

# PHIL 201 A02 (12667) – Critical Thinking

Fall 2023, University of Victoria

Department of Philosophy

Course website: <https://bright.uvic.ca/d2l/home/291710>

## **Instructor & Contact Information**

Dr. Clifford Roberts ([cliffordroberts@uvic.ca](mailto:cliffordroberts@uvic.ca)) Meeting Times: Tue-Wed-Fri 11:30am-12:20pm  
Office hours: Tue-Wed 12:30-2pm (or by appt.) Meeting Place: DSB C103  
Office: CLE B318

## **Course Description**

Every day each of us is bombarded by attempts to persuade us of the truth of some claim, often with a view to influencing our actions and behavior. Regardless of whether it is politicians, scientists, lobbyists, advertisers, corporations, or even acquaintances or friends doing the persuading, we often wish to make up our own minds; we might even think that it's our duty as free thinking citizens to do so. But how do we adjudicate these myriad arguments? How do we figure out which are good arguments and which merely appear to be? This course attempts to provide you with some of the skills, methods and criteria for evaluating the arguments you may encounter in daily life. The goal of the course is to enable you not only to make up your own mind about whether an argument is good or bad, but to do so in a rationally defensible, systematic and rigorous way.

## **Course Texts**

Required: Vaughn, Lewis & MacDonald, Chris. *The Power of Critical Thinking: Canadian 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* (Oxford University Press)

## **Course Evaluation**

### **(1) Problem Sets**

10 problem sets will be assigned during the term. 2 of these ten (the two receiving the lowest grades) will be dropped and each of the remaining 8 will be worth 5% of your final grade. Since there are 8 problem sets worth 5%, the total value will be 40% of your final grade. Answers to the problem sets will be provided online on CourseSpaces after the due date.

### **(2) In-class Tests**

3 in-class tests will be held during the term, each worth  $\frac{40}{3}\%$ , for a total of 40% of your final grade. Answers to the in-class tests will be provided online on CourseSpaces after the due date.

### **(3) Final Exam**

A final exam worth 20% of your final grade will be held during the exam period.

## **Course Grading**

<b>Grade s</b>	<b>GP V</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Description</b>
A+	9	90-100	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
A	8	85-89	
A-	7	80-84	
B+	6	77-79	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material.
B	5	73-76	
B-	4	70-72	
C+	3	65-69	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
C	2	60-64	
D	1	50-59	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
F	0	0-49	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.

Interpretation of these grade definitions is up to the discretion of the instructor. If you receive a grade during the course that you believe is unfair, please begin by discussing the matter with the instructor in a respectful, open-minded manner. Rest assured that if you still believe the grade you received is unfair you can appeal the matter to the chair of the department. For additional information regarding grades, please see the September 2023 issue of the academic calendar (online here: [Grading](#)). All evaluations of tests and assignments will be calculated according to percentage scores. Letter grades and grade point scores are listed purely for reference.

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is intellectual honesty and responsibility for academic work that the student submits, whether individual or group work. It involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust, and responsibility. It is expected that students will respect these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research, and service. Therefore, plagiarism and other acts against academic integrity are serious academic offences.

#### *The responsibility of the institution*

Instructors and academic units have the responsibility to ensure that standards of academic honesty are met. By doing so, the institution recognizes students for their hard work and assures them that other students do not have an unfair advantage through cheating on essays, exams, and projects.

### *The responsibility of the student*

Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding regarding the rules of academic integrity, but it is the responsibility of the student to know them. If the student is unsure about the standards for citations or for referencing sources, the instructor should be consulted. Depending on the severity of the case, penalties include a warning, a failing grade, a record on the student's transcript, or a suspension.

It is the student's responsibility to read and understand the University's policy on academic integrity. For the policy, see the September 2023 edition of the academic calendar (online here: [University of Victoria Statement on Academic Integrity](#)).

### **Intellectual property of materials on the LMS website**

Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without the instructor's permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the Policy on Academic Integrity (link above). Any evidence that you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

### **Policy on Late or Missed Assignments**

Any assignment submitted after the specified due date will be assessed a penalty of **6%** per day, unless the student can provide a legitimate reason for the delay. For information about legitimate reasons for academic concession, please see [here](#). The previous policies do not apply to students with documented disabilities; all attempt will be made to accommodate such students including, but not restricted to, providing make-up assignments and tests.

