

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**Undergraduate Course Outline 2021–2022**

**Philosophy Course Number: Phil 1230A**  
**Reasoning and Critical Thinking**

Fall Semester  
Asynchronous

Instructor: Angela Mendelovici  
Office Hours: by appointment  
Email: [amendel5@uwo.ca](mailto:amendel5@uwo.ca)

## 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 quickly or instantaneously.

Course components:

- Weekly video presentations and handouts
- Weekly readings
- Weekly practice exercises and quizzes
- Closed-book final examination (during exam period, in person (London, only) or online using Proctorio)

**With the exception of the in-person option for the final exam, the course is entirely online and asynchronous.**

## Texts

- Joe Lau. *An Introduction to Critical Thinking and Creativity: Think More, Think Better*. Wiley, 2011.
  - Available for purchase as e-book or softcover
  - E-book available to check out or read online for a limited time through Western Libraries at <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/lib/west/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=706494>
- Selected modules from Joe Lau's Critical Thinking Web: <https://philosophy.hku.hk/think/> (free)
- Additional online readings (free)

## Objectives

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.

## Requirements and assessment

Practice exercises (graded for completion, online)	20%
Quizzes (online)	20%
Final examination (in person)	60%

## Audit

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor 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.

## Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this

policy can be found at

[http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

## Self-reported absences

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

[http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading\\_322](http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_322)

## Accommodation policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

## Religious accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

## Evaluation of academic performance

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade.

## Academic 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 Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

## Support services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> 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.