Phil 201: Critical Thinking
Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Audrey Yap (ayap@uvic.ca)
Office: CLE B307
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Office Hours: Thursdays 10:00-12:00, and by appointment
Class Information: TWF 10:30-11:20 in HSD A240
Course Website: Through CourseSpaces: http://coursespaces.uvic.ca
Recommended textbook: Lewis Vaughn and Chris MacDonald The Power of Critical
Thinking, Oxford University Press

Course Description:

Everywhere we look, we find arguments trying to persuade us of the truth of one claim or
another. We are told that a scientific study proves one thing, and then later that a different
scientific study proves the exact opposite. Conflicting claims are made on television, the
internet, in advertisements, in newspapers, and in everyday interaction with other people.
How do we evaluate them?

Informal logic is the study of everyday reasoning, and of what makes arguments good
or bad ones. If we tell ourselves we only want to be persuaded by good arguments, then
we ought to have some criteria and some tools for analysing what distinguishes a good
argument from a bad one. The goal of this course is to learn some of these skills, and how
to apply them to actual arguments.

Coursework:

There will be 11 homework assignments, roughly one per week. Homework must be turned
in by 5pm on the due date, unless otherwise specified, and will be done online through
CourseSpaces. The lowest assignment mark will be dropped, and all remaining assign-
ments will be weighted equally. Late assignments will not be accepted, since solutions will
be released immediately after the assignments are closed. Exceptions to these rules will
only be made in the case of documented illness or other extenuating circumstances which
interfere with the timely completion of the assigned work. However, in order to be con-
sidered, requests for exceptions must be received before the due date for the assignment.
Students may verbally discuss the homework assignments in small groups, but must answer
assignments independently. Plagiarised work will not be given credit. For more information
on plagiarism, see the University Calendar.

Homework will be worth 20% of the final grade. There will also be four non-cumulative
tests, held in class, each worth 15%, and a cumulative final to be written during the exam
period (20%). Exam rewrites will only be scheduled in cases of documented illness or other extenuating circumstances. Such documentation must be received within a week of the exam date. Numbers will be converted to a letter grade in accordance with the following scale:

90-100 = A+; 85-89 = A; 80-84 = A-; 77-79 = B+; 73-76 = B; 70-72 = B-; 65-69 = C+; 60-64 = C; 50-59 = D; 0-49 = F.

Schedule:

- **Week One:** Sept 3, 5  
  Topic: Introduction to Critical Thinking  
  Reading: Chap 1

- **Week Two:** Sept 9, 10, 12  
  Topic: Argument Basics, Missing Premises  
  Reading: Chap 3

- **Week Three:** Sept 16, 17, 19  
  Topic: Argument Patterns, Diagramming Arguments  
  Reading: Chap 3  
  HW 1 due Sept 19

- **Week Four:** Sept 23, 24, 26  
  Topic: Experts, Experience, and Advertising  
  Reading: Chap 4  
  HW 2 due Sept 24  
  Test One (Basics) Sept 26

- **Week Five:** Sept 30, Oct 1, 3  
  Topic: Fallacies  
  Reading: Chap 5  
  HW 3 due Oct 3

- **Week Six:** Oct 7, 8, 10  
  Topic: Fallacies  
  Reading: Chap 5  
  HW 4 due Oct 10

- **Week Seven:** Oct 14, 15, 17  
  Topic: Propositional Logic  
  Reading: Chap 6  
  HW 5 due Oct 15  
  Test Two (Fallacies) Oct 17
• Week Eight: Oct 21, 22, 24  
  Topic: Propositional and Categorical Logic  
  Reading: Chap 6, Chap 7  
  HW 6 due Oct 24

• Week Nine: Oct 28, 29, 31  
  Topic: Categorical Logic  
  Reading: Chap 7  
  HW 7 due Oct 31

• Week Ten: Nov 4, 5, 7  
  Topic: Inductive Arguments  
  Reading: Chap 8  
  HW 8 due Nov 5  
  Test Three (Propositional and Categorical Logic) Nov 7

• Week Eleven: Nov 14  
  Topic: Inductive Arguments  
  Reading: Chap 8  
  HW9 due Nov 14

• Week Twelve: Nov 18, 19, 21  
  Topic: Causal Arguments  
  Reading: Chap 8  
  HW 10 due Nov 21

• Week Thirteen: Nov 25, 26, 28  
  Topic: Evaluating Arguments  
  HW 11 due Nov 28

• Week Fourteen: Dec 2,3  
  Topic: Review  
  Test Four (Inductive and Causal Arguments) Dec 2

Note: This syllabus is tentative, and should only be used to give a rough guide to the course schedule. Additional readings may be assigned, and dates may be changed if necessary.