

PHIL 201 A02 – Spring 2018 Critical Thinking

Instructor: Eric Hochstein

Time: Tuesday/Wednesday/Friday 12:30 PM – 1:20 PM

Place: ECS 125

Office Hours (in Clearihue B330): Wednesday, 2:00-4:30 pm; and by appointment

Email: ehochstein@uvic.ca

Description: We are living in a time when terms like “alternative facts” and “fake news” are frequently thrown around; where climate change and the safety of vaccinations have been called into question despite overwhelming scientific evidence and agreement. We are constantly bombarded with information from different sources, some of it good, and a lot of it bad. Being able to tell what kind of information is worth taking seriously, and what kind is not, is more important than ever. The purpose of this class is to help provide a set of conceptual tools you can use to think clearly and critically in your daily lives.

Structure: The course comprises three lectures (50min) per week, the contents of which will be based on the course readings. The course will proceed primarily through lectures and discussions.

Textbook: Kenyon, T. (2008). *Clear Thinking in a Blurry World*.

Evaluation: The course will be graded as follows:

- 3 in-class mid-terms worth 20%, 25% and 25%
- A final examination worth 35%.

Important to Note: It is expected that students will prepare for and attend class regularly. Students are encouraged to consult the instructor with any problems or concerns about the course **early** in the semester.

Tentative Schedule of Readings:

Week 1 (Jan 3 & Jan 5): Introduction and Basics

Reading: pages xiii - xx

Week 2 (Jan 9, Jan 10 & Jan 12): Argument Structures and Deductive Reasoning

Reading: pages 1 - 34

Week 3 (Jan 16, Jan 17 & Jan 19): Argument Structures and Ampliative Reasoning

Readings: pages 35 - 60

Week 4 (Jan 23, Jan 24 & Jan 26): Fallacies of Reasoning

Readings: pages 92-123

January 23rd: Mid-term 1

Week 5 (Jan 30, Jan 31 & Feb 2): When, How, and Why our Brains Deceive Us (Part 1)
Readings: pages 184 - 216

Week 6 (Feb 6, Feb 7 & Feb 9): When, How, and Why our Brains Deceive Us (Part 2)
Readings: pages 184 - 216

Week 7 (Feb 13, Feb 14 & Feb 16): Reading Week
No Classes

Week 8 (Feb 20, Feb 21 & Feb 23): When Statistics and Numbers Lie
Readings: pages 124 - 150

February 23rd: Mid-term 2

Week 9 (Feb 27, Feb 28 & Mar 2): How Language Influences Reasoning
Readings: pages 61 - 90

Week 10 (Mar 6, Mar 7 & Mar 9): How Society Shapes the Way we Think
Readings: pages 219 - 249

Week 11 (Mar 13, Mar 14 & Mar 16): Thinking Critically about the Media
Readings: pages 290 – p. 316

Week 12 (Mar 20, Mar 21 & Mar 23): Good and Bad Reasoning in Science (Part 1)
Readings: pages 252 - 287

March 20th: Mid-term 3

Week 13 (Mar 27, Mar 28): Good and Bad Reasoning in Science (Part 2)
Readings: pages 252 - 287

Classes Cancelled on Friday, March 30th.

Week 14 (Apr 3, Apr 4 & Apr 6): Spill over and Review
No additional readings

Note on Avoidance of Academic Offenses:

All students registered in the course are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offense is established, it will be acknowledged by disciplinary penalties. If you need help in learning how to avoid academic offenses such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your course instructor for guidance. You can find the university's Policy on Academic Integrity here:

<http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2017-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html>

If you are seeking editing help, please note that the university has recently adopted a

strict view about seeking the help of others for editing. They say (this can be found in the link above):

An editor is an individual or service, other than the instructor or supervisory committee, who manipulates, revises, corrects or alters a student's written or non-written work.

The use of an editor, whether paid or unpaid, is prohibited unless the instructor grants explicit written authorization. The instructor should specify the extent of editing that is being authorized. Review by fellow students and tutoring that do not include editing are normally permitted.

Note for students with disabilities:

The Centre for Accessible Learning (<http://www.uvic.ca/services/rcsd/>) is a fantastic resource that collaborates with all academic departments to help arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with them at the beginning of each academic term.