed and not necessarily based on how many questions you answer correctly. For example, if you correctly answer 7 of 10 exercise questions then you will receive full credit for the homework so long as you answered all 10 questions.

Homework assignments must be completed on your own unless the assignment explicitly requires group work.

Quizzes

We will also have a quiz every Friday (except for the Veteran's Day and Thanksgiving day holidays). Quizzes will not take up our entire class time and will always be held right at the beginning of lecture. If you are late to a quiz you will not be given extra time. Makeup quizzes will only be given if you can demonstrate evidence of a significant medical or other hardship. I will be dropping your **lowest** quiz score. If you miss a quiz then it becomes your lowest score (0%) and will be dropped.

Students with disabilities: if you have been granted additional time for exams or quizzes do let me know. We will always be able to work out alternative days/times. Please do not hesitate to inform me.

Plagiarism

Do not plagiarize. Remember that plagiarism is more than just copying and pasting without citation. Unless an assignment is explicitly described as a group assignment you should not take answers from your classmates and represent them as your own. For more see 'Part 5' of the Cal Poly research tutorial on plagiarism: <<http://www.csupomona.edu/~library/tutorials/>>

Office Hours

I hold office hours twice a week. I am also available by appointment if you cannot make it to office hours. Please do not hesitate to ask for other meeting times. Spending time in office hours is a great way to get your questions answered and practice critical thinking in real time!

Tentative Schedule

The following is a tentative schedule of the readings for the course. They are subject to change (but not without notice). Assignments will be announced in class so make sure to either show up to lecture or e-mail me to receive assignments for the week. If you have a foreseeable conflict with the date of the midterm let me know as soon as possible.

Week 0 Introductions

F Introductions, Syllabus

Homework: Read Ch.1 pages 1-10

Week 1 Basic Terms and Cognitive Biases

M Basic terms: claims, issues, premises, conclusions and arguments

Homework: Finish Ch.1 pages 17-24

- W More on arguments, Cognitive Biases
Homework: Comprehensive Ch. 1 exercises
- F Quiz! Ch.1; homework due; Heuristics and Biases (cont).
Homework: Read Ch.2 pages 37-44

Week 2 Argumentative Basics

M Class Canceled

- W Premises, deduction, induction, validity and soundness
Homework: Read Ch.2 pages 45-56; Comprehensive Ch.2 exercises
- F Quiz!; homework due; IBE, images stories and other translated arguments, what is a fallacy?
Homework: Read Ch. 3 pages 69-77 [stop at 'Syntactic Ambiguity']

Week 3 Persuasiveness, Ambiguity, and some Fallacies

- M Vagueness, Ambiguity, group fallacies and Rhetorical Argument
Homework: Read Ch.3 pages 77-87
- W Syntactic Ambiguity, Definitions, and Rhetoric
Homework: Comprehensive Ch. 3 homework
- F Quiz!, homework due, Biases, problems with perception and memory
Homework: Ch. 4 pages 104-113

Week 4 Fallacies (again) and Why Good Arguments Avoid Them

- M Homework: Read Ch. 4 pages 118-121; 127-131 [stop at 'The Internet, Generally']
- W Rhetorical Persuasion and assessing the *source* of a claim
Homework: Read Ch. 7 pages 210-214
- F Quiz!, ad hominem, poisoning the well and the genetic fallacy; what is a fallacy (again)?
Homework: Read Ch. 7 pages 216-223 [stop at 'Misplacing the Burden of Proof']
*Midterm Study Guide Handed out

Week 5 More Fallacies and Midterm Preparation

- M Straw men (women), false dilemma, and the slippery slope
Homework: Read Ch.7 223-229
- W more fallacies! Begging the question, burden of proof
Homework: Comprehensive Ch. 7 homework; study for midterm
- F **MIDTERM**
Bring a pen/pencil and paper. Bluebooks are good but not necessary.

Week 6 Begin Formal Logical Analysis

M Introduction to Categorical Logic, Validity and Soundness (again)
Homework: Read Ch. 8 pages 253-257 [stop at 'Translation into Standard Form']

W Types of Categorical Claims, Venn Diagrams
Homework: Read Ch. 8, pages 257-263

F Quiz! Translation translation and the square of opposition
Homework: Read Ch. 8, pages 264-273

Week 7 Categorical Logic: Translation, Operations, and Validity

M Conversion, Obversion, Contraposition and the Categorical Syllogism
Homework: Read Ch. 8 273-283; Comprehensive Chapter 8 homework

W homework due, testing for Validity with Venn Diagrams and Rules
Homework: Read Ch. 9 pages 295-301

F **Veteran's Day Holiday – Classes Canceled**

Week 8 Transitioning from Categorical to Truth Functional Logic

M Basic Operators and Truth Tables
Homework: Read Ch. 9 pages 302-309

W Quiz! [on ch.8]; more truth tables, translating if, only if, if and only if, (and) either/or
Homework: Read Ch. 9 pages 311-314 [stop at 'Three Mistakes']

F Translation exercises, valid argument forms MP, MT, CA
Homework: Read Ch. 9 pages 314-323;

Week 9 Moving from Translation to Proving whether an Argument is Valid

M Invalid arguments and an introduction to truth table proofs
Homework: Read Ch. 9 pages 324- 328; Chapter 9 homework assignment #1

W Homework due; Rules for Proofs: MP, MT, CA, DA, SIM, CONJ, ADD, CD, DD
Homework: Read Ch. 9 pages 330-334

F **Thanksgiving Holiday – Classes Canceled**

Week 10 More practice with Proofs

M Equivalency Rules for Proofs
Homework: Read Ch. 9 pages 337-340
*Final Exam Study Guide Handed Out

W Conditional Proofs and putting it all together
Homework: Chapter 9 homework assignment #2; study for the final exam

F Proof/final exam review session
Homework: study for the final exam