

Course Outline

PHIL 1104 Critical Thinking

Spring 2024

Course Format: Lecture 3.0 h + Seminar 1.0 h + Lab. 0.0 h

Credits: 3.0

Transfer Credit: For information, visit bctransferguide.ca

Course Description

This is a course on critical thinking, which might also be called *practical logic*, or logic applied to everyday life. Logic is the study of good thinking, which teaches us to form reliable (and hopefully true) beliefs.

We all need to think critically for two reasons. First, we need to defend our minds from attempts to deceive us. Sometimes we (all of us) are persuaded by faulty reasoning, to the detriment of those around us as well as ourselves. We may, as a result, buy a poor product, make an unwise investment, vote for the wrong candidate, fall for propaganda, and so on. Second, critical thinking helps us to construct good arguments that will properly persuade others. This is useful when writing argumentative essays, for example.

Since thoughts are expressed using language, an aim of the course is to develop a heightened awareness of how language works. Another focus will be on belief on the basis of authority. This is particularly important during the present age of the internet, which exposes us to an enormous variety of opinions. How can we tell if these sources are reliable?

Prerequisites and Corequisites: None

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify slippery language – such as vague, ambiguous or emotionally loaded terms
- Analyse arguments: identify premises and conclusions, and judge their soundness
- Recognise common errors in reasoning and describe what is wrong with them
- Identify qualitative mistakes in statistical reasoning and cost-benefit analysis
- Assess claims to authority and consensus for their trustworthiness

Instructor: Dr. Richard Johns

Office: A382d

(Zoom Office: <https://langara.zoom.us/j/3475366594>, by appointment)

Phone: (604) 323-5830 **Email:** rjohns@langara.ca

Web site: <http://iweb.langara.bc.ca/rjohns> , for lecture slides and practice quizzes. (Grades and any videos will be posted on Brightspace.)

Office Hours:

Tues 11:00 – 12:00
 3.30 – 4:00
Weds 3:00 – 3:30
Thurs 1:00 – 2:00
Fri 11.00 – 12:00

Classes:

Tues + Thurs, 8.30 – 10.20 am.
A347

Textbook and Course Materials:

The optional course textbook is Hughes and Lavery, *Critical Thinking*, Canadian (7th) edition, Broadview Press, ISBN 978-1-55481-199-1.

A few other readings will be posted to the Langara iweb for free download.

Assessments and Weighting:

5 quizzes, of which the best 4 count. (70%)

Final exam, during exam period. (30%)

Quizzes will be completed in class on the **Thursday** of each week indicated on the schedule. (**Q** = quiz). The quizzes are *open book*. You may use any books, notes, etc. The final is closed book.

Grading:

A+	90-100	B+	76-79	C+	64-67	D	50-54
A	85-89	B	72-75	C	60-63	F	0-49
A-	80-84	B-	68-71	C-	55-59		

Detailed Course Schedule:

January	4	Introduction. Basics of reasoning	Ch. 1
	9, 11	Inconsistency and anomaly. Slippery Language.	6.7.2 3.2, 15.1-15.5
	16, 18	Making and understanding definitions. Q 1	2.6 – 2.11
	23, 25	Arguments, disagreements.	Ch. 4
February	30, 1	Arguments from authority. Q 2	7.3, 8.2
	6, 8	Fallacies: authority, ad hominem, appeal to force, pity, straw person, etc.	6.7, 7.4, 8.3-8.6
	13, 15	More fallacies: generalisations, circularity, ignorance, ad populum, etc. Q 3	15.7-15.10
	19 – 23	*** Spring Break ***	
	27, 29	Formal reasoning: Argument, explanation, categorical logic.	
March	5, 7	Formal reasoning: Conditionals. Q 4	Ch. 9
	12, 14	Inductive logic: inferring causes, analogies.	11.1
	19, 21	Statistics	11.2, 10.5
	26, 28	cost-benefit analysis Q 5	
April	2, 4	Inference to the best explanation, exam prep.	11.4, 11.5

As a student at Langara, you are responsible for familiarizing yourself and complying with the following policies:

College Policies:

[E1003 - Student Code of Conduct](#)

[F1004 - Code of Academic Conduct](#)

[E2008 - Academic Standing - Academic Probation and Academic Suspension](#)

[E2006 - Appeal of Final Grade](#)

[F1002 - Concerns about Instruction](#)

[E2011 - Withdrawal from Courses](#)

Course Policies:

The course instructor will hold office hours at the times listed on the previous page. You are encouraged to drop in (without appointment) to these if you either have a difficulty related to the course, or are especially interested in some topic and want to know more. I have set aside this time, and am very happy to interact with students. Also, I can meet by appointment – send me an email to arrange this.

The instructor's email address is also listed. Students may use email to ask questions of the instructor, when this is more efficient than attending an office hour. In many cases, use of email is highly convenient to both the student and the instructor. Students should use only email the instructor when necessary, however. Always check the course outline to see if it has the information you need, and consider asking a classmate for help.