

TENTATIVE OTLINE
BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
(at Western)

Room 204, Brescia

Philosophy 1230b

2018

Reasoning and Critical Thinking

Mon: 4:30-5:30

Dr. Dennis Hudecki

Wed: 3:30-5:30

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to critical thinking and rational argumentation.

Critical thinking is a skill that will reward students for the rest of their lives. To the extent that they develop their critical faculties, they will be less likely to be bamboozled and duped by the countless arguments and forms of persuasion that we experience constantly in our lives, about matters big and small. Reasoning will help students see the heart and essence of arguments that they face, helping them better understand their own beliefs and the beliefs of others. Furthermore, these reasoning skills will help students in their other university courses and in their callings and careers afterwards. They will be able to read and analyze academic materials more critically and be better able to both organize their thinking and develop strong arguments in defense of their beliefs. Such skills can play a big role in actualizing their human potential. 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).

Topics to be covered include:

- (a) recognizing an argument;
- (b) identifying premises and conclusions of arguments;
- (c) argument evaluation;
- (d) recognition of fallacies (i.e., bad arguments);
- (e) differences between scientific, moral, aesthetic and other kinds of thinking;
- (f) learning how to build rational, cogent arguments;

- (g) the role that charity plays in interpreting the arguments of others;

(h) respectful interaction when intellectually discussing controversial issues.

Required Text:

Critical Thinking: An Introduction to the Basic Skills, 7th Edition. William Hughes and Jonathan Lavery, Broadview Press (2015). ISBN 978-1-55481-199-1 (pb)

Note: You must have the seventh edition; earlier editions will not suffice.

All other course materials will be photocopied and made available to the students.

Course Requirements:

Two tests 40% (20 + 20)

Class participation 10%

Final examination 50%

Office Hours:

The easiest way for you to contact me is right after every class, in the classroom. I make myself available at that time for as long as needed. Furthermore, I will especially try to be in my office at Brescia on Tuesday's and Thursday's, 4::00 to 5:30. Still, to make sure, you should phone ahead to make sure I am there. My office is in the portable complex that is located behind the Merici Lounge. You may have to ring the doorbell to get in. Please feel free to drop into my office anytime, or by appointment at a mutually acceptable time. You can also communicate with me by phone or voice-mail (tel: 519-432-8353, x. 28245), or you can reach me via email at: <dhudecki@uwo.ca>. Please put something like "Philosophy 1230b" in the subject heading of any email you send me. Otherwise I may inadvertently delete it without reading it. (Please be warned that, because of the number of students I have, I may be slow in answering your e-mail.) Please do not hesitate to come in and see me regarding course matters or other matters. Feel free to visit if you want to philosophize about any issue--course-related or not! Regardless of why you are there, it will be my duty and my pleasure to try to help.

Course Objectives

At the end of the course, students will:

be better able to distinguish good arguments from bad ones;
 be able to identify an argument's assumptions, premises and conclusions;
 be better able to articulate and defend their views in both written and spoken form;
 be better able to have respectful and useful discussions with others about important matters;
 have a better appreciation of the discipline of philosophy;
 have been presented with and encouraged to think about many current issues that we face in society today;
 be better able to find within themselves and give expression to the questions that are most personally important to them;
 have an understanding of the central role that logical, rational arguments, (based on reasoning and evidence) play in the search for truth.

CLASS SCHEDULE

LECTURES

The course will begin with Meiland's "The Difference Between High School and College" and some lectures on the concept of "rational argumentation"

After this, the course text will be followed closely. Some sections in some chapters will not be studied and we will not cover every chapter. Students will know exactly what material has been covered before every test.

Tests

There will be two term tests:

February 7 (worth 20% of the final grade)

March: 21 (worth 20% of the final grade)

Participation

The 10% participation mark is determined solely by attendance. (Approximately a half-mark is deducted for every missed hour.)

Final Exam

The final exam will be worth 50 % of your final grade and it will cover the material from the whole course.

