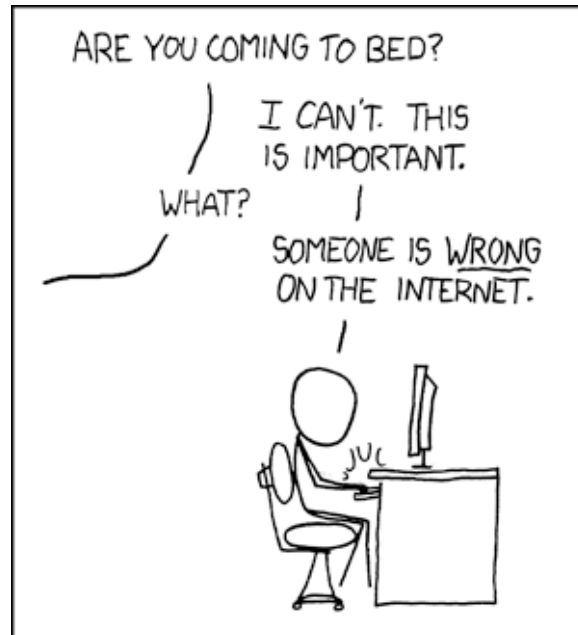


WESTERN UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
Undergraduate Course Outline 2026–2027

Course Number: PHILOSOP 1230A/B 650  
Reasoning and Critical Thinking



## Instructor information

Information including instructor contact details can be found on the course Owl BrightSpace:  
<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

## Prerequisites and anti-requisites

This course has no prerequisites. Philosop 1200 is an anti-requisite, meaning that you cannot take both courses for credit.

## Course description

This course teaches a basic set of skills that will improve your ability to think clearly and rationally. It will help you avoid fallacies and inconsistencies, uncover implicit assumptions, and become aware of your own biases. These skills will help you identify and assess claims and arguments, such as those encountered in your coursework, in conversation, and on social media.

The course has a strong focus on hands-on practice with immediate feedback, which is facilitated with weekly short exercises that are graded immediately.

Course components:

- Weekly video presentations and handouts
- Weekly readings
- Weekly practice exercises (graded for completion, not accuracy)
- Closed-book midterm examination (**in person**)
- Closed-book final examination (**in person**, scheduled during final examination period by the OOR)

## Learning outcomes

This course aims to help you

- identify, understand, and evaluate claims and arguments,
- understand the difference between different types of claims and arguments,
- depict the structure of statements and arguments using symbolic and graphical tools,
- recognize rational and non-rational influences on belief formation, including biases,
- understand the importance and relevance of critical thinking skills, and
- know when and how to apply critical thinking skills in both everyday and academic contexts.

## Texts

Digital versions of all required readings are available for free. You may also choose to purchase a hard copy of the course textbook.

1. Joe Lau. *An Introduction to Critical Thinking and Creativity: Think More, Think Better*. Wiley, 2011.
  - o The textbook is available in [ebook format](#) at Western Libraries (recommended; free)
  - o If the library version is insufficient, you may consider purchasing a hard copy available on Amazon.ca: <https://www.amazon.ca/Introduction-Critical-Thinking-Creativity-Better/dp/0470195096> (\$107.95)
  - o You may be able to purchase a used textbook at the University Bookstore, on Amazon.ca, or elsewhere.
2. Selected modules from Joe Lau's Critical Thinking Web: <https://philosophy.hku.hk/think/> (free)
3. Additional online readings (free)

## Method of evaluation

Practice exercises (graded for completion, online, flexible deadline)	10%
Midterm examination (designated assessment)	40%
Final examination (scheduled by the OOR)	50%

The midterm examination is scheduled during the seventh to ninth week of class; the precise date is posted on the course BrightSpace site. Please note that the midterm examination is a **designated assessment**, meaning that supporting documentation is required for academic consideration.

The **midterm exam** is in person and asynchronous, meaning that you can complete it at any time during a specified time window. The **final exam** is in person and synchronous, meaning that it must be taken at the scheduled time. It is scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (OOR) during the final exam period.

The **midterm** and **final exams** are taken on students' own laptops computers using MATCHA. MATCHA is an integrity-promoting application that students download to their computers, enabling them to efficiently complete in person assignments. MATCHA is available for our course free of charge. **By taking this course, you are agreeing to using MATCHA on your own laptop computer to take exams.**

The instructor reserves the right to issue exams on paper and pencil in the event that MATCHA becomes unsuitable for either of our exams.

The midterm and final exams are multiple choice.

Apart from the midterm and final exams, all required course components are asynchronous and online. There are no tutorials or synchronous lectures. There may be optional synchronous review sessions on Zoom.

The practice exercises have flexible assessments: there is a 24-hour grace period on their completion.

**Policy on Academic Consideration** – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs  
[https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/academic\\_consideration\\_Sep24.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf)

## Audit

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor at [philosophy1230@gmail.com](mailto:philosophy1230@gmail.com) prior to or during the first week of classes.

## Department of Philosophy policies

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/policies.html>.

It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

## Electronic devices

Use of a laptop computer (not tablet or phone) is required for the midterm and final exams. Other electronic devices—including phones, smart watches, and electronic eyewear—may not be present during exams (any such devices must be left at the front of the classroom during an exam).

## Statement on the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI)

Generative AI may be used to study course materials. Generative AI may be used to do practice exercises (though this is strongly discouraged). Students are urged to critically evaluate any information or guidance obtained from AI and to use independent thinking and validation in assessing such information or guidance.

Generative AI **may not** be used during exams. Exams are written on MATCHA to ensure fairness. Students may not bring any electronic devices apart from their laptop computers—including smart watches, phones, cameras, microphones, earphones, and electronic eyewear—to exams. The presence of such devices may be considered an academic offence.

## Academic consideration

Academic Consideration: Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student’s control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student’s ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
  - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
  - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
  - c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar

during official examination periods always require formal supporting documentation.

**Note: The midterm exam is a designated assessment, meaning that academic consideration for this course component requires formal supporting documentation (an undocumented absence cannot be used).**

**Practice exercises are flexible assessments, meaning that they have a flexible deadline and thus not eligible for academic consideration.**

[Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

## Academic accommodation and accessible education

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.” <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Accessible Education at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students.” [https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html)

## Special examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

## Religious accommodation

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_religious.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf). In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be “given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test”.

## Course assignment

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments

will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

Note that the last practice exercise is due no later than the last day of class.

## Scholastic offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:

[https://www.uwo.ca/biology/pdfs/undergraduate/rights-and-responsibilities/scholastic\\_discipline .pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/biology/pdfs/undergraduate/rights-and-responsibilities/scholastic_discipline.pdf)

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate academic dishonesty.

## Academic advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: [https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty\\_academic\\_counselling.html](https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html)

## Mental health support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends (24/7 availability).

## Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/index.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).