

Philosophy 10: Critical Thinking
Mount Saint Mary's University
Spring 2017

	Chalon campus	Doheny campus
Course number	PHI_010_6_17/SP	PHI_010_D5_17/SP
Day/Time/location	MW/3-4:30PM/H402	TTH/11:20AM-12:50PM/ Bldg. 4 207A
Office hours day/time/location	MW 4:30-5:30PM/H320	TTh 1-2PM/Bldg. 2 204A

Course website

available on Canvas

Instructor Information

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Course Description

When we read the news, watch TV, scroll through social media, or talk to our friends and family, we are faced with decisions about what to believe. “Critical thinking” refers to a broad set of cognitive tools and skills to help us form beliefs responsibly – i.e., *rationally*. In this course we will reflect on our own habits of thought and learn to subject our beliefs to critical scrutiny. We will study common fallacies, or ways that rational thought goes wrong. We will practice constructing and deconstructing arguments, evaluating whether they are valid, and identifying their implicit premises. We will also examine the way scientific theories are constructed on the basis of evidence, and the forms of reasoning used to choose between different theories. All of this will lead to an appreciation of the value of critical thinking and an understanding of its pervasive role in our lives.

Learning Objectives

1. To develop your skills of argumentation, examining evidence, analysis, and using critical reasoning.
2. To acquire techniques and tools for reading comprehension and for writing clearly and coherently.
3. To acquire the skills to “think on your feet” so you can express yourself clearly, coherently, and with enough evidence to support your claims.
4. To demonstrate an ability to bring in diverse perspectives and different frames of reference in developing thinking and writing skills
5. To work collaboratively on group assignments

Required texts and assigned viewings

The Power of Critical Thinking 5th ed. by Lewis Vaughn, ISBN: 978-0-19-938542-3

Additional readings and course content will be made available on Canvas.

Requirements

Exam #1 (week 5): 15%
Exam #2 (week 10): 15%
Exam #3 (finals week): 15%
Writing assignment #1: 15%
Writing assignment #2: 15%
Fallacies presentation: 10%
Weekly quizzes: 15%

Total: 100%

Grading scale

A	93-100	B-	80-82	D	60-69
A-	90-92	C+	77-79	F	<60
B+	87-89	C	73-76		
B	83-86	C-	70-72		

Class policies

“A friend is one before whom I may think aloud” –Emerson

My fundamental policy in this class is to have a class environment of mutual respect where we help one another achieve our course objective. The course policies in this section are designed to help achieve that environment.

Cell phones, text messaging, and other distractions

Our classroom is not a suitable place for a ringing cell phone or to check your text messages. Even for a world-class multi-tasker like you, these activities are a distraction from our class activities. In addition, our classroom is not an appropriate place to work on homework for other classes or other outside projects. Here’s a good rule to follow: If the instructor wouldn’t do it, then a student shouldn’t do it either.

Attendance

Success in this course highly depends on regular attendance. You will not receive points simply for showing up, but attendance is incentivized through short, relatively easy reading quizzes. (I say “relatively easy” because they will only be easy if you actually do the reading and assigned exercises.) Furthermore, if you miss a class and fail to provide official documentation (a doctor’s note, etc.) you will not be given the opportunity to make up anything you missed, e.g. a quiz. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to inquire after anything you may have missed. Six unexcused absences result in automatic failure and withdrawal from the course.

Late work policy

Late work will be penalized one full letter grade per day late.

Required Readings and Exercises

You should complete the assigned reading and exercises on the course schedule *before* class meets. The assigned exercises are not homework that you have to turn in. They are assigned so that you may test yourself to make sure you have understood the reading. Quizzes will often include some of the same questions from these exercises.

Quizzes

This class incentivizes attendance with frequent in-class pop quizzes. These quizzes will be made using some of the same questions from the review exercises in the book (as well as some different but similar questions), therefore they will be easy if you do the reading and assigned exercises. I drop the lowest two quiz grades for the semester. If you miss a quiz due to *unexcused* lateness or absence, you receive a zero for that quiz.

