

Philosophy 57: Logic and Critical Reasoning Fall 2017

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| Instructor: | Nathan Osborne |
| Email: | nathan.osborne@sjsu.edu |
| Office and Office Hours: | FO 208, TBA |
| Class Days/Time: | Tuesday Thursday 3 - 4:15pm |
| Location: | Dudley Moorhead Hall 149B |
| GE/SJSU Studies Category: | GE: Area A3 |

Course Description:

This course is aimed at developing practical reasoning skills. Through the practice of argumentation in relation to current and classic controversies, this course is designed to improve your reasoning skills as well as your critical writing capabilities. Along the way, students will also explore informal fallacies, basic rules of deduction and induction, issues pertaining to the ethics of belief, and some general reflections on the political dimensions and promise of argumentation.

Course Goals:

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

1. Distinguish between reasoning (e.g., explanation, argument) and other types of discourse (e.g., description, assertion)
2. Identify, analyze, and evaluate different types of reasoning
3. Find and state crucial unstated assumptions in reasoning
4. Evaluate factual claims or statements used in reasoning, and evaluate the sources of evidence for such claims
5. Demonstrate an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism
6. Evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system
7. Locate, retrieve, organize, analyze, synthesize, and communicate information of relevance to the subject matter of the course in an effective and efficient manner
8. Reflect on and learn from past successes, failures, and come up with alternative strategies for problems that arise

GE/SJSU Studies Learning Outcomes:

Students will demonstrate, orally and in writing, proficiency in the Area A3 Learning Outcomes.

Students will be able to:

1. Locate and evaluate sources, through library research, and integrate research through appropriate citation and quotation.
2. 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 view.
3. Effectively locate, interpret, evaluate, and synthesize evidence in a comprehensive way in support of one's ideas.

4. Identify and critically evaluate the assumptions in and the context of an argument.
5. 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 consequences).

Assignments and Grading Policy:

The class is broken into Four units.

In **Unit I** we will learn about the foundation for critical thinking – the argument. In this section we will learn about the basis of a valid argument, what comprises an argument, how to successfully construct an argument, the basic rules of logic, and finally we will explore the common logical fallacies that can be committed (all too often in current debates). This section will include a test on the logical fallacies and deductive arguments.

After learning about what a strong argument is, we will begin to study the difference between authentic (critical) and inauthentic (uncritical) thought.

Thinkers from **Unit II** will focus on how this plays out on an objective /societal level.

We will explore various modern philosophers’ radically different takes on the nature of mankind and how he should be governed. This section will be concluded with an in class film in which you will compose an essay engaging with the thinkers and their relation to the film.

Thinkers from **Unit III** will tend to focus on the individual. We will concentrate on the Existentialist branch of Philosophy and they approach truth and critical theory from the subjective standpoint; seeking to find individual truth and cultivate the self. In their world “God is Dead¹,” and we will discover that such a statement is not as frightening or blasphemous as it seems and we will see why they believe it is in fact quite liberating. This section will also be concluded with an in class film in which you will compose an essay engaging with the thinkers and their relation to the film.

In **Unit IV** we will explore the dangers inherent in uncritical thought, especially in regards to the political realm. To help illustrate this we will explore one of the darkest hours in human history; and we will investigate the role uncritical thought played in it and how to potentially combat it.

Participation is a key component in your overall experience in the classroom, which is why it is being weighed so heavily. Participation is not merely showing up and sitting quietly (though a low attendance tends to correlate with a low participation grade); it is making your presence known by participating in class and small group discussions and in class writing assignments. The frequency of participation and quality of comments will be taken into consideration when assigning a grade (this does not mean you will be marked down for asking questions, on the contrary I encourage you to ask questions about

¹ Save for Kierkegaard, as we shall see he was a committed Christian.

anything you don't understand); what this deals with namely goes back to being respectful of others and staying on a *relevant* topic during class discussions.

With regards to Absences – they cannot be made up (though a family or medical emergency can potentially be excused. If something like this does come up please email me)

The ***Final Project*** will be centered on finding an example of philosophical critical theory today and analyzing it using at least one of the thinkers to back up your argument. In this way, you will demonstrate what you have learned throughout the course by relating it to the world in which you live.

→ **Late Assignment Policy:** Unless otherwise stated, late assignments will have a -1 point penalty for every day it is late and will NOT be accepted after a week past the original due date. You MUST provide a hardcopy; you can email your paper, but you MUST give me a hardcopy next time you come to class otherwise it will not be graded.

Classroom Protocol:

A good philosophy class is centered not on a dull lecture and student regurgitation of information, but rather on dialog and debate in conjunction with a guided discussion designed to break down the readings into something more manageable. With this in mind, the class will have a strong emphasis on in-class discussion, and therefore attendance, preparation (having actually read the assigned reading), and participation will all be essential to your experience in this course and will make up a considerable portion of your final grade. We will work frequently in small groups, and it will be imperative that we all work together to foster a trusting and comfortable environment for everyone.

