

**San José State University**  
**Department of Philosophy**  
**PHIL 57- 01/03 Critical Reasoning, Spring 2018**

**Course and Contact Information**

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<i>Office Hours:</i>	M/W 12:30-1:30, or by appointment
<i>Class Days/Time:</i>	M/W 9-10:15/1:30-2:45
<i>Classroom:</i>	Sweeney Hall 241/DMH 149B
<i>GE Category:</i>	A3, Basic Skills, Critical Thinking

**Course Catalog Description**

Basic concepts of logic; goals and standards of both deductive and inductive reasoning; techniques of argument analysis and assessment; evaluation of evidence; language and definition; fallacies.

**GE Learning Objectives**

- (1) Students should be able to locate and evaluate sources, through library research, and integrate research through appropriate citation and quotation.
- (2) Students should be able to present effective arguments that use a full range of legitimate rhetorical and logical strategies to articulate and explain their positions on complex issues in dialogue with other points of views.
- (3) Students should be able to effectively locate, interpret, evaluate, and synthesize evidence in a comprehensive way in support of one's ideas.
- (4) Students should be able to identify and critically evaluate the assumptions in and the context of an argument.
- (5) Students should be able to effectively distinguish and convey inductive and deductive patterns as appropriate, sequencing arguments and evidence logically to draw valid conclusions and articulate related outcomes (implications and consequence).

Assessment of each GE Learning Objective is based upon in class work, writing assignments, and exams.

**Course Learning Objectives**

There are no additional course learning objectives.

**Required Texts**

All course materials are available online at the course website: on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](http://sjsu.instructure.com) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>.

## Requirements and Assignments

### *Total Amount of Writing for Class*

PHIL 57 is a GE A3 course. A total of 6000 words, 4000 of which consist of final drafts, is a requirement for all A3 courses. In this course, the daily journal accounts for 2000 words and the four essay exams account for 4000 words (1000 each). The final project, which consists of revisions of each of the four essay exams, accounts for the 4000 final draft words.

### *Daily Class Cards (0 words, 10%)*

*Review:* We'll start every class (other than the first) with review. The **purpose** of review is to help you retain what we cover in class. Review will consist of 3-5 questions. Those questions and the answer to them will be distributed at the end of the previous class. I'll randomly draw from a deck of cards with your names to call on people. The person called will have 5 seconds to answer the question correctly. The cards of people who answer correctly will be set aside, and the cards of those who do not answer correctly will be shuffled back into the deck. After we go through the deck, I'll reshuffle all the cards. The expectation is that by the end of the semester, everyone will have correctly answered 2-3 review questions (depending on how many are asked).

*Daily Assessment:* At the end of every class, you will write your answer to two questions on a note card or piece of paper and turn it in before leaving. The first question will always be "what is one thing that you learned in class today?" The second will always be "what is one thing from class that you find confusing?" The **purpose** of daily assessment is to help us all be on the same page about what has been learned and what still needs to be learned. These will be scored based on completion.

### *Daily Journal (2000 words, 40%)*

*Written Journal:* For each class, there will be a small homework assignment and a journal prompt based upon that assignment. The homework assignment and prompt will be posted on Canvas. You will upload your journal prompt **before the next class**. The **purpose** of the written journal is to practice critical thinking and prepare for the next class. These will be scored based on completion.

*In class journal activity:* Each journal assignment is connected to an in-class activity. Therefore, in addition to completing the journal before class, you must also contribute to the activity by sharing what you journaled. The **purpose** of these activities is to help you hone your critical thinking skills. After all, critical thinking is an activity that we *do*, so actually critically thinking is the best way to learn how to do it. These activities will be scored based on participation. (*Note:* You must be in class to participate.)

### *Take-home Essay Exams (4000 words, 40%)*

There are four take-home essay exams, one for each unit. The **purpose** of these essays is to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of the critical thinking methods covered in each unit. Each exam will be posted on Canvas at the start of the class period on the exam day. You must upload your exam submission within 24 hours of receiving it. The exam is designed to be completed in one hour, so it is recommended that you use just the class time to complete it. Further instructions will be given before the first exam.

### *Final Project (4000 words, 10%)*

The final project is a revision of the four take-home essay exams. The **purpose** of this project is to demonstrate improvement in your critical thinking over the course of the semester. Further instructions will be given later in the semester.

**The final project is due during the final exam period, (T 5/22 7:15-9:30am)/(T 5/22 12:15-2:30).**

### *Thinking Points Challenge (0 words, 0%, maximal fun)*

A lot of our in class activities will involve games. The winner(s) of these games will receive points for their efforts. (Perhaps there will be opportunities to lose points as well.) I'll keep a running scoreboard over the course of the semester. At the end, the person with the most points wins a prize!

### *Note on in-class discussion:*

Discussion is a major part of this class. It has two important **purposes**: talking with each other about our ideas is how we learn to critically thinking, and critical thinking helps us unpack arguments we encounter in everyday life that matter to us. With these two purposes in mind, it's important to note that discussion is more than just speaking up; it requires carefully thinking through issues and engaging with peers, often by listening to, supporting, clarifying, or justifying their comments. Good discussion is not solely about contributing your own ideas, but cultivating the ideas of others. Our discussions should reflect both critical analysis and the creation and strengthening of ideas.

