



PHIL-1200H-W: Critical Thinking 2018SU - Online

Instructor:

Instructor: Amanda Bryant

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Office Hours: by appointment

Meeting Times:

Online course (no class meetings)

Department:

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Description:

In this course, students will be introduced to a set of powerful logical and analytical tools, and skills which can be applied to improve critical thinking in a variety of social, vocational, educational, and interpersonal environments. Students will learn how to logically assess claims and arguments occurring in such contexts as: news and advertising, science and pseudo-science, politics, religion, and everyday life.

The course will commence with an introduction to several basic logical concepts and common fallacies, designed to teach students both to clearly differentiate between deductive and inductive arguments, and to apply the distinct methods of logical evaluation appropriate to each of these two, logically distinct categories of argument.

In the middle section of the course, we will then train our focus in on deductive arguments, when we introduce two semi-formal deductive logical systems, called 'categorical logic' and 'propositional logic.' As we shall see, each of these systems contains methods designed to test common deductive arguments and argument patterns for the all-important logical property of validity.

Finally, we will examine how critical thinking can be applied in the logical evaluation of claims and arguments as they occur in the more practical domains of media and advertising, as well as scientific reasoning. In this last section of the course, we will learn to think critically about the news media, recognize common advertising ploys, and identify as well as expose pseudo-scientific thinking and practices.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will acquire an ability to distinguish deductive from inductive arguments and argument patterns, and to employ methods of logical evaluation appropriate to each of these two distinct types of argument.
2. Students will learn how to detect, explain, and attack various common fallacies which occur frequently in social, interpersonal, vocational, academic, cultural and pseudo-scientific contexts.
3. Students will master a set of rudimentary formal techniques designed to assess deductive arguments for the all-important logical property of validity. They will learn to recognize and effectively attack deductively invalid arguments and argument patterns.
4. Students will acquire an ability to think critically about the media, in terms of recognizing what factors motivate and influence the presentation and content of news media. They will acquire an ability to detect, explain, and attack common ploys used by advertisers.
5. Students will learn to distinguish genuine science from pseudo-science. They will acquire an ability to effectively attack and expose pseudo-scientific thinking and practices.

Texts:

Bassham, Gregory et al. Critical Thinking: A Student's Introduction, 5th ed., McGraw Hill, 2011.

Assessments, Assignments and Tests:

Assignment #1:

The assignment will consist of 10-15 short response questions or exercises, all dealing with Module 1. Questions may require students to evaluate an argument in order to determine whether it is deductive or inductive, valid or invalid, sound or unsound, cogent or not cogent. Alternatively, short answer questions may require students to critically evaluate a passage of written text, by identifying the premises and conclusion of the argument it contains, along with the fallacy committed. Students will also be required to briefly explain or justify these evaluations.

Mid-Term Exam:

The Mid-Term exam will consist of approximately 30-45 multiple choice questions, all dealing with material covered in Modules 1 and 2.

Discussion Posts:

In each of Weeks 1-5, students must contribute a discussion post, in which they answer the discussion question assigned for that week. The discussion question will consist of an exercise, or question dealing with material covered that week, and which will be very similar (or in some cases identical to) the sorts of questions students can expect to find on their first assignment as well as final exam. Your weekly discussion post must be submitted by the end of that week (**note that because classes begin and end during the middle of the week, our weeks do not correspond to normal Monday to Friday weeks. Pay special attention to the dates in the course schedule**). For example, Discussion Post #4 must be submitted by the end of Week 4 (i.e., Wednesday by 11:59pm). Each of this discussion posts is worth 1% and is 'completion based.' In other words, as long as you do your best to answer the question, and submit your answer to the discussion board, you will get 1/1 for that week's post.

Quizzes:

Over the course of the term, students will complete 10 multiple choice quizzes consisting of approximately 5 questions each. Each of these quizzes is worth 2% of your final grade.

Final Exam:

The Final Exam will be cumulative, but weighted more heavily towards the material covered in Module 3. Questions will generally be very similar to those found in the assignments, quizzes, and discussions, but students may additionally be required to write short responses designed to explicate key distinctions or concepts. The exam may also incorporate a brief multiple choice component.

Students will also be required to reproduce or critically analyze a recent story in the news media, explaining how it e.g., 'blurs the line' between news and entertainment. Students will be required to critically assess a recent or current advertisement or advertising campaign, and explain precisely how it employs several common advertising ploys. Students will also be required to critically evaluate a passage of pseudo-scientific text, by identifying various hallmarks of pseudo-scientific thinking exhibited in the passage, and explaining precisely where and how they occur therein.