Writing Assignments

There will be two short papers for this course. More details will be provided when each is assigned. Mechanical errors such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure will negatively affect your grade. If you have trouble with written communication skills, it is your responsibility to schedule an appointment with an LRC writing tutor in advance. All written work will be submitted electronically via Canvas. "Technical difficulties" is not a valid excuse for a late submission.

Exams

There will be three exams for this course. The first two will be held in class during week 5 and week 10, respectively. The third will be held at our scheduled final exam time during finals week. The exams may consist of a combination of multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay questions.

Presentation

You will present an advertisement, article, or a speech and identify three different fallacies. Then explain how each fallacy is committed. You may only choose one media to identify the three different fallacies and must email the link in advance to avoid duplicate presentations. More details to follow.

Academic difficulty

This may be your first philosophy class, and/or you may find the topic challenging and difficult. If you do have difficulties, the only way to address it is to actively seek help. Ask questions in class, see me before or after class, talk to me in my office or at the LRC, e-mail me, set up a time to meet, or all of the above. I'm here to help, but the best help comes from constant interaction. *Do not wait until the last minute to get help!*

Academic honesty

As a member of this class you are also a member of the community of scholars. As a scholar, your fundamental commitment is to truth, and academic integrity is an important part of that commitment. Academic dishonesty undermines the integrity of the educational process and cannot be tolerated. Thus, the college has developed the following "Statement On Academic Integrity" which I fully endorse.

Cheating of any kind is dishonest. This includes copying others' essays or exams, stealing exams, buying or otherwise procuring new or used exams, paying someone else to take an exam or write an essay for which you take credit, and any other way you might receive credit for work that is not your own.

Using one essay for two different classes is also dishonest. If you have a topic

appropriate for two classes, original and separate work must be done for each class.

Plagiarism is also an act of academic dishonesty. It is a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is using anyone else's ideas and representing them as your own (i.e., not giving appropriate credit). Acts of plagiarism include the following:

- Failure to document and give credit to an original source
- Paraphrasing another person's ideas without giving credit
- Using direct quotations without proper recognition of the source
- Using statistics, facts, or information from a source other than your own original research (i.e., not your own) without credit.

When in doubt, give credit. Submitting work (even work completed by a team or group) containing material not properly credited is a serious academic offense and a violation of the very principles of academic integrity. Every individual is ultimately responsible for ensuring the honesty and integrity of any academic or scholarly work bearing her name.

Academic freedom

As a member of the community of scholars, you not only have the duty of academic integrity, but the right of academic freedom—including the right to reasonably disagree with your instructors without being penalized for this disagreement. For more information on the academic freedom which is yours as a student, see the *Student Handbook*.

Disability Statement

Mount Saint Mary's University Los Angeles, in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of disability in administration of its education related programs and activities. We have an institutional commitment to provide equal educational opportunities for disabled students who are otherwise qualified. Students with documented disabilities must see Joan L. Cashion, Interim Director of the Chalon Learning Center, (310) 954-4470, jcashion@msmu.edu OR Brandon Roberson, Director of the Doheny Learning Resource Center, to make arrangements for classroom accommodations. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain accommodation letters from the director and to make arrangements for the implementation of accommodations with faculty and/or staff in advance. Students who believe they have been subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability, or have been denied access to services or accommodations required by law, should contact the campus Disability Services Coordinator at his/her campus for resolution. For more information regarding disability grievance procedures, go to: <https://welcome.msmu.edu/academics/learning-assistance-ISAE/Documents/DisabilityGrievanceProcedures.pdf>

Course Overview

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
1	Introduction to critical thinking	Ch. 1: The Power of Critical Thinking
2	Impediments to critical reasoning	Ch. 2: Obstacles to Critical Thinking
3	Argument basics; judging arguments	Ch. 3: Making Sense of Arguments
4	Argument patterns; long arguments	Ch. 3: Making Sense of Arguments
5	Review & Exam #1	

