

# Logic: The Practice of Critical Thinking (Phil 101 T 006)

Edgewood College - Spring 2016

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 – 9:50 am; Mazzuchelli Hall, 103

Instructor: Michael Zenz

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8-8:30am & 10-10:30am (& by appointment)

## Course Description

This is an introduction to critical thinking and argumentation. Every day we must respond to numerous arguments and make some of our own about various issues. Some issues are rather mundane (Should you buy that Toyota Corolla? Should you buy an extended warranty on it? Should you give your brother a ride?) whereas others are much more significant (What environmental changes will global warming cause? Is the death penalty immoral? Who will win the 2016 U.S. presidential election). Sometimes we argue about the way the world is (How does our visual system process light? What monetary policy is best at keeping both unemployment and inflation low?), and other times we argue about how we should act (Is killing in war ever morally justifiable, and if so when? What are our obligations to the poor?). In this class we will study *how* we should come to answers about these and other issues, and how we can avoid common missteps in our thinking. We will look at several systematic ways of critically thinking, both informal (like we do every day) and formal (with logic or statistics). Therefore, this class is really about *how*, rather than *what* one should think.

## Learning Outcomes

The development of critical thinking skills enables each student to evaluate ideas, solve problems, and draw conclusions. Specifically, each student will be able to:

1. Create and sustain an argument logically and identify its strengths and weaknesses.
2. Critically assess and question beliefs and ideas from multiple perspectives.
3. Make judgments based on evidence, while recognizing the open-endedness and complexity of the reasoning process.

## Requirements

**30% - Weekly Discussion Writing** Approximately 350 word **typed** responses to bi-weekly discussion questions posted on Blackboard. Responses must be handed in at the start of class on the days they are assigned (no exceptions). The lowest score will be dropped.

**25% - Term Paper** Detailed instructions will be distributed in February. You will provide an argument for a position of your choosing. Due via Blackboard on **May 12**.

**10% - Midterm Exam** Covering primarily informal logic and formal deductive logic. **March 10**.

**10% - Final Exam** Online, due **May 10**.

**15% - Attendance and Participation** You are expected to come to every class.

**10% - Presentation** A presentation previewing the argument you give in your term paper.

## Required Text

We will be using the following text, available at Edgewood's book store; all other readings will be posted on Blackboard:

**Sylvan Barnet and Hugo Bedau. *Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing: A brief guide to argumentation*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition. Bedford/St. Martin's. 2014. ISBN: 978-1457649974.**

## Grading Scale

A  $\geq$  91.5, AB : 91.4 – 87.5, B : 87.4 – 81.5, BC : 81.4 – 77.5, C : 77.4 – 71.5, CD : 71.4 – 67.5, D : 67.4 – 59.5

## Late Work

All late work will be marked down  $\frac{1}{3}$  a letter grade for each day late.

## Students with Disabilities

It is a college policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you would like to request accommodations due to a physical, mental, or learning disability, please contact the Student Accessibility and Disability Services. Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodation is requested to speak directly to the Director of Student Accessibility and Disability Services as early in the semester (preferably within the first week) as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.

## Absences

Students are expected to inform the instructor in advance of medically necessary absences, and present a self-signed note documenting the date of the missed class(es) and testifying to the need for the absence. **Prolonged absence or illness** preventing attendance from a health care provider verifying dates of treatment when student was unable to meet academic responsibilities. **Absence due to religious observance** will not be penalized, however, it is the students responsibility to notify the instructor within the first week of class regarding any religious observance absence(s) for the entire semester.

## Academic Integrity

Academic Honesty is to be expected; violations of this policy are subject to academic sanction. Please familiarize yourself with the Student Handbook and College Catalog on this matter. Some examples of violations of academic honesty include: cheating on exams; submitting collaborative work as ones own; stealing examinations or course materials; submitting work previously submitted for another course, unless specifically approved by the present instructor; plagiarism.

