

PHIL 100
Reasoning: An Introduction to Critical Thinking

Fall 2022

CRN 91022, Section AB2

Mondays 14:30–17:20, Room ABD 213

Instructor: Dr. Joseph Carew

Contact: joseph.carew@ufv.ca

Office Hours:

Wednesdays 15:00-17:00, ABK 167

Or by appointment in person or on Zoom

The University of the Fraser Valley is located on the unceded territory of the Stó:lō peoples. We gratefully acknowledge our ability to live and work on the traditional territory.

Academic Calendar Description

Good reasoning is the basis for successful thought and action. This course introduces methods for creative and successful reasoning such as analyzing and evaluating evidence, recognizing different forms of arguments, and applying innovative, critical thinking to both practical and theoretical issues.

Detailed Course Description

Reasoning is the process of backing up beliefs by providing evidence that justifies them. Although reasoning is the primary method employed in philosophy, science, and law, as well as other disciplines, it is also something that we use every day—indeed, often without realizing it. We use it, for example, when we try to decide which product best fits our needs or even when we watch YouTube. Anytime we stop to wonder whether something claimed makes sense, is fact-based, or comes from a trustworthy source, we are engaging in reasoning: we are determining, by logically thinking over the evidence provided, whether we have been presented with a convincing argument for believing that something is true or false. That, in a nutshell, is what reasoning is all about.

In this course, we will study various skills that relate to good reasoning. These skills require and develop critical thinking—that is to say, the unbiased, rational analysis and evaluation of evidence with the aim of formulating an informed judgment about what to believe. To this end, we will examine what makes for both good and bad reasoning and how we can apply these skills in a wide variety of settings (including everyday conversations with friends or family members, theoretical debates in academia, social media, advertising, and politics). We will look at, among other things, the following topics: the logical structure of arguments; how to recognize arguments, analyze them into their component parts, and evaluate them according to different criteria; and how to use critical thinking to protect ourselves from marketing ploys and propaganda. Throughout the course, we will emphasize the social and political importance of critical thinking.

Learning Outcomes

- Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:
- Distinguish arguments from other forms of persuasion, unsupported claims, and other types of speech (e.g., appealing to emotions, opinions, and explanations).
- Recognize arguments (e.g., by identifying inference indicators and enthymemes).
- Analyze arguments (e.g., by identifying dependent premises, independent premises, and conclusions).

- Evaluate different types of arguments (e.g., deductive arguments, statistical syllogisms, and inductive generalizations).
- Describe the defining characteristics of good and bad arguments (e.g., relevancy vs. irrelevancy of premises and adequate vs. inadequate evidence).
- Use key concepts of reasoning (e.g., validity, truth, soundness, and probability).
- Detect fallacies (e.g., appeal to inappropriate authority, *ad hominem*, and a straw man).
- Recognize misleading and manipulative instances of marketing and propaganda.

Texts

The following textbook is required and is the basis for coursework. It is available through UFV's bookstore.

- Ronald Munson and Andrew Black. *The Elements of Reasoning*. 7th edition. United States: Cengage, 2017.

Two further readings are also available on Blackboard:

- Gary James Jason. "Rational versus Irrational Marketing." *The Critical Thinking Book*. Peterborough: Boardview, 2022. 481-507.
- Gary James Jason. "Rational versus Irrational Propaganda." *The Critical Thinking Book*. Peterborough: Boardview, 2022. 509-530.

Student Evaluation

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| • Participation | 10% | |
| • Assignment 1 | 10% | <i>Due October 9</i> |
| • Midterm Exam | 35% | <i>In class on October 31</i> |
| • Assignment 2 | 10% | <i>Due November 20</i> |
| • Final Exam | 35% | <i>Date to be set by the university</i> |

Participation:

Since we will do various critical thinking exercises and activities together throughout the term, it is expected that students not only attend class but also contribute to class discussions, pose questions, and engage with one another.

Assignments:

Each assignment will consist of critical thinking exercises and short-answer questions. As the assignments are designed to help ensure that you are prepared for the exams, we will go over the assignments beforehand. The assignments will be posted on Blackboard.

Exams:

Each exam will be a combination of multiple-choice, critical thinking exercises, and short-answer questions. The midterm exam will be on material from the first part of the course and the final exam will be on material from the second part of the course. Both will be administered on Blackboard.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (September 12): Introduction to Critical Thinking

Week 2 (September 19): Recognizing Arguments

- Chapter 1 (1-14).

Week 3 (September 26): Analyzing Arguments

- Chapter 2 (15-29).

Week 4 (October 3): Evaluating Deductive Arguments

- Chapter 3 (30-36).
- Assignment 1 Posted After Class.
- Deadline for Submitting Assignment 1: October 9, 11:59 pm.

Week 5 (October 10): Thanksgiving, No Class

Week 6 (October 17): Evaluating Non-Deductive Arguments

- Chapter 3 (37-50).

Week 7 (October 24): Review and Critical Thinking in Action

- Chapters 1-3 (1-50).

Week 8 (October 31): Midterm Exam

Week 9 (November 7): Fallacies in Supporting a Claim

- Chapter 8 (127-135).

Week 10 (November 14): Fallacies of Criticism and Response

- Chapter 8 (135-152).
- Assignment 2 Posted After Class.
- Deadline for Submitting Assignment 2: November 20, 11:59 pm.

Week 11 (November 21): Marketing

- Gary James Jason. "Rational versus Irrational Marketing."

Week 12 (November 28): Propaganda

- Gary James Jason. "Rational versus Irrational Propaganda."

Week 13 (December 5): Review and Critical Thinking in Action

- Chapter 8 (127-152) and Reading on Blackboard.

Final Exam: *To be set by the University during the final exam period.*

Course Procedures and Policies

- 1 *Email*: I will respond within 2 business days. If something is urgent, please indicate so in the subject line so that I can prioritize getting back to you.
- 2 *Missed Exams*: Please contact me within 24 hours, if possible. If you are excused (for medical reasons, bereavement, etc., as determined on a case-by-case basis), you must reschedule.

- 3 *Late Assignments:* Any assignment handed in late will be penalized by 5% per day for a maximum of 7 days. Late assignments after this point will not be accepted, except under extenuating circumstances.