

Critical Thinking (PHIL 2200)

Course Information, Expectations, and Syllabus

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CRN:	21805	Office Hours:	Tues/Thurs, 2-3pm or by appointment

Course Description

From the course catalog: "A systematic study of extended arguments aimed at helping students develop the skills necessary for understanding, analyzing, and evaluating argumentative rhetoric. Topics included are argument identification and argument structure, definitions and disputes, deduction and induction, premise verification and informal fallacies." This course satisfies General Education Proficiency 4c (Critical Thinking)

Your Instructor

I am less than a year from completing my grad program at WMU. (By the way, did you know WMU is one of the top ranked MA programs in philosophy in the US?) I have a BA in Psychology and Philosophy, and I already have an MA in religion. I am really looking forward to this course with you. Often online courses can feel impersonal and disconnected, but I am quite happy to bridge that gap so feel free to reach out to me!

Communicating with Your Instructor

Forums Versus Email

- If you have a question about course content or mechanics, I encourage you to post it to the *Problem Solver* discussion forum. Doing so gives students in the course an opportunity to help one another out and it allows everyone to benefit from the answers to your questions. Of course, don't hesitate to email me directly if your concern is of a personal nature.

Email Response Time

- Generally I will respond to emails within 3 days (less than 72 hr) of receiving them. If I plan to be away from my computer for more than a couple of days, I will let you know in advance.
- Please include the course ID somewhere ("PHIL 2200") in the subject line of your email so I will know to attend to it quickly.

Office Hours

- My office hours are on campus, but I am also happy to meet online, either 1 on 1 or in a group:
 - Google Hangouts – jonathan.m.vajda@wmich.edu (supports up to 10 people at once)
 - Microsoft Skype – jonathan.m.vajda
 - Or by phone call, if necessary
- Do not hesitate to send me an **email** if we need to talk so we can agree on a convenient time for a meeting whether in person or online.

Required Materials

Textbook

- *Understanding Arguments: 9th Edition, Concise* by Walter Sinnott-Armstrong & Robert J. Fogelin
 - Available online and at the WMU Bookstore
- You may use the earlier *Understanding Arguments: 8th Edition*, but this is not available in the bookstore

Computer stuff

- In order to participate in any WMU online course, you should have easy access to a computer less than 5 years old and a high-speed internet connection. You will also need speakers or headphones.
- You are expected to be proficient with installing and using basic computer applications and have the ability to send and receive email attachments.

Computer Requirements

- The following media software *may* be required to access the content of this course:
 - [Google Chrome](#) or [Mozilla Firefox](#) (latest version; Macintosh or Windows)
 - [Adobe Reader](#) or equivalent for PDF viewing
 - [Adobe Flash Player](#)
 - [Microsoft Windows Media Player](#) or [QuickTime Player](#)
- It is preferred that you use Microsoft Office products. All submitted documents **must** be Microsoft Office compatible. Please contact me for special considerations or to confirm compatibility.

Course Organization & Online Tools

Learning Modules

The course is organized into modules of instruction, called Learning Modules, as outlined in the PDF named *Course Schedule*. Each learning module is listed by its main topic and contains required readings, mini lectures, discussion forum assignments, and homework assignments that you complete. When you complete a module, the next becomes available.

- Note: Most materials used in conjunction with the course are subject to copyright protection.

Discussion Forums

You will find the following discussion forums in the course site:

- Introductions: Meet and greet one another informally. I've already posted there so join in!
- Problem Solver: Post any questions or comments you may have about course mechanics or technical issues to this forum.
- Student Lounge: Use this forum to celebrate your personal accomplishments, encourage each other, post inspirational quotes, etc.
- Forums related to collaborative and discussion assignments, as described in Learning Module sections.

My role in discussion forums is that of a facilitator. I will occasionally correct misconceptions and/or redirect conversations that need redirecting. I may also post comments following the completion of discussion indicating my general impressions of the comments and conclusions.

