

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline**

**Philosophy 1200, 001: Critical Thinking
Previously Philosophy 021**



**Fall/Winter Terms 2011-12
Time: WF 11:30-12:30
Classroom: SH 3345**

**Instructor: Eric Desjardins
Office: Stevenson Hall 2131
Office Hours: WF 12:30-1:30
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to informal reasoning and how to critically conduct inquiry about various contemporary issues. Topics to be covered include: recognizing an argument, identifying premises and conclusions; evaluating arguments, fallacies, formal symbolization of arguments and deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning, social and psychological factors influencing our judgments, moral deliberation, scientific reasoning and how to interpret statistics, thinking critically about works of art, and how to assess the media. The course will help students to read and analyze academic material more critically and also help students organize their own work in order to produce more cogent arguments. The material in the course is also beneficial to students preparing for standardized tests for entry to graduate schools (GRE) or professional schools (LSAT, GMAT, MCAT).

TEXT

Sharon Bailin and Battersby, Mark (2010) *Reason in the Balance: An Inquiry Approach to Critical Thinking*, McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will learn a variety of technical notions and skills for applying them. The overarching objectives are to develop a capacity to conduct critical inquiry about various issues as well as

developing reading and writing skills to be successful in academic and professional environments.

Specific skills and concepts to be acquired include:

1. The technical notion of “argument.”
2. The structure of arguments and different ways to represent that structure (diagrams and standard form).
3. Fallacies of reasoning.
4. Criteria for good reasoning and their application to assessing and producing arguments.
5. Methods for assessing inductive reasoning and basic deductive reasoning.
6. Applications of a general method for conducting critical inquiry about various issues (scientific, ethical and aesthetic).
7. Social and psychological factors that influence reasoning.
8. Basic numeracy to assess statistical information commonly encountered in popular scientific media, newscasts or advertizing.

REQUIREMENTS

- Assignments (applied and theoretical) 40%
 - Two, applied group assignments (4% each)
 - Four theoretical individual assignments (5% each)
 - One group project (12%)
- Midyear Examination (December) 30%
- Final Examination (April) 30%

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/proceduresappeals.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus cannot be used as grounds of appeal.