

Critical Thinking

Philosophy 130

Spring, 2022

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

[Assignment & Schedule Sample Only]

REQUIRED TEXT:

(1) We will be using the free, creative commons, textbook: **Van Cleave, *Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking***. It can be downloaded from Canvas.

(2) All additional PDF readings will be posted to Canvas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Weekly Content Quizzes (25% in total):

These short weekly quizzes consist of **10 questions** of **varied types** (e.g. true/false, multiple-choice, matching, etc.). They will cover the topics we've discussed during the week. Doing some textbook exercises on your own and participating in class discussions and work should adequately prepare you for these short quizzes.

They are usually due on **Fridays** by **11:59PM**, unless otherwise indicated, for the first 4 modules of the course.

Argument Analysis and Evaluation (35% in total):

This tests your skills at interpreting arguments, first by trying to reconstruct the kinds of arguments found in various written sources (i.e. editorials, philosophy arguments, think-pieces, etc.) and then evaluating them. Your job is to **(1st)** reconstruct the argument to the best of your ability and **(2nd)** evaluate the argument (both for its validity and for its soundness).

This should not be an essay, but simply a short response to get you thinking about a complex issue. At minimum, each analysis homework should be at least sixteen original, college-level sentences. **You will turn these in online but we will also have an *in class* discussion period about our argument reconstructions.**

THESE ASSIGNMENTS ARE PASS/FAIL. If you do the work, you will get full credit regardless of its quality. However, I will give you feedback on quality to prepare you for the final essay.

Final Argument Analysis Proposal (10%):

This **Analysis Proposal** assignment is just to let me know what you are thinking of writing about for your final term paper, so I can make sure you are on the right track.

The purpose of this assignment is to let me know **(1)** what argument you are thinking of analyzing, and **(2)** show me that you know and can clearly state what the author's conclusion is. It is *short*, just a brief link to the article you'll be writing about and a single sentence explaining what the author's conclusion is.

You should choose an argument from **EITHER** an opinion editorial (not a news report) of your choice **OR** another type of published argument (for example, an academic philosophy argument).

Make sure to choose **EITHER** a major journalistic source: for example, New York Times, LA Times, Washington Post, New Republic, Fox, The Guardian, Slate, Salon, etc. (local newspapers are fine too), **OR** if you are doing another type of argument a reputable published source. Many of these, both opinion columns and academic journals, can be accessed through the library's online databases and journal subscriptions.

I will grade this for completion; however, I will give you feedback about the argument you selected. If I think your selection is inadequate or too difficult it is possible that I may ask you to select a different argument. Even if this happens, this will not affect your grade. **Assignments will be turned in through Canvas.**

Final Argument Analysis Paper (20%):

For your term paper (**Due during exam week**), you will be writing a critical essay. A critical essay is one in which you analyze and critically evaluate another person's argument (in this case, one you at least partially disagree with). For this assignment, you will write a 1,200 word critical essay on **EITHER** an opinion editorial (not a news report) of your choice **OR** another type of published argument (for example, a philosophy argument like one of the ones we read this semester) previously approved by me in the **Analysis**

Proposal assignment. Your essay should include the following four elements:

Introduction: Identify the source, title, author, and context of the essay you are evaluating. Summarize briefly the writer's basic position and state in general terms your overall evaluation of the argument (this should include your thesis statement).

Argument Summary: Summarize the writer's argument.

Critical Evaluation: Evaluate the argument; that is, explain where the argument goes wrong, as well as where it goes right (if at all). Always give reasons to support your view.

Conclusion: Briefly restate the key points of your paper to reinforce them. End with a strong concluding section that puts the issue in its larger context (i.e. why does this matter?)

Your paper will be given a letter grade according to a rubric I will provide on Canvas. I will be focusing my grading primarily on the quality of your ARGUMENT SUMMARY and CRITICAL EVALUATION sections.

Attendance (10%):

Because philosophical understanding is developed through argument and discussion class attendance is crucial to your success. You cannot explore your ideas adequately without being in class! However, I also understand that sometimes you may need to skip class for a host of reasons. As such, I have two policies that allow you to skip class: (1) you will receive **three unexcused absences**, this means you can skip a normal class period without having to let me know ahead of time. (2) After that you can **skip any other class only after sending me an email letting me know you are missing class BEFORE the class you skip**. These subsequent skips can be **for any reason** and you don't necessarily need to tell me what those reasons are, however, you need to let me know you'll be gone before the class you skip. If you do not let me know I will remove **5 points** from your attendance score for each class period you miss. Exceptions will be made for emergency situations **or prior arrangements for distance learning**.

