

Phil 102: Critical Thinking and Reasoning

University of Nevada Las Vegas

Professor	Dr. Jesse Fitts
Time & Place	
Contact	jesse.fitts@unlv.edu (702) 895-4333 CDC rm. #404
Website	Canvas
Office hours	

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. There is no textbook for this course. Handouts and your own notes will be your main reading.

Rough Schedule/Learning Objectives. This course will be split into separate modules. After each of the first four modules, there will be an exam, and after the last module, there will be a project. The following are the learning outcomes for this course:

- Identify arguments and distinguish arguments from non-arguments in actual discourse.
- Identify components of arguments—conclusions and premises (both explicit and implicit).
- Understand bias.
- 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.
- Combine course skills to construct a written argument evaluation.

Assessment. Your grade will consist of three components. **There will be no extra credit.**

Exams, worth 20% of your grade each: There will be four exams. I drop the lowest score. For this component of your grade, I reward mastery of the material. Exams will be mostly multiple choice/true false.

Participation, worth 20% of your grade: We'll use class time to complete various kinds of exercises, which will include both group and individual work. I will collect this work and grade it on whether you gave an honest effort. I'll update the schedule regularly to let you know if we'll be doing some participation work. You have to be in class to get points for these, and you can't make them up, but I'll drop a few of them.

Project, worth 20% of your grade: For the project, you'll analyze and evaluate an argument contained in a passage. There will be a few passages to choose from. The result will be a paper roughly 3–4 pages long. We'll go over the details as the date approaches.

Attendance: I will regularly (though not always) take attendance. If you miss three classes or fewer, your grade will be unaffected. After three unexcused absences, your grade will suffer.

I'll calculate your final grade as follows:

$$20 * \left(\frac{\text{exam grade}}{100} + \frac{\text{exam grade}}{100} + \frac{\text{exam grade}}{100} + \frac{\text{project grade}}{100} + \frac{\# \text{ of completed participation}}{\text{total \# of participation}} \right)$$

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. A detailed schedule will be on Webcampus.

Lectures and Handouts. For each meeting, there will (usually) be a slide set that I talk through as well as a handout. I will bring the handouts to class. 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. I'll post these handouts on Blackboard. **You don't turn the handouts in—they are for you.**

Office Hours/help. I'm good with email, but for substantive help, take advantage of office hours.

Respect for other students. 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 Student 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: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

Copyright. The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with 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. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC). The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

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 within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

Library Resources. Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the subject librarian is https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject. UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students' access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information

are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu/>.

Tutoring and Coaching. The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

UNLV Writing Center. 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 702-895-3908. 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. Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.

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