

PHIL 1500 – Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking
University of Georgia
Fall Semester 2009

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

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Required Text: The text for the course is a paperback custom textbook, *Logic and Critical Thinking: PHIL 1500 – Dr. Bryan Baird*.

The text comes with a number of resources to help you master the material on your own for each of the chapters we will cover. I highly encourage you to take advantage of them! Bundled with the textbook itself is the Learning Logic 5.0 CD-ROM, which has a bunch of practice problems and tutorials. For additional online tutorials, practice tests, and personalized study plans to do on your own, use the CengageNOW instant access code.

Course Description and Objectives:

Logic is the study of the principles of reasoning, the aim of which is to make explicit the rules by which inferences may be drawn.

Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.

Logic is primarily concerned with the principles, the fundamentals, the elements, and the rules of sound reasoning and argumentation. In reasoning about an issue—something about which questions may be raised—we draw inferences about that issue. What this means is that we come to accept a claim about the issue on the basis of information we have at hand. What we study in logic are the rules of reasoning that allow us to draw good inferences; the counterpart to this is that when the rules are not followed, we may be drawing bad inferences. The action of drawing of inference is what happens in arguments: a conclusion is inferred from the premises that are offered in support of it. So, another way of thinking about logic is as the study of good and bad arguments.

Critical thinking, though perhaps broader in scope than logic, is nevertheless closely related and well suited to it as a partner. Most broadly, critical thinking

concerns the manipulation of information in various ways in order to produce belief or action—that is, in order to think the right thing or to do the right thing. Although critical thinking need not explicitly involve argumentation or the drawing of inferences, when combined with logic (as it is in this course) it is primarily concerned with the actions and attitudes that accompany sound reasoning and the formulation and acceptance of arguments. What counts as sound, or good, reasoning is determined by a relatively stable set of rules that can be applied to any bit of reasoning.

This course is a study in reasoning: its elements (what it “composes”), its process and direction (what it does), its taxonomy (what kinds of reasoning there are), its evaluation (what “rules” apply to reasoning), and its purposes (what reasoning is supposed to achieve). Let me suggest two related objectives you should have for this study:

Objective #1: Acquire the skills of a critical thinker. Critical thinking is a skill that is acquired by an understanding of reasoning in all its facets and by the application of such understanding. It is a skill that presupposes an understanding of the standards of reasoning and a proper command of their use. It is a skill that presupposes effective problem-solving and communication abilities, abilities that are the direct result of the study of reasoning.

These critical thinking skills will be acquired by a careful reading of the text, attending the lecture period which will cover significant points in the text and occasionally provide further explanation, and applying your understanding through quizzes, tests, and assignments.

Objective #2: Develop the habits of a critical thinker. Critical thinking is not just about acquiring skills and abilities. It is not just about applying these skills to *others'* reasoning. It is also about developing deep-seated habits—consistently putting the skills and abilities you learn into practice over the long haul as a life-long endeavor—and being self-conscious and self-corrective in one's thinking, resulting in greater humility rather than arrogance. Putting the critical thinking skills that you learn into regular and mindful practice will help you develop important habits that will become almost second nature.

Being a good critical thinker includes a host of attributes: asking pertinent questions; acquiring relevant information; analyzing issues and problems; examining beliefs, assumptions, and opinions (one's own and others'); recognizing different standards of evaluating information; admitting one's intellectual limitations; and assessing arguments and inferences. These are but a few of the characteristics that I hope you come to possess over the course of this semester and over the course of your life and that I believe will be of great benefit and value to you.

Lecture period. Twice a week, the entire class will meet together to engage the course material. Although it will primarily be a time of taking in information through the lecture, I will often ask you to actively reflect upon, write about, and discuss the material we are covering. You should come to class having read and absorbed the material (to some degree) and ready to ask questions about difficult parts of the material. The main goal of the lecture period is the achievement of the first course objective: acquiring the information necessary to be a skilled critical thinker.

Discussion Sections. Once a week, you and a smaller portion of the class will meet with your teaching assistant. This is a more intimate setting designed to encourage active participation and discussion from everyone in the class and to go over specific exercises that cannot be covered during the lecture period. You will be greatly benefited and more prepared for exams by taking this time seriously. The main goal of discussion sections is the achievement of both course objectives: to apply the critical thinking skills learned and to develop the habits of a good critical thinker. Check your schedule for the day, time, and place that your discussion section meets.

Course Requirements: Attendance, quizzes, and three exams.

