

Reasoning

Philosophy 202

Instructor Dr. Corey McGrath

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Office Hours By appointment (via Zoom)

Course Description

Critical reasoning is the ability and tendency to be moved by good reasons and not by poor ones. This course examines arguments—how to identify them, how to evaluate them, and how to produce them—so that students will be better prepared to reason critically about issues of importance to themselves and to society. Topics will include identifying and analyzing arguments in everyday language, propositional and categorical logic, and logical fallacies.

Course Goals

1. Students will be able to identify arguments and distinguish them from other forms of communication.
2. Students will be able to discern the structure of an argument, to identify its premises and conclusion.
3. Students will be able to evaluate arguments according to deductive and inductive standards.
4. Students will learn key phrases used in argument, and:
 - a) be able to identify them in the language of others;
 - b) identify their rhetorical purpose;
 - c) learn to employ them in persuasive writing.
5. Students will learn to identify various forms of fallacious argument.

Textbook

We will use *Understanding Arguments: An Introduction to Informal Logic* by Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin. It is available at Brewer Bookstore or online.

Format of the Course

This is an online course. It will have an *asynchronous* component and a *synchronous* component.

Asynchronous

At the beginning of each week, you will watch a series of short lecture videos I have recorded and, usually, complete a short homework assignment.

Synchronous

Every Thursday I will hold a live Zoom session where I will review answers to the homework. This is also an opportunity for students to ask any questions they have about the course material.

Attendance at live Zoom sessions is strongly encouraged, but not required. These sessions will be recorded and made available on Sakai.

Course Requirements

Your course grade depends upon a writing assignment, two exams, and homework. It will be calculated as follows:

20%	Homework
25%	Writing Assignments
25%	Exam #1
30%	Exam #2

Homework

Most weeks you will be asked to complete a homework assignment. It will be graded for completeness — if make a sincere effort to answer every question on the assignment, you will receive a grade of “Complete”. We will use the scheduled class sessions to go over the answers to homework assignments.

Writing Assignments

The purpose of the writing assignments is to put the skills and concepts we learn in the first month of the course to use. Over the course of several weeks, you will complete short writing tasks that will culminate in the creation of a short argumentative essay.

Email

Two points regarding communication by email:

1. I receive an enormous amount of administrative spam. In order to make your email stand out and ensure a prompt response, please put "PHIL 202" in the subject line.
2. When contacting me by email, please do not expect a response earlier than 24 hours from the time your message is delivered. Usually I will respond much more quickly, but do not depend on a quick response. If your email is a genuine emergency, please put "Urgent" in the subject line.

Student Accessibility Services

If you have a learning difference/disability or other health impairment and need accommodations please be sure to contact the Student Accessibility Services Office right away so they can help you get the accommodations you require. If you need to use any accommodations in this class, please meet with your instructor early and provide them with your Individualized Educational Accommodation Plan (IEAP) letter so you can have the best possible experience this semester.

Although not required, your instructor would like to know of any accommodations that are needed at least 10 days before a quiz or test. Please be proactive and set up an appointment to meet with someone from the Student Accessibility Services Office.

Color-Vision Deficiency

If you are Color-Vision Deficient, the Student Accessibility Services office has on loan glasses for students who are color vision deficient. Please contact the office to make an appointment.

For more specific information about setting up an appointment with Student Accessibility Services please see the listed options below.

Telephone: 315.229.5537

Email: studentaccessibility@stlawu.edu

For further information about Student Accessibility Services you can check the website at: <https://www.stlawu.edu/student-accessibility-services>.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Reading: pp. 1-13

Videos:

1. Introduction: the Professor, the Course, the Syllabus
2. Justification and Explanation

Week 2

Reading: pp. 17-27

Videos:

1. Grammatical and Semantic Rules
2. Speech Acts

Week 3

Reading: pp. 28-47

Videos:

1. Conversational Acts
2. Cooperative Principle
3. Conversational Implication
4. Argument and Conditional Markers

Week 4

Reading: Finish Chapter 3

Videos:

1. Rhetorical Devices
2. Conditionals
3. Assuring, Guarding, and Discounting

Week 5

Reading: Chapter 5

Videos:

1. Excess Verbiage
2. Subconclusions and Multiple Arguments
3. Validity and Soundness

2/5 Writing Assignment due on Sakai by 11:55 PM.

Week 6

Reading: Continue reading Chapter 6

Videos:

1. Why we need a formal language.
2. Syntax of propositional logic
3. Semantics of propositional logic
4. Simple truth-tables

Week 7

Reading: Continue reading Chapter 6

Videos:

1. Substitution Instances
2. Translating Arguments
3. Conditionals
4. More truth-tables

Week 8

Reading: Finish Chapter 6

Videos:

1. "Unless" as a logical connective
2. Valid Argument Forms
3. Formal Fallacies

Week 9

Reading: Chapter 7 through p. 156

Videos:

1. The shortcomings of propositional logic
2. Categorical Propositions
3. Basic Categorical Forms

Week 10

Reading: Finish Chapter 7

Videos:

1. Translation
2. Conversions
3. Categorical Syllogisms

3/12 Exam #1 due on Sakai by 11:59 PM.

Week 11

Reading: Chapter 8

Videos

1. Inductive Standards of Evaluation
2. Statistical Generalizations
3. Statistical Applications

Week 12

Reading: Chapter 9

Videos

1. Inference to the Best Explanation

Week 13

Reading: Chapter 14 and pp. 314-317

Videos

1. Argumentum ad Hominem
2. Fallacies of Division and Composition
3. Fallacies of Ambiguity

4/16 Exam #2 due on Sakai by 11:59 PM.