

Phil 102: Critical Thinking and Reasoning

Spring 2014

University of Nevada Las Vegas

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Section	102-1029(26588)
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Website	Webcampus (https://wcpilot.unlv.edu/)
Text	<i>Good Reasoning Matters!</i> , Leo Groarke and Christopher Tindale, Fifth Edition, Oxford University Press, 2012 (Available at the campus bookstore)

Course Description. Introduction to the analysis and evaluation of actual arguments, to the practice of constructing logically sound arguments, and to logic as the theory of argument. Emphasizes arguments of current or general interest.

This course fulfills the Analytical Thinking Distribution Requirement for General Education. The reason that this course fulfills the Analytic Thinking Requirement is that it is aimed at covering the Inquiry and Critical Thinking University Undergraduate Learning Outcome. For more information, go here: <http://generaled.unlv.edu/uulo.html>.

Readings. Most of the readings will be from the text listed above, but there will be some other readings that I'll post on Webcampus within the appropriate module.

Rough Schedule/Learning Objectives. This course will be split into separate modules, each with its own learning objectives. I'll use Webcampus announcements/email, as well the calendar, to keep you abreast of day-to-day activities. After each of the first three modules, there will be an exam, and after the last module, there will be a project. Within each module, there are folders labeled with dates. You'll find all of the material for that day within the folder.

The following is the list of our modules, mastery of which is the learning objective of that module.

- Identify arguments and distinguish arguments from non-arguments in actual discourse.
- Identify components of arguments—conclusions and premises (both explicit and implicit).
- Identify assumptions used in actual arguments.
- Reconstruct arguments in order to make logical structure explicit.
- Evaluate Arguments: (a) strength of inference: validity vs. invalidity; strong vs. weak; (b) type of inference: deductive, inductive, causal, analogical, statistical; (c) truth/plausibility of premises: soundness or cogency.
- Identify, distinguish, and classify fallacious forms of reasoning.
- Distinguish types of definitions and their use in argumentation.
- Identify, distinguish, and classify typical argumentative forms, including: (a) standard deductive forms, (b) standard inductive forms, (c) statistical forms, (d) analogies, and (e) causal arguments.
- Construct and defend reasonable arguments of your own.

Assessment. Your grade will consist of three components.

Exams: 300 points total, 100 points each. There will be three exams, the lowest score of which will be dropped. For this component of your grade, I reward mastery of the material. Exams will be multiple choice/true false/short answer. They will be taken on Webcampus and will be timed.

Project: 100 points. There will be one project, due during finals week, in which you choose a controversial issues among a set of controversies that I have chosen. Your job will be to analyze and evaluate the controversy that you have chosen. The result will be a paper of roughly 1200 words (≈3-4 pages). We'll go over the details as the date approaches.

Participation: A total of 100 points. There will (usually) be three components to your discussion grade. If your posts/emails are appropriate, then your participation grade will just be the percentage of posts/emails completed. For this component, I reward effort.

- Post a response to a discussion question that I pose through (usually—check the schedule) **Tuesday** every week.
- Sometimes respond to another student's post through **Thursday**. I'll tell you when you need to complete a second post. If I don't say anything, that means you don't have to.
- **E-mail me by Friday afternoon every week** simply answering two questions:
 - Are you understanding the material?
 - Do you think you're going to make it through this class?

Your email can be as simple as "yes, yes," but this is your chance to voice any concerns or confusions that you have about the class. If you do voice questions/concerns, I'll email you back. This will be our way of conducting "office hours."

I will often assign ungraded homework that we'll go over in the lecture component. The grade scale is as follows:

- A: at least 90% of the possible points.
- B+: between 87% and 89.9% of the possible points.
- B: between 83% and 86.9% of the possible points.
- B-: between 80% and 82.9% of the possible points.
- C+: between 77% and 79.9% of the possible points.
- C: between 73% and 76.9% of the possible points.
- C-: between 70% and 72.9% of the possible points.
- D: between 60% and 69.9% of the possible points.
- F: below 60% of the possible points.

Schedule. The schedule is posted separately on Blackboard on the sidebar.

Lectures and Handouts. For each meeting, there will (usually) be a slide set as well as a handout. Slides and handouts can be found in the appropriate day's folder.

Slides. There will usually be two versions of each slide set. One version will be a PDF that you can flip through at your own speed. You'll need a PDF viewer (such as Adobe Acrobat). Make sure to download the slide set (i.e., don't try to view them on Webcampus), view them in full screen, and use your right arrow key to move through them. The same slide set will often be available with audio commentary—posted as an (unlisted) Youtube or as a Google Drive video.

Handouts. For each slide set except the first, there will usually be a corresponding handout. On the handout, there will be information to fill in. On the slides, the information that you need to fill in will be in red. These handouts will be your go-to for studying for the exam.

Office Hours/help. Take advantage of the weekly office hours email. We can also set up chat sessions through Skype by request.

Respect for other students. When using the forums, please respect your fellow students. Don't put down other students' suggestions. This doesn't mean that you can't disagree. Quite the contrary, disagreement is encouraged. However, we test, agree, and disagree with ideas—not each other. So disagree in a respectful way, and if you are disagreed with, don't take it personally.

University Policies.

Academic Misconduct. Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the Student Academic Misconduct Policy (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <http://studentconduct.unlv.edu/misconduct/policy.html>.

Copyright. The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. To familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, you are encouraged to visit the following website: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright/>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC). It is important to know that over two-thirds of the students in the DRC reported that this syllabus statement, often read aloud by the faculty during class, directed them to the DRC office. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) coordinates all academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. The DRC is the official office to review and house disability documentation for students, and to provide them with an official Academic Accommodation Plan to present to the faculty if an accommodation is warranted. Faculty should not provide students accommodations without being in receipt of this plan. UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, offering reasonable accommodations to qualified students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137, and the contact numbers are: Voice (702) 895-0866, TDD (702) 895-0652, fax (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: <http://drc.unlv.edu/>.

Religious Holidays Policy. Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor no later than the last day at late registration of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. This policy shall not apply in the event that administering the test or examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the university which could not be avoided. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=164>.

Tutoring. The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex, #22 on the current UNLV map. Students may learn more about tutoring services by calling (702) 895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at: <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>.

UNLV Writing Center. The following statement is recommended for inclusion in course syllabi. One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students

with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.

Rebelmail. By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's Official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. We will use WebCampus Mail as our primary means of out of class communication. However, if you don't use your Rebelmail account, you should set it up to forward all its messages to your primary account. It is very easy to do this; and in this way you won't miss any important University messages.

Disclaimer: I reserve the sole right to alter this syllabus. If it is altered, the alterations will be posted on WebCampus.