Grading:

Type of Assignment, Weighting, and Due Date:

- Assignment #1, 25%, May 23 (submitted online to assignment dropbox)
- Mid-Term Exam, 15%, May 30 (completed online)
- Discussion Posts, 5%, weekly
- Quizzes, 20%, weekly
- Final Exam, 35%, held during exam period (Jun 14-17)

Grade Total by Withdrawal Date:

At least 25% of the grade will be available before the final date for withdrawal on May 29th.

Schedule:

Week 1 (May 03 to 09)

[Module 1: Basic Logical Concepts and Fallacies]

First Weekly Topic: Introduction to Critical Thinking

Readings: Bassham et al, pp 1-28

Power Point: Day 1

Second Weekly Topic: What is an Argument? Deductive and Inductive Arguments

Readings: Bassham et al, pp 29-85

Power Point: Day 2

Video Lecture: Day 2

Weekly Assignments (Due May 09):

Quiz #1

Discussion Post #1

Week 2 (May 10 to 16)

First Weekly Topic: Fallacies I

Readings: Bassham et al, pp 86-92, 107-139

Power Point: Day 3

Video Lecture: Day 3

Second Weekly Topic: Fallacies II

Readings: Bassham et al, pp 140-163, 285-326

Power Point: Day 4

Video Lecture: Day 4

Weekly Assignments (Due May 16):

Quiz #2

Quiz #3

Discussion Post #2

Week 3 (May 17 to 23)

[Module 2: Categorical and Propositional Logic]

First Weekly Topic: Categorical Logic

Readings: Bassham et al, pp 225-251

Power Point: Day 5

Video Lecture: Day 5

Second Weekly Topic: Propositional Logic I

Readings: Bassham et al, pp 252-265

Power Point: Day 6

Video Lecture: Day 6

Weekly Assignments (Due May 23):

Quiz #4

Quiz #5

Discussion Post #3

Assignment #1 (online submission via Dropbox)

Week 4 (May 24 to May 30)**First Weekly Topic:** Propositional Logic II**Readings:** Bassham et al, pp 271-284**Power Point:** Day 7**Video Lecture:** Day 7**[Module 3: Advertising and Pseudo-Science]****Second Weekly Topic:** The News Media**Readings:** Bassham et al, pp 418-441**Power Point:** Day 8**Video Lecture:** Day 8**Weekly Assignments (Due May 30):**

Quiz #6

Quiz #7

Discussion Post #4

Mid-Term Exam

Week 5 (May 31 to Jun 06)**First Weekly Topic:** Advertising**Readings:** Bassham et al, pp 442-454**Power Point:** Day 9**Video Lecture:** Day 9**Second Weekly Topic:** The Scientific Method**Readings:** Bassham et al, pp 455-463**Power Point:** Day 10**Video Lecture:** Day 10**Weekly Assignments (Due Jun 06):**

Quiz #8

Quiz #9

Discussion Post #5

Week 6 (Jun 07-13)**First Weekly Topic:** Science versus Pseudo-Science**Readings:** Bassham et al, pp 464-483**Power Point:** Day 11**Video Lecture:** Day 11**Second Weekly Topic:** Review**Video Lecture:** Day 12 Final Exam Review**Video:** Logic Practice**Weekly Assignments (Due Jun 13):**

Quiz #10

Course Guidelines:

Online Course Structure:

The course is divided into 3 modules, divided into 12 Days, completed over 6 weeks (where, again, our weeks do not correspond to normal Monday to Friday weeks). Module 1 (Basic Logical Concepts and Fallacies) consists of Days 1-4 (completed over Weeks 1-2). Module 2 (Categorical and Propositional Logic) consists of Days 5-7 (completed over Week 3 and part of Week 4). Module 3 (Advertising and Pseudo-Science) consists of Days 8-12 (completed over part of Week 4, through Week 6).

In each module, students will read selections from the required course textbook assigned for each day. Students will also watch the video lectures for each day. Students will also review the power point slides assigned for each day.

Contacting Your Instructor:

By far the quickest and easiest way to contact the course instructor is via email.

Please include your course number in the subject of your e-mail and use your Trent e-mail account to ensure that your message is not spam-filtered accidentally. Remember that class discussion boards are also available for your general questions.

Technology:

This is an **online course**. It is the responsibility of you, the student, to ensure that you have the appropriate technology to access the course.

- It is your responsibility to ensure you are able to submit assignments online in the appropriate format (usually, .doc, .docx, .odt or .pdf, but see the instructions for each assignment for the accepted formats).
- It is your responsibility to ensure all of your assignments have been submitted properly. Submission areas permit you to verify your documents once they have been submitted.
- Material submitted incorrectly, or in an unreadable format, will receive the standard penalty for lateness until submitted correctly.