With that in mind, respect for one another is absolutely *essential* for this class. Feel free to disagree and debate with each other, but do so in a respectful manner. For example, try to refrain from interrupting others while they are talking, and remember to critique the *idea*—and not the *person*—you are debating. Coming to class and maintaining an open mind is also vital for good dialog to flourish.

Any disrespectful conduct will not be tolerated. Please feel free to email or speak to me if at any time you feel uncomfortable with the classroom environment. Similarly, I will speak to you if I perceive any problematic assumptions, biases, or prejudices that are making others uncomfortable.

Required Texts/Readings:

- *A Rulebook for Arguments* (fourth edition) by Anthony Weston
 - Herbert Marcuse – “*An Essay on Liberation*” (*is also available free online*)
 - Phil 57 Course Pack
- Any additional readings or handouts I will provide them via email or in class*

Grading Criteria:

- A:** Superior achievement; far exceeds demands of assignment.
- B:** Goes beyond adequate achievement; exceeds demands of assignment.
- C:** Achieves assignment purpose adequately; fulfills assignment.

- D. Problems outweigh strengths, does not quite fulfill assignment.
- F: Problems overpower strengths, clearly does not fulfill assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Unit 1 Test: 10
 Unit 2 Paper: 20
 Unit 3 Paper: 20
 Unit 4 Assignment: 10
 Participation: 20
 Final: 20

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| Grading Scale: | |
| A (93-100) | A- (90-92) |
| B+ (87-89) | B (83-86) |
| B- (80-82) | C+ (77-79) |
| C (73-76) | C- (70-72) |
| D (64-69) | F (0-69) |

Total: 100 points

Philosophy 57: Logic and Critical Reasoning

The schedule is subject to change (with fair notice). If any changes are made I will notify you in class and/or via email.

Course Schedule

| Week | Date | Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines |
|------|------|---|
| 1 | 8/21 | Introduction and Syllabus |
| 1 | 8/23 | Critical Thinking with <i>Calvin and Hobbes</i> |
| 2 | 8/28 | Rulebook for Arguments (Ch 1,2,3, 4) |
| 2 | 8/30 | Rulebook for Arguments (Ch 5,7,8,) |
| 3 | 9/4 | Rulebook for Arguments (Ch6) |
| 3 | 9/6 | Rulebook for Arguments (Appendix I: common fallacies) |
| 4 | 9/11 | Rulebook for Arguments Test |
| 4 | 9/13 | Plato: "The <i>Apology</i> " |
| 5 | 9/18 | Kant: "What is Enlightenment" |
| 5 | 9/20 | Habermas: "Notes on a Post-secular Society" |
| 6 | 9/25 | Marcuse: <i>An Essay On Liberation</i> |
| 6 | 9/27 | Marcuse: <i>An Essay On Liberation</i> |
| 7 | 10/2 | <i>Unit 2 Movie – V for Vendetta</i> Unit II Essay Assigned |
| 7 | 10/4 | <i>Unit 2 Movie – V for Vendetta</i> |

| Week | Date | Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines |
|------|----------------|---|
| 8 | 10/9 | Kierkegaard: "Modes of Existence" Lecture |
| 8 | 10/11 | Kierkegaard: "Concluding Unscientific Postscript" (group work) Unit II Essay DUE |
| 9 | 10/16 | Nietzsche: "The Gay Science" |
| 9 | 10/18 | Existentialism Lecture (De Beauvoir) |
| 10 | 10/23 | De Beauvoir: "The Woman in Love" |
| 10 | 10/25 | De Beauvoir: "The Woman in Love" |
| 11 | 10/30 | <i>Unit 3 Movie - Fight Club</i> Unit III Essay Assigned |
| 11 | 11/1 | <i>Unit 3 Movie - Fight Club</i> |
| 12 | 11/6 | Arendt: "Eichmann in Jerusalem" Unit III Essay Due Unit IV Assignment Assigned |
| 12 | 11/8 | Arendt: "Eichmann in Jerusalem" |
| 13 | 11/13 | <i>Band of Brothers "Why We Fight"</i> & discussion Unit IV Assignment Due Final Paper assigned |
| 13 | 11/15 | Le Guin: "Staying Awake" Groupwork |
| 14 | 11/20 | <i>Research day</i> |
| 14 | 11/27 | <i>Thanksgiving Break - - - No Class !!!</i> |
| 15 | 12/4 | Freire: "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" Ch1 |
| 15 | 12/6 | Freire: "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" Ch2 |
| 16 | 12/17 @2:45 | Class Symposium Final Paper Due |