

Critical Thinking

(Proposed)

Logistics

Ideal Level: 100 or 200
Ideal Enrolment: 120-150
Max. Enrolment: 200

Delivery Format: Lecture + Seminars
Ideal Hours/Week: LEC: 2; SEM: 1.

Course Description

Everyone is trying to convince us of something: companies try to convince us to buy their products; politicians try to convince us to support them; or, our friends try to convince us to go out instead of studying. The primary means by which these attempts at persuasion are carried out is through arguments—a series of premises used to convince you to accept a conclusion. This course is designed to improve your ability to spot, assess, and respond to arguments, and to create strong arguments of your own. You will learn the difference between inductive and deductive reasoning, and the unique methods of dealing with them. You will learn how to recognize logical fallacies and will be able to avoid them in your own writing. Finally, you will learn about cognitive biases and how they are used to exploit our reasoning.

Course Texts

1. Hughes, William and Lavery, Jonathan. *Critical Thinking: An Introduction to the Basic Skills (Concise Edition)*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2016. (Required)
2. Readings to be made available through electronic reserve, as applicable. (Required)

Summary of Course Requirements

Requirement	Description	Weight	Date
Short Project	A short project designed to test your competency with the material from Unit One.	15%	Week 06
Midterm	One cumulative midterm to test your competency with the material from Units One and Two.	20%	Week 10
Long Project	A cumulative project designed to test your competency with the course material, especially Units Two and Three.	25%	Week 14
Seminar Participation	Assessed by your TA on the quality and quantity of participation.	10%	
Final Examination	One sit-down cumulative examination.	30%	See Registrar

Summary of Course Policies

1. All deadlines are hard deadlines. Be aware of when assignments are due.
2. Be respectful and courteous to your peers and the Instructor. Expect the same in return.
3. Refrain from all behaviour that may distract others. The Instructor will take steps to remedy any situations as they may arise.

Description of Course Requirements

1. Short Project (15%)

This project will test your competency with the material from Unit One. It may require you to identify the premises and conclusions of a given argument, to respond to several short answer questions, and similar questions. The deadline is **Week 06**.

2. Midterm (20%)

The midterm will be held in-class in **Week 10** and will be cumulative from the beginning of the course but with emphasis on the material covered in Unit Two. Question types may include multiple choice, short answer, and similar.

3. Long Project (25%)

This project will test your competency with the key themes of the course, with special emphasis on the material found in Units Two and Three. It will consist of several short- and long-answer questions, as well as a creative component. The deadline is **Week 14**.

4. Seminar Participation (10%)

Seminars are an integral part of this course. They will significantly aid you in your development as a critical thinker. This portion of your grade will be assigned by your Teaching Assistant on the basis of the quantity and the quality of your contributions.

5. Final Examination (30%)

The final examination will be held at a date and time specified by the Registrar. It will be cumulative from the beginning of the course. Expect multiple choice, short answer, and long answer questions.

Tentative Course Schedule

All topics and reading selections are subject to change with notice.

Week	Topic	Readings	
1	“The First Steps”	Mon	Syllabus.
		Weds	CT: 1.1 to 1.4, 1.6.
2	“Statements and Definitions”	Mon	CT: 2.3.
		Weds	CT: 2.6, 2.7, 2.9, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13.
3	“Clarifying Statements”	Mon	CT: 3.1, 3.2.
		Weds	CT: 3.4, 3.6, 3.7.
4	“Necessary and Sufficient Conditions”	Mon	CT: 3.8, 3.9.
		Weds	CT: 3.8, 3.9.
5	“Standard Form”	Mon	CT: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3.
		Weds	CT: 4.8.
6	Winter Break	Mon	
		Weds	
7	“Good Arguments: Acceptability”	Mon	CT: 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.6.
		Weds	CT: 6.7, 6.8.
8	“Good Arguments: Relevance”	Mon	CT: 7.1 to 7.3.
		Weds	CT: 7.4, 7.5.
9	“Good Arguments: Adequacy”	Mon	CT: 8.1 to 8.3
		Weds	CT: 8.4 to 8.6.

Tentative Course Schedule

All topics and reading selections are subject to change with notice.

Week	Topic	Readings	
10	“Deductive Reasoning”	Mon	Midterm; no readings.
		Weds	CT: 9.1, 9.2.
11	“Inductive Reasoning”	Mon	CT: 9.3 to 9.5
		Weds	CT: 10.1 to 10.4
12	“Rhetoric and Persuasion”	Mon	CT: 12.1 to 12.6.
		Weds	CT: 12.7 to 12.11.
13	“Cognitive Biases”	Mon	On electronic reserve.
		Weds	On electronic reserve.

Legend		
Unit One: Clarifying Ideas	Unit Two: Strengthening Arguments	Unit Three: Reason and Anti-Reason
CT: <i>Critical Thinking: An Introduction to the Basic Skills</i> .		
Italicized numbers indicate a recommended self-test.		