

PHIL 1101

Critical Thinking

Fall 2021

N3417

T/Th 12:30-14:20.

Matthew Rachar

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N3323, T/Th 3:30-4:30

According to Hare, the result of thinking critically about critical thinking is to conclude that most everyday thinking had best not be critical thinking

David Wiggins, *Ethics: Twelve Lectures*

DESCRIPTION

To reason is to make judgments on the basis of prior judgments. In this class, we're going to discuss what it is to reason well, how humans actually do reason, what mistakes we tend to make while reasoning, and what steps we can take to develop our reasoning abilities so that we can do it better.

We'll start with an introduction to some concepts and tools that philosophers use to distinguish good reasoning and bad reasoning by working through Tracy Powell, Robert Cowan, and Gary Kemp's *Critical Thinking: A Concise Guide*. Then we'll turn to recent research about human reasoning via Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. We'll supplement these two books with additional readings from philosophy, cognitive science, psychology, and economics. Along the way, we'll apply what we've learned to issues that arise when we reason in particular domains, such as risk assessment, statistical evidence, morality, public policy, and human behaviour.

REQUIREMENTS

Exams — 60% (Three exams each worth 20%)

Argument Analysis — 20%

In-class assignments — 20%

Exams

The exams will be made up of short answer and short essay questions. They are not cumulative. The first two exams will cover material from the Bowell, Cowan, and Kemp book. The final exam will cover material from the Kahneman book.

Argument Analysis

This is a brief written assignment (500-700 words), which consists of a description and a diagnosis of a real-world argument. The example is up to you to choose. It may come from, among other things, a newspaper, journal, magazine, or other course. You will have to tell me what example you have chosen a week before the assignment is due.

In-class assignments

The in-class assignments will be a mix of written and oral. They will all be graded pass/fail. Their purpose is to familiarize you with the other graded tasks (exams and argument analysis) in a low-stakes setting. So, for example, before the argument analysis due date we will have in-class assignments that build up the skills required for philosophical writing.

READINGS

The only required book, available in physical and digital form from the bookstore, is the following:

Tracy Bowell, Robert Cowan, and Gary Kemp. 2019. *Critical Thinking: A Concise Guide*. Fifth Edition. New York: Taylor and Francis. [referred to as “BCK” from now on]

The rest of the readings will be provided to you.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- identify an argument’s premises and conclusions (including hidden premises and conclusions)
- recognize an argument’s structure

- understand the difference between inductive and deductive arguments
- evaluate the support the premises of an argument provide for a conclusion
- explain common fallacies, and recognize them in a variety of settings
- critically engage with Kahneman’s dual process model of human thought, and his explanations of how humans reason and why we sometimes reason poorly

HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE

For most people, learning the concepts and ideas introduced in the course will require the following:

- Do all the readings before we discuss them in class, and usually again after.
- Regularly attend and participate in class.
- Ask questions, preferably in class, but alternatively by email or in office hours.
- Complete all the assignments.

SCHEDULE

Sept. 7:	Introduction
Sept. 9:	BCK, Ch. 1: “Introducing Arguments”
Sept. 14/16:	BCK, Ch. 2: “Language and Rhetoric”
Sept. 21/23:	BCK, Ch. 3: “Logic: Deductive Validity”
Sept. 28:	Exam 1
Sept. 30:	No Class
Oct. 5/7:	BCK, Ch. 4: “Logic: Probability and Inductive Reasoning”
Oct. 12/14:	BCK, Ch. 5: “The Practice of Argument Reconstruction”
Oct. 19/21:	BCK, Ch. 6: “Issues in Argument Assessment”
Oct. 26/28:	BCK, Ch. 7: “Pseudo-Reasoning”

- Nov. 2: **Exam 2**
 Nov. 4: Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Intro
- Nov. 9: Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Ch. 1.
 Nov. 11: No Class
- Nov. 16: Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Ch. 2 and 3.
 Nov. 18: Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Ch. 4
- Nov. 23: Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Ch. 5 and 6
 Nov. 25: Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Ch. 7
- Nov. 30: Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Ch. 8
 Dec. 2: Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Ch. 9
- Dec. 9: Review and **Argument Analysis Due**
- Final date: **Exam 3**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, COMMITMENTS, AND POLICIES

Indigenous Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that at Douglas College we live, learn, work and play on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples of the Qayqayt and Kwikwetlem First Nations.

Commitment to Inclusivity

Students are encouraged to discuss with me their own learning requirements and challenges, and any other difficulties they may have in this course, either during office hours or at other arranged times. Students who require the services of the Center for Students with Disabilities, or of Counselling Services, are entitled to them, and should avail themselves on either campus as early as possible.

Missed Exams

Normally, your grade on a missed exam would be zero. However, makeup exams or quizzes are available in cases of sickness and extreme circumstances. This includes

showing symptoms of Covid.

Late Assignments

There is a late assignment penalty of 5% a day (including weekend days), except in cases of sickness and other extreme circumstances.

Academic Integrity

This will be dealt with according to Douglas College policy. See the college website for details.