6	Experts, evidence, personal experience	Ch. 4: Reasons for Belief and Doubt
7	News media, advertising	Ch. 4: Reasons for Belief and Doubt
8	Fallacies of irrelevant premises	Ch. 5: Fallacies and Persuaders
9	Fallacies of unacceptable premises	Ch. 5: Fallacies and Persuaders
10	Review & Exam #2	
11	Enumerative induction, opinion polls	Ch. 8: Inductive Reasoning
12	Analogical and causal arguments	Ch. 8: Inductive Reasoning
13	Explanations, inferences, theory criteria	Ch. 9: Inference to the Best Explanation
14	Scientific method, testing, theories	Ch. 10: Judging Scientific Theories
15	Judging scientific theories, weird theories	Ch. 11: Moral Reasoning

Schedule of readings and assignments (subject to change at discretion of instructor)

Key: R = assigned reading; E = exercise problems; WA = writing assignment

1/9	Week 1.1	Course Introduction
	Week 1.2	R: Chapter 1 (3-20); E 1.1 (20-21); Self-Assessment Quiz (26-28)
1/16	Week 2.1	MLK Holiday – no class Monday 1/16 Continue review of Chapter 1; in-class writing assignment
	Week 2.2	R: Chapter 2 (30-47); E 2.3 (49-51); WA #1 assigned
1/23	Week 3.1	R: Chapter 3 (58-70); E 3.1 (65); E 3.3 odd #s only (72-73)
	Week 3.2	R: Chapter 3 (73-83); E 3.5; WA#1 due
1/30	Week 4.1	R: Chapter 3 (86-91); E 3.9 odd #s only (92-94)
	Week 4.2	R: Chapter 3 (95-99); E 3.10 #1-2 only (99-100)
2/6	Week 5.1	Review
	Week 5.2	Exam #1
2/13	Week 6.1	R: Chapter 4 (109-123); E 4.1 #s 1-11 (147)
	Week 6.2	R: Chapter 4 (123-137); E 4.2 odd #s only (148-149)
2/20	Week 7.1	President's Day Holiday – no class Monday 2/20 R: Chapter 4 (137-146); E 4.4 (149-150); Self Assessment Quiz #s 17-20 (151-152)
	Week 7.2	Review; Fallacies presentation assigned
2/27	Week 8.1	R: Chapter 5 (155-170); E 5.1 #s 1-17 only (182-183)
	Week 8.2	R: Chapter 5 (170-178); E 5.3 (185-186)

3/6	SPRING BREAK	SPREAK BREAK HOLIDAY 3/6 – 3/10
3/13	Week 9.1 Week 9.2	R: Chapter 5 (178-181); E 5.2 odd #s only (183-185) Review; Self-Assessment Quiz #s 1-10 (187) Fallacies presentations
3/20	Week 10.1 Week 10.2	Review; Self-Assessment Quiz #s 11-20 (187-188) Fallacies presentations Exam #2
3/27	Week 11.1 Week 11.2	R: Ch. 8 (264-277); E 8.1 odd #s only (277-278); WA#2 assigned No Class Thursday March 30 for Doheny section R: Ch. 8 (281-287); E 8.7 (288-289)
4/3	Week 12.1 Week 12.2	R: Ch. 8 (289-304); E 8.8 #s 1-10 (305-307) Review; Self-Assessment Quiz odd #s only (311-313)
4/10	Week 13.1 Week 13.2	R: Ch. 9 (319-348); E 9.1 & 9.2 (328-329) R: Ch. 9 (331-356); E 9.8 WA#2 due
4/17	Week 14.1 Week 14.2	Easter Holiday – no class Monday 4/17 R: Ch. 10 (367-387); E 10.1 R: Ch. 10 (392-409); E 10.10
4/24	Week 15.1 Week 15.2	R: Ch. 11 (422-442); no exercises Review
5/1	Exam week	Exam #3