Technical Support:

If you have any technical difficulties in using this course website, please contact the following:

Technical Support Centre

(705) 748-1010

helpdesk@trentu.ca

In the event that a technological problem occurs during a critical moment, such as while submitting an assignment, you are expected to contact technical support services to attempt to resolve the problem immediately.

Safe Assign:

You will upload assignments to Blackboard through SafeAssign so that they can be checked for originality against web pages and databases of existing papers. SafeAssign uses plagiarism-checking software to detect text copied from other authors. Your paper will automatically

become part of a Trent database of papers to be compared to other students' work in the future. Further information about SafeAssign can be found at safeassign.com.

Participation in Course Discussion Boards:

In this course you are expected to participate in online discussion boards. Each time the instructor creates a discussion board topic (excluding General, Technical or support questions), you should make at least 1 and **not more** than 3 postings. This will allow all students to participate, while at the same time crafting their responses carefully and thoughtfully.

- Please limit each posting to the size of a single message board window (< 250 words).
- When posting a response, reply initially to the instructor's forum question by using the "Create Thread" button, if it is available, or the "Reply" button, if the instructor has created an initial thread.
- Once you have made an initial posting, you should use only "Reply" to respond to other postings, rather than creating new threads.
- Unless instructed to do so, you should never need to create a new forum.

Discussion Best Practices:

- **Discussion Threads:** The idea of the discussion list is to have an ongoing "thread" of discussions with the members of your class. The discussion board works best when you respond to one another's comments and ideas. Please check the discussion board regularly for new postings and make thoughtful responses.
- **Timing of Posts:** In response to a question, make your first posting early on, so others have time to respond to it.
- **Audience:** Remember that your posting may be visible to the entire class. Be sensitive enough not to offend anyone deliberately, but be sure to express your own opinions as well.
- **Flaming:** Intellectual disagreement is expected, but give your classmates the same respect you would in the classroom. Avoid "flaming" or publicly attacking someone for their point of view.
- **Language:** Please use good taste in your language. Also try not to use slang or web abbreviations (e.g. LOL). Since these are classroom discussion boards, they should have a more formal tone than public forums on the internet.

Policy on Midterms, Exams and Assignments:

- **Midterm Tests & Final Exams:** Students should *not make any commitments* (e.g. vacation, job-related activities, or other travel plans) during the midterm or final examination period. Students are required to be available for all examinations during the periods in which they are scheduled (as published in the course syllabus or university time table).
- **Assignment and Assessment Instructions:** Assignments and Assessments have specific instructions regarding acceptable online submission formats (e.g. .doc, .docx). Failure to follow the instructions outlined in each assignment or assessment will result in a grade of 0 for each incident.

- **Valid Submissions:** Always check that your assignment was submitted correctly by returning to the assignment area and re-opening your submission. Assignments in incorrect formats, or assignments that are left un-submitted in the assignments area past the date due, will not be accepted.
- **Deferral of Midterm or Final Examinations and Extensions for Assignments:** Extension of due dates for completion of assignments or writing of midterms or final examinations may be granted to students on the basis of illness, accident or other extreme and unanticipated legitimate circumstances beyond the student's control.
- **Independent work:** Unless you are specifically directed to work collaboratively with your classmates, all of the work that you hand in for assessment should be your own.

Penalties:

- Assignments are to be submitted by the time and date they are due, which will be stated above in the syllabus for each assignment.
- Due Times are given in either Eastern Standard Time (EST) or Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), appropriate to the time of year. Students in other time zones need to adjust the deadlines to their local time accordingly.
- All assigned work in this class is due by 11:59pm on the assigned due date.
- Grades for assigned work will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade (or its percentile equivalent) per day late. (e.g., an 'A' paper handed in one day late will receive a grade of 'A-', two days late a 'B+', 3 days late a 'B', and so on).

Special Circumstances:

If there are cases of exceptional circumstances surrounding a student's inability to complete allocated course work, these should be brought to the attention of the instructor as soon as possible. Extensions arranged after an assignment is due will normally not be granted. Each situation with regard to extensions or potential penalties will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

Departmental Policies:

Final departmental deadline for submission of work:

No term work will be accepted for evaluation in the Philosophy Department later than one week after the last day of classes. One week after the last day of classes is also the deadline for the filing of Request for Incomplete Standing Forms to the Chair with all the relevant documentation.

Note: Most instructors will have deadlines well before this final departmental deadline. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with instructor's deadlines and deadline policies.

University Policies:

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from failure on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University's *Academic Integrity Policy*. You have a responsibility to educate yourself – unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly encouraged to visit Trent's Academic Integrity website to learn more: www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity.

Access to Instruction

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and documentation from a regulated health care practitioner and feels that they may need accommodations to succeed in a course, the student should contact the Student Accessibility Services Office (SAS) at the respective campus as soon as possible.

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