Dropbox and Naming Documents for Submission

Dropbox will be the primary means by which you submit assignments. Before you submit a document, name your file according to the format below:

Title	Should follow format	Example
Analogy Essay	LastNameFirstInitial_Title.doc	PotterH_AnalogyEssay.doc

Course Assessment

- Your final grade will be based on the following assignments:
 - Assignments – five (5), worth 5% each (25%)
 - Quizzes – two (2), worth 5% each (10%)
 - Discussion (participation) – five (5), worth 4% each (20%)
 - Exams – three (3), worth 15% each (45%)
- Assignments
 - Unless indicated otherwise in Learning Modules, you will submit homework using the **DROPBOX** tool on eLearning
 - Instructions are given with the task posted on eLearning
 - The due dates in Assignments match the due dates in the **Course Schedule**.
- Quizzes
 - Usually multiple-choice
 - Based on readings and lectures
- Discussion
 - Engaging one another and
- Due-dates are all posted on the Course Schedule and on the individual assessments
- Currently there is no extra credit, but I reserve the right to create opportunities in the future

Grading Scale.

I'll assign final grades with the following interpretations:

100-93	A	4.0	77-73	C	2.0
92-88	BA	3.5	72-68	DC	1.5
87-83	B	3.0	67-60	D	1.0
82-78	CB	2.5	59-0	E	0.0

Late Submissions

Late submissions. Assignments, quizzes, and exams submitted after the due date/time will incur penalties. For every hour the submission is late, the assignment will be docked 2% (e.g., if it is late 5 hours, it will lose 10%; if it is 24 hours late, then it will lose 48%). Minutes will be rounded to the nearest hour.

Late discussion forum posts will not be accepted.

Professionalism

Time Commitment

- Online courses are typically just as time intensive as traditional courses. In fact, many students claim that online courses require more time and commitment. As you begin this course, you would be wise to schedule 8 or more hours per week for studying materials and completing assignments.
- Falling behind in this course is particularly problematic because the concepts we cover are cumulative. This means that not becoming proficient with information and objectives presented and assessed in a particular week can lead to low scores for that week as well as in subsequent weeks.

Active Participation

- Online courses require your active participation. Here are some tips for success:
 - In discussion forums, you learn from one another by posing questions, justifying your comments, and providing multiple perspectives. When you prepare for discussions through thoughtful reflection, you contribute to your own successful learning experience as well as to the experience of your peers.
 - Log in to the course frequently (at least several times per week for long semesters and daily for summer sessions) and check the announcements. This will keep you apprised of any course updates, progress in discussions, assignment information, and messages requiring immediate attention.
 - Be aware of and keep up with the Course Schedule in the Syllabus.

Academic Dishonesty

Students must demonstrate high standards of integrity. They should do their own work on all material submitted to meet course requirements. Since dishonesty harms the individual and his/her fellow students, as well as the integrity of the University, School, and profession, the School and University will strictly enforce policies on academic dishonesty. You must read and abide by the academic honesty policies as stated in the Western Michigan University Handbook. If you have any questions or reservations about this policy or your obligations under it, see your academic advisor immediately.

You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. [The policies can be found at <http://catalog.wmich.edu> under Academic Policies, Student Rights and Responsibilities.] If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with your instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

The instructor takes integrity seriously. Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty (for examples: cheating or plagiarism) should expect the fullest, swiftest, and most severe repercussions. If you feel you have not demonstrated academic honesty or you have been sloppy in proper citation for any piece of graded work *after* you have submitted it but *prior* to my assessment, email me *immediately*. We can arrange corrections to avoid the most severe aforementioned penalties.

Students With Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the Disabilities Services for Students center at the beginning of the semester; contact information is here:

<http://www.wmich.edu/disabilityservices/index.html>.

A disability determination must be made by this office before accommodations are provided by the instructor.

Religious Observances

The following constitutes university policy with respect to religious observances and course obligations.

The University is a diverse, multicultural enterprise and, as a community, we jointly embrace both individual responsibility and dignified respect for our differences. It is our general policy to permit students to fulfill obligations set aside by their faith.

It is our intent that students who must be absent from scheduled classes to fulfill religious obligations or observe practices associated with their faith not be disadvantaged. However, it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with his/her instructors in advance. It is in the student's best interests to approach each instructor expeditiously and with sufficient notice that the rights and responsibilities of the instructor are not disrupted. Instructors should make it known to classes early in the term what they consider reasonable notice for anticipated absences. Without specifying a fixed notification time, we acknowledge in this policy joint responsibility: instructors will inform students of their requirements and students will make every effort to cause no disruption in the instructors' plans and duties.

Instructors should assume that a claim of religious observance has veracity, especially when advance notice is provided by the student. Students likewise must recognize that it is their responsibility to meet all their course obligations. Instructors are not obligated to provide materials to students unless these materials would have normally been distributed to the entire class. For example, if an instructor does not normally post notes, a student cannot expect notes to be provided for lectures missed.