## The Writing Center

The Writing Center, located in the Edgewood library, first floor (behind the Printing & Copy Center) offers free, drop-in service to all students. No appointment necessary. Students may bring work from any class, at any stage of development. Tutors offer feedback on all aspects of writing, from organization, evidence, and flow, to citation style and punctuation. We work with students at all levels, in every school and department, and at every level of ability and experience. Students can work off a lap top, or tutors can print out a draft at no cost. More information at <http://writing-center.edgewood.edu>. Hours: Monday Thursday 9-9, Friday 9-2, Sunday 1-5. Two tutors also work in each residence hall, on call nights and weekends. Check the website or ask an RA for help finding a res. hall tutor.

## **Tentative Schedule and Readings**

All readings are due on the date they are listed. All page numbers listed are from the Barnet & Bedau textbook. All other readings will be made available on Blackboard. **Note that some assignments will specify additional readings that are required for their completion.**

### **Week 1 - Introduction to Argumentation**

**Tuesday, 1/19**

- Introductions

**Thursday, 1/21**

- Barnet, pp. 1–19

### **Week 2 - Forming and criticizing arguments**

**Tuesday, 1/26**

- Gain a familiarity with the major presidential primary candidates.

**Thursday, 1/28**

- **Writing Assignment # 1 Due in Class**
- “Birthright Citizenship” Readings on Blackboard

### **Week 3 - Clear Thinking and Writing**

**Tuesday, 2/2**

- Barnet, pp. 74–90

**Thursday, 2/4**

- Barnet, pp. 90–107

### **Week 4 - Categorical Logic**

**Tuesday, 2/9**

- Barnet, pp. 349–361

**Thursday, 2/11**

- **Writing Assignment # 2 Due in Class**

### **Week 5 - Venn Test of Validity**

**Tuesday, 2/16**

- None

**Thursday, 2/18**

- None

### **Week 6 - Truth-functional Logic**

**Tuesday, 2/23**

- None

**Thursday, 2/25**

- **Writing Assignment # 3 (Logic problem set) Due in Class**

### **Week 7 - Truth Functional Logic**

**Tuesday, 3/1**

- None

**Thursday, 3/3**

- None

### **Week 8 - Truth Functional Logic**

**Tuesday, 3/8**

- Truth-Functional Logic Problem Set, Part 1 Due in class

**Thursday, 3/10**

- Truth-Functional Logic Problem Set, Part 2 Due in class

### **Week 9 - Spring Break**

## **Week 10 - Logic in Review**

**Tuesday, 3/22**

- Review Sheet Due

**Thursday, 3/24**

- **Midterm Exam**

## **Week 11 - Fallacies and the Psychology of Reasoning**

**Tuesday, 3/29**

- Barnet, pp. 368–383
- Excerpt from Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*

**Thursday, 3/31**

- **Writing Assignment # 4 due in class**
- Excerpt from Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*

## **Week 12 - Statistical and Scientific Reasoning**

**Tuesday, 4/5**

- Barnet pp. 361–368
- Excerpt from Nate Silver, *The Signal and the Noise*

**Thursday, 4/7**

- Excerpt from Nate Silver, *The Signal and the Noise*
- **Writing Assignment # 5 Due in Class**

### **Week 13 - “Good” Rhetoric?**

**Tuesday, 4/12**

- Barnet, pp. 392–399.
- Excerpt from Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends & Influence People*.

**Thursday, 4/14**

- Excerpt from Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends & Influence People*.

### **Week 14 - Argumentative Speaking and Writing**

**Tuesday, 4/19**

- Singer, “Animal Liberation” in Barnet, pp. 207–219.

**Thursday, 4/21**

- **Writing Assignment # 6 Due in Class**

**Week 15 (4/26-4/28) - Class Presentations**

**Week 16 (5/3-5/5)- Class Presentations**

**Online Final Exam due 5/10**

**Term Paper due 5/12**