Lastly, discussion is a joint venture that works best when everyone contributes. Please always feel free to contribute! And if you notice that some people haven't contributed as much as others, invite the into the discussion! Everyone has something to contribute, and together, we can build each other up into extraordinary critical thinkers.

### **Final Evaluation**

The final evaluation is your final project, due during the final exam period, (T 5/22 7:15-9:30am)/(T 5/22 12:15-2:30).

### **Grading Information**

- Grades are based on the requirements and assignments above in accordance to the weights specified.
- Late work is accepted if you consult with me ahead of time, but may be penalized.
- The grading scale is as follows:  $100 \geq A+ \geq 97$ ,  $97 > A \geq 93$ ,  $93 > A- \geq 90$ ,  $90 > B+ \geq 87$ , etc.

### **Classroom Protocol**

Please arrive on time. Our class is primarily discussion and activity based, so please come prepared to participate.

### **Electronic Devices Policy**

Electronic devices are permitted as long as they do not distract people other than the user. Judgments about what counts as distracting will be made by me.

### **University Policies**

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

PHIL 57 / Critical Reasoning, Spring 2018, Course Schedule\*

\*Course schedule and readings are subject to change.

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	W 1/24	<p>Introductions, Syllabus</p> <p><b>Unit 1: The Basics, Part I</b></p> <p><i>What is critical reasoning? What are arguments?</i></p> <p><u>Key concepts</u>: critical reasoning, argument</p> <p><u>Assignment</u>: Read syllabus, find two arguments, journal</p>
2	M 1/29	<p><i>Diagramming Arguments</i></p> <p><u>Key concept</u>: the support relation</p> <p><u>Assignment</u>: Find two arguments for the same conclusion, journal</p>
2	W 1/31	<p><i>Evaluating Arguments</i></p> <p><u>Key concepts</u>: validity, soundness, cogency</p> <p><u>Assignment</u>: Find two arguments, one “good” and one “bad”, and explain why they are good or bad in terms of validity, soundness, and cogency; journal</p>
3	M 2/5	<p><i>Evaluating Arguments, cont’d.</i></p> <p><u>Assignment</u>: Journal</p>
3	W 2/7	<p><i>Definitions</i></p> <p>What is a definition?</p> <p><u>Key concepts</u>: definition, counterexamples</p> <p><u>Assignment</u>: Read excerpt from “Fantastic Beasts”, journal</p>
4	M 2/12	<p><i>Advanced Definitions</i></p> <p>Why do definitions matter?</p> <p><u>Key concepts</u>: semantic implicature, ambiguity, vagueness, equivocation</p> <p><u>Assignment</u>: Read “<a href="#">Why our children don’t think there are moral facts</a>”, journal</p>
4	W 2/14	<p><i>Truth and Sentences</i></p> <p>What is truth?</p> <p><u>Key concepts</u>: Sentences, truth, fact, opinion</p> <p><u>Assignment</u>: Read excerpt from “<a href="#">On Bullshit</a>”, journal</p>
5	M 2/19	<p><i>On Bullshit</i></p> <p>Why does the truth matter?</p> <p><u>Key concept</u>: Bullshit</p> <p><u>Assignment</u>: Find two news articles, one fake and one genuine, and explain the difference between them; journal</p>
5	W 2/21	<b>Take-home Essay Exam #1, No Class</b>
6	M 2/26	<p><b>Unit 2: The Basics, Part II</b></p> <p>Material Conditional</p>
6	W 2/28	Material Conditional, cont’d. and Bi-Conditional
7	M 3/5	Disjunction
7	W 3/7	Disjunction, cont’d. and Negation
8	M 3/12	And and Nand
8	W 3/14	Catch-up and Review Day
9	M 3/19	Game Day
9	W 3/21	<b>Take-home Essay Exam #2, Optional Game Day</b>
10	M 3/26	Spring Break, No class
10	W 3/28	Spring Break, No class

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</b>
11	M 4/2	<b>Unit 3: Non-deductive Reasoning</b> Abduction
11	W 4/4	Induction
12	M 4/9	Probabilistic Reasoning
12	W 4/11	Probabilistic Reasoning, cont'd.
13	M 4/16	Probabilistic Reasoning, cont'd.
13	W 4/18	<b>Take-home Essay Exam #3, Optional Day</b>
14	M 4/23	<b>Unit 4: Obstacles to Reasoning</b> Confirmation Bias
14	W 4/25	Propaganda
15	M 4/30	Disagreement
15	W 5/2	You Only Believe That Because...
16	M 5/7	Implicit Bias
16	W 5/9	<b>Take-home Essay Exam #4, Optional Day</b>
17	M 5/14	TBA
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>T 5/22</b> <b>7:15-9:30/</b> <b>12:15-2:30</b>	<b>Final Projects Due</b>