

PHIL 201 A02 – Fall 2019 Critical Thinking

Instructor: Eric Hochstein

CRN: 12475

Time: Tuesday/Wednesday/Friday 1:30 PM – 2:20 PM

Place: Human and Social Development Building (HSD) A240

Office Hours (in Clearihue B330): Wednesday, 3:00-5:00 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 in support of them. 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 30%.

Policy on exams: Any exam missed without documentation/proof of illness or family emergency will receive a 0.

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.

Grading System:

Percentages	Letter Grade	Grade Point
90 – 100	A+	9
85 – 89	A	8
80 – 84	A-	7

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

77 – 79	B+	6
73 – 76	B	5
70 – 72	B-	4

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. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.

65 – 69	C+	3
60 – 64	C	2

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

50 – 59	D	1
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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.

0 – 49	F	0
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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 (or TA) 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 pp. 51-53 of the most recent (September 2018) edition of the Uvic Undergraduate Calendar.

All evaluations of tests and assignments will be calculated according to percentage scores. Letter grades and grade point scores are listed purely for reference.

Final examinations are the property of Uvic and are not returned. They are available for viewing at the Records Office according to Uvic procedures and regulations (pp. 49-51 of the calendar).

Uvic is committed to providing a safe, supportive learning environment for all members. Further information regarding Uvic policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are located in the Uvic calendar (p. 15), but if you have any particular concerns in our course please do not hesitate to contact me.

Tentative Schedule of Readings:

Week 1 (Sept 4 & Sept 5): Introduction and Basics

Reading: pages xiii - xx

Week 2 (Sept 10, Sept 11 & Sept 13): Argument Structures and Deductive Reasoning

Reading: pages 1 - 34

Week 3 (Sept 17, Sept 18 & Sept 20): Argument Structures and Ampliative Reasoning

Readings: pages 35 - 60

Week 4 (Sept 24, Sept 25 & Sept 27): Fallacies of Reasoning

Readings: pages 92-123

September 28th: Mid-term 1

Week 5 (Oct 1, Oct 2 & Oct 4): When, How, and Why our Brains Deceive Us (Part 1)

Readings: pages 184 - 216

Week 6 (Oct 8, Oct 9 & Oct 11): When, How, and Why our Brains Deceive Us (Part 2)

Readings: pages 184 - 216

Week 7 (Oct 15, Oct 16 & Oct 18): When Statistics and Numbers Lie

Readings: pages 124 - 150

Week 8 (Oct 22, Oct 23 & Oct 25): How Language Influences Reasoning

Readings: pages 61 – 90

October 26th: Mid-term 2

Week 9 (Oct 29, Oct 30 & Nov 1): How Society Shapes the Way we Think

Readings: pages 219 - 249

Week 10 (Nov 5, Nov 6 & Nov 8): Thinking Critically about the Media (Part 1)

Readings: pages 290 – p. 316

Week 11 (Nov 15): Thinking Critically about the Media (Part 2)

Readings: pages 290 – p. 316

READING WEEK: No class Tuesday, November 12

READING WEEK: No class Wednesday, November 13

Week 12 (Nov 19, Nov 20 & Nov 22): Good and Bad Reasoning in Science (Part 1)

Readings: pages 252 - 287

November 20th: Mid-term 3

Week 13 (Nov 26, Nov 27 & Nov 29): Good and Bad Reasoning in Science (Part 2)

Readings: pages 252 - 287

Week 14 (Dec 2 & Dec 3): Spill over and Review

No Additional Readings for This Week

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 (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal/>) 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.