Some Other Important Dates:

First class: Mon., Jan. 8

Reading Week: Feb. 19-23

Easter: April 1

Our Last class: Wed., April 11

Final Exam period: April 14-30

1. POLICY REGARDING MAKEUP EXAMS AND EXTENSIONS OF DEADLINES

When a student requests academic accommodation (e.g., extension of a deadline, a makeup exam) for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course, it is the responsibility of the student to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical or compassionate claim. All such requests for academic accommodation **must** be made through an Academic Advisor and include supporting documentation. Academic accommodation for illness will be granted only if the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete her academic responsibilities. Minor ailments typically treated by over-the-counter medications will not normally be accommodated. Documentation shall be submitted as soon as possible to the student's Academic Advisor indicating the period of illness and when the student should be able to resume academic responsibilities. Students must submit their documentation along with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested no later than two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Please note that personal commitments (e.g., vacation flight bookings, work schedule) which conflict with a scheduled test, exam or course requirement are **not** grounds for academic accommodation.

A UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is **required** if a student is seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. A SMC can be downloaded from: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf. The student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that her ability to meet academic responsibilities was seriously affected. Please note that under University Senate regulations documentation stating simply that the student "was seen for a medical reason" or "was ill" is **not** adequate to support a request for academic accommodation.

Whenever possible, requests for academic accommodation should be initiated in advance of due dates, examination dates, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and Academic Advisor in a timely manner.

The full policy on requesting accommodation due to illness can be viewed at: <http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg117.html>

2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal problem that is interfering with your work, contact your instructor and Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Problems may then be documented and possible arrangements to assist you can be discussed at the time of occurrence rather than on a retroactive basis. Retroactive requests for academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds may not be considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult an Academic Advisor. If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines (refer to the Registrar's website, <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/> or the list of official dates <http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg7.html>). You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. *Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP eligibility and/or Entrance Scholarship eligibility.*

The Dean may refuse permission to write the final examination in a course if the student has failed to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year or for too frequent absence from the class or laboratory (<http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg130.html>)

3. ABSENCES

Short Absences: If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate. Contact the course instructor if you have any questions.

Extended Absences: If you have an extended absence, you should contact the course instructor and an Academic Advisor. Your course instructor and Academic Advisor can discuss ways for you to catch up on missed work and arrange academic accommodations, if appropriate.

4. POLICY ON CHEATING & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

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.

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. Students are urged to read the section on Scholastic Offences in the Academic Calendar. Note that such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in the University or elsewhere. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Misconduct in the Western Academic Calendar.

If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Student Services Centre, or the Registrar. A claim that "you didn't know it was wrong" is not accepted as an excuse.

The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offence (including plagiarism) include refusal of a passing grade in the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Computer-marked Tests/exams:

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating. Software currently in use to score computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams performs a similarity review as part of standard exam analysis.

5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEALING ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS

All appeals of a grade must be directed first to the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course instructor, a written appeal signed by the student must be sent to the Department Chair. If the response of the department is considered unsatisfactory to the student, she may then submit a signed, written appeal to the Office of the Dean. Only after receiving a final decision from the Dean may a student appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic. A Guide to Appeals is available from the Ombudsperson's Office, or you can consult an Academic Advisor. Students are advised to consult the section on Student Academic Appeals under Academic Rights and Responsibilities in the Western Academic Calendar (<http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg112.html>).

Note that final course marks are not official until the Academic Dean has reviewed and signed the final grade report for the course. If course marks deviate from acceptable and appropriate standards, the Academic Dean may require grades to be adjusted to align them with accepted grading practices (http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf and http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/finalgrades.pdf).

6. PREREQUISITES

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisite(s).

7. SUPPORT

Support Services

The Brescia University College Registrar's website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/>. The website for the Student Development Centre at Western is <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>.

Mental Health and Wellness

Students may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to your learning, such as increased anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, feeling down or lost, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. Services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about mental health and wellness at Brescia at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/life/mental-health-wellness/>. 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.

Sexual Violence

All members of the Brescia University College community have a right to work and study in an environment that is free from any form of sexual violence. Brescia University College recognizes that the prevention of, and response to, Sexual Violence is of particular importance in the university environment. Sexual Violence is strictly prohibited and unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Brescia is committed to preventing Sexual Violence and creating a safe space for anyone in the Brescia community who has experienced Sexual Violence.

If you or someone you know has experienced any form of Sexual Violence, you may access resources at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/life/sexual-violence/>.

Portions of this document were taken from the Academic Calendar, the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policy and the Academic Handbook of Senate Regulations. This document is a summary of relevant regulations and does not supersede the academic policies and regulations of the Senate of the University of Western Ontario.