### **Accessibility**

The University of Victoria is committed to creating a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you have a disability or chronic health condition, or think you may have a disability, you may also want to meet with an advisor at the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL). For more information about CAL, see:

<https://www.uvic.ca/accessible-learning/>

### **Counseling Services**

Many, if not most, students experience some difficulties with their mental health during their years as undergraduate students. Make sure you are familiar with the university's **Counseling Services** (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/counselling/>) which is an excellent resource you have at your disposal on campus. It is hard to shake the stigma associated with problems like depression and anxiety, but if at any point you can benefit from help with mental health issues, please contact Counseling Services. They genuinely want to help, and why not take advantage of this free resource?

### **Important Dates**

Please consult the university calendar's **Academic Year Important Dates** for information about last possible dates to withdraw from courses without penalty, examinations period start/end dates, and so on: <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/dates/>

### **Academic Advising**

For information about declaring a program, academic concessions or interpreting your CAPP report, please visit **Undergraduate Advising** (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/advising/>) or make an appointment with an adviser.

### **Territory Acknowledgment**

The University of Victoria is committed to acknowledging and respecting the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. For information about support for indigenous students and efforts to foster reconciliation, please visit the **Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement**: <https://www.uvic.ca/services/indigenous/>.

### **Course Schedule**

<b>Dates &amp; Topics</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
<u>Week 1:</u> <i>What is Critical Thinking?</i> Sep 6-8	Reading: Chapter 1 <b>Problem Set #1 due Sep 10</b>
<u>Week 2:</u> <i>The General Nature &amp; Kinds of Arguments</i> Sep 11-15	Reading: Chapter 3 <b>Problem Set #2 due Sep 17</b>
<u>Week 3:</u> <i>Patterns of Argument &amp; Diagramming</i> Sep 18-22	Reading: Chapter 3 <b>Problem Set #3 due Sep 24</b>
<u>Week 4:</u> <i>Conflicting Claims: Expertise, Experience &amp; Persuasion</i> Sep 25-29	Reading: Chapter 4 <b>Problem Set #4 due Oct 1</b>
<u>Week 5:</u> <i>Fallacious "Arguments"</i> Oct 2-6	Reading: Chapter 5 <b>**In-class test #1 on Oct 6**</b>
<u>Week 6:</u> <i>Fallacious "Arguments"</i> (cont'd) Oct 9-13	Reading: Chapter 5 <b>Problem Set #5 due Oct 15</b>

Dates & Topics	Assignments
<p><u>Week 7:</u> <i>Categorical Logic</i> Oct 16-20</p>	<p>Reading: Chapters 6 <b>Problem Set #6 due Oct 22</b></p>
<p><u>Week 8:</u> <i>Categorical Logic</i> (cont'd) Oct 23-27</p>	<p>Reading: Chapter 6 <b>Problem Set #7 due Oct 29</b></p>
<p><u>Week 9:</u> <i>Propositional Logic</i> Oct 30-Nov 3</p>	<p>Reading: Chapter 7 <b>**In-class test #2 Nov 3**</b></p>
<p><u>Week 10:</u> <i>Propositional Logic</i> (cont'd) Nov 6-10</p>	<p>Reading: Chapter 7 <b>Problem Set #8 due Nov 12</b></p>
<p><u>Week 11:</u> <i>Propositional Logic</i> (cont'd) Nov 16-17 <b>(Reading Break Nov 13-15)</b></p>	<p>Reading: Chapter 7 <b>Problem Set #9 due Nov 19</b></p>
<p><u>Week 12:</u> <i>Inductive Arguments: Enumerative &amp; Analogical</i> Nov 20-24</p>	<p>Reading: Chapter 8 <b>**In-class test #3 on Nov 24**</b></p>
<p><u>Week 13:</u> <i>Inductive Arguments: Causal</i> Nov 27-Dec 4</p>	<p>Reading: Chapter 8 <b>Problem Set #10 due Dec 4</b></p>