Attendance (20%). Attendance will be taken only in the discussion section (DS). In calculating your attendance grade, the following equation will be used:

$$\frac{\text{\# DS periods attended}}{\text{total \# of DS periods}} \times 100$$

Making attendance part of your grade is intended to help you achieve the course objectives by encouraging you to be present and discouraging you from being absent. Because I realize that sometimes circumstances arise that inadvertently prevent you from attending a class, I will give you one free absence. Use it wisely. Whether or not an absence will be excused from affecting your grade will be made on a case-by-case basis, but understand that only for the most pressing reasons (e.g., serious illness, death in the immediate family) will we even consider excusing an absence.

Quizzes (20%). Periodic, unscheduled pop quizzes will be given at any time during any given lecture period. The quizzes may test how well you prepared for class that day, or they may test you on how well you have comprehended what has been recently covered in the lecture period and/or discussion section. Giving these quizzes is intended (1) to encourage you to be in class and receive the instruction you need to do well in the course, (2) to keep you on top of the readings, and (3) to help you achieve the first course objective by testing how well you have digested the course material through questions related not only to critical thinking theory but also to applying the theory to concrete situations.

You may use your notes and textbook when taking the quizzes. However, the quizzes will have a strict time limit, and I wouldn't bet on the possibility of being able to look up the answers without having done the assigned reading beforehand or gotten caught up on the material. Missing a quiz will get you a 0% grade, missing all of the quiz questions will get you a 50% grade, and getting some quiz questions correct/incorrect will get you between 51% and 100%. And because I am such a nice guy, I will drop your two lowest quiz grades. No make-up quizzes will be given.

Exams (60%). There will be three exams for this course: two in-class exams and a final exam. Each exam will be closed-book and closed-notes exams. The final exam is not cumulative and will test your knowledge and application of the material covered since the previous exam. The exams are intended to test your mastery of the material covered up to the exam date.

Grading: Your final grade will be determined by averaging together the grades for each of the requirements above and then weighting the averages according to their percentages to determine your final grade for the course. For borderline grade cases,

higher grades earned later in the course, signs of real progress, and active participation may bump you up to the next higher letter grade.

For final letter grades submitted to the university, I will be using the plus-minus system according to the following grade scale.

Plus-Minus Letter Grade Scale

A	93.5 >	C+	76.5 - 79.4
A-	89.5 - 93.4	C	73.5 - 76.4
B+	86.5 - 89.4	C-	69.5 - 72.4
B	82.5 - 86.4	D	59.5 - 69.4
B-	79.5 - 83.4	F	< 59.4

Important Dates to Remember:

September 7	Holiday - No Class
September 28 (Mon)	Exam 1
October 22	Midterm Withdrawal Deadline
November 2 (Mon)	Exam 2
October 30	Fall Break - No Friday Discussion Sections
November 23-27	Holiday - No Class
December 8 (Tues)	Friday schedule – Friday Discussion Sections <u>Will Meet</u>
December 14 (Mon)	Final Exam – 8:00-11:00 am – 115 Peabody

Ethical Considerations: This course involves an ethical dimension in two ways.

First, you must abide by the [Academic Honesty Policy](#) of the university. All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." All students are responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. Specifically, you have agreed to abide by the Student Honor Code, which states: "**I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others.**" Take the time to familiarize yourself with the consequences of violating the Academic Honesty Policy, and take note of the following definitions of the underlined terms:

- "**Academic Honesty**" means performing all academic work without plagiarism, cheating, lying, tampering, stealing, giving or receiving unauthorized assistance from any other person, or using any source of information that is not common knowledge without properly acknowledging the source.
- "**Academic Work**" means any act performed in connection with work required to be submitted, being prepared to be submitted, or actually submitted for academic advancement in connection with courses and programs offered by the University. Academic work includes, but is not limited to, dissertations, theses, examinations, exercises, quizzes, term papers, required drafts of assignments, required attendance, reports, performances, presentations, artwork, laboratory work, and scientific experiments. [partial definition]
- "**Academic Dishonesty**" means performing, attempting to perform, or assisting any other person in performing any academic work that does not meet this standard of academic honesty.

Second, this course is set within an academic environment, and I expect you to behave accordingly in the classroom. Remaining in this course counts as an implicit

agreement to these and other general terms of academic etiquette. Although these are not offenses of academic honesty, we take them seriously and encourage you to do so, as well. At least part of what this means for you is that we will not tolerate cell phone ringing, extended or distracting private conversations, crossword puzzles or other games, napping, coming late to class on a regular basis, etc. These activities are distracting both to us and to those around you, and they are just plain rude. That this course is set within an academic environment also means that you treat your instructors and your classmates with charity, respect, and open-mindedness, even (and especially!) when you are in disagreement.