

PHILOSOPHY 1200-002
Reasoning and Critical Thinking
The University of Western Ontario
Undergraduate Course Outline
(Previously Phil 021)

Fall/Winter Terms 2011-2012	Instructor: Dylan Gault
Time: W 6-9 pm	Office: Stevenson Hall 3124
Classroom: WL-258	Office Hours: TBA
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1 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).

2 Course Resources

2.1 Textbook

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

2.2 Online Components

This textbook has additional online material that forms the basis for many of the assignments in the textbook. This material may be used in this course.

Course information and additional material for the course will be available through WebCT.

3 Course Objectives

Students will learn a variety of technical notions and skills for applying them. The governing objectives of the course 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 (e.g., 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. Concepts regarding social and psychological factors that influence reasoning.
8. Skills and concepts of basic numeracy, particularly that used in assessing statistical information commonly encountered in popular scientific media, newscasts or advertizing.

4 Requirements

- Assignments — 40% of final grade
These are individual assignments.
 - Six (6) short reponses – 2% Each
 - Two (2) applied assignments – 4% Each
 - Four (4) theory assignments – 5% each
- Exams — 60% of final grade
 - Midyear examination (December) – 30
 - Final examination (April) – 30

5 Audit

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

6 Academic Standards

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.

Students who need to be temporarily excused from assignments or examination should first contact their assigned Faculty for permission in accordance with the standards and procedures of that Faculty. The instructor of this course does not need to know the reason for any consideration; all that is required is that an official from the student's Faculty contact the instructor and ask for academic accomodation.