GRADE SCALE:

94-100: A	87-89: B+	77-79: C+	67-69: D+	0-59: F
90-93: A-	84-86: B	74-76: C	64-66: D	
	80-83: B-	70-73: C-	60-63: D-	

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY: There is a **24 hour** “grace period” for all assignments from the assigned “turn-in” date. If you believe you will be **more than** 24 hours late please email me for an extension.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Day	Date	Type	Assignment
Module 0: What is “Critical Reasoning”?			
M	1/24	Class	Introduction
		Read	No Reading
		Optional	Critical Thinking (Phil 130), Syllabus [Baker-FA 2021]
W	1/26	Read	“First Principles” from <i>Being Logical</i> [excerpt-PDF]
F	1/28	Attend	No Reading, Class Discussion
Module 1: Basic Arguments- Deductive, Inductive, and Formal			
M	1/31	Read	“What is an argument?”,pt.1 (Textbook – 1.1-1.3)
W	2/2	Read	“What is an argument?”pt.2 (Textbook – 1.4-1.5)
F	2/4	Attend	No Reading, Class Discussion
		Take	1st Weekly Content Quiz [on Canvas]
M	2/7	Read	Intro to Deductive and Inductive Arguments (1.6-1.8)
W	2/9	Read	Deductive Arguments and Inference Forms (supplementary reading)
F	2/11	Attend	No Readings, Class Discussion
		Take	2nd Weekly Content Quiz [on Canvas]

M	2/14	Read	Analyzing and Interpreting Arguments (1.10-1.12)
W	2/16	Read	Analyzing and Interpreting Arguments #2
F	2/18	Attend	No Readings- bring homework for class discussion
		Submit	Argument Analysis Homework #1
		Take	3rd Weekly Content Quiz [on Canvas]
Module 2: Non-Basic Arguments- Abductive, Analogical, and Probabilistic			
M	2/21	Read	Generalizations (3.1)
W	2/23	Read	Inference to the best Explanation (3.2)
F	2/25	Attend	No Reading, Class Discussion
		Take	4th Weekly Content Quiz [on Canvas]
M	2/28	Read	Statistical Arguments, Analogical Arguments (3.3)
W	3/2	Read	Probability, Decision Theory, and Causality (3.5)
F	3/4	Attend	No Reading, Class Discussion
		Take	5th Weekly Content Quiz [on Canvas]
M	3/7	Read	TBA
W	3/9	Read	TBA
F	3/11	Attend	No readings, bring homework for class discussion
		Submit	Argument Analysis Homework #2
M	3/14	No Class, Spring Break	
W	3/16		

F	3/18		
Module 3: Logical Fallacies and Cognitive Bias			
M	3/21	Read	Logical Fallacies of Vagueness and Inference (4.1-4.2)
W	3/23	Read	Logical Fallacies of Relevance (4.3)
F	3/25	NO CLASS, Dr. Baker is Unavailable	
		Take	6th Weekly Content Quiz [on Canvas]
M	3/28	Read	Logical Fallacies Continued
W	3/30	Read	TBA
F	4/1	Attend	No readings- bring homework for class discussion
		Submit	Argument Analysis Homework #3
		Take	7th Weekly Content Quiz [on Canvas]
M	4/4	Read	Cognitive Bias (pt. 1) (Supplementary Reading)
W	4/6	Read	Cognitive Bias (pt. 2) (Supplementary Reading)
F	4/8	Attend	No Reading, Class Discussion
		Take	FINAL Weekly Content Quiz [on Canvas]
Module 4: Critical Thinking in Media			
M	4/11	Read	"Thinking Critically about the Media" (Supplementary Reading)
W	4/13	Read	"Advertising" (Supplementary Reading)
F	4/15	NO CLASS, SPRING RECESS	

M	4/18	Read	"Fake News and Partisan Epistemology" by Rini [PDF]
W	4/20	Read	"Am I in an Echo Chamber?" by C. Thi Nguyen [Online- linked through Canvas]
F	4/22	Attend	No readings- bring homework for class discussion
		Submit	Argument Analysis Homework #4
Module 5: Critical Thinking in Science			
M	4/25	Read	Science and Scientific Reasoning (Supplementary Reading)
W	4/27	Read	Science and Scientific Reasoning (Supplementary Reading)
F	4/29	Attend	No Reading, Class discussion
		Submit	Proposal for Final Argument Analysis Essay [on Canvas]
Module 6: The Limits of Critical Thinking? - Transformational Experiences, Mysticism, and the Unknown.			
M	5/2	Read	"The Will to Believe" by William James
W	5/4	Read	"Transformational Experiences" by L.A. Paul
F	5/6	Attend	No readings- bring homework for class discussion
		Submit	Argument Analysis Homework #5
Final Module: "What About the Arguers?" - A Brief Discussion of the Intellectual Virtues			
M	5/9	Read	Virtues of Thinking, Virtues of Doing (Supplementary Reading)
Exam Week		Submit	Final Argument Analysis Essay

