

**Phil 102, 3 Credit, Fall 2015, Somewhere.**

# Critical Thinking

**Dr. Scott O'Connor**

<http://scoconno.github.io/Teaching/CT/>

09/02/2015–12/18/2015

## Copyright

The materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lectures, exams, quizzes, and homework assignments are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized copying of the class materials or recording of lectures is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary actions being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of class materials without the specific, express approval of the instructor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of sharing those materials with other current or future students.

## Course Description

In this course, we will be learning how how to identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments. We will begin by discussing what critical thinking is and why we should improve our ability to do it. Since critical thinking concerns arguments, the bulk of the course will focus on reconstructing arguments and learning how to diagnose them. Topics to be covered include argument patterns, argument types, fallacies, introductory formal logic, probabilistic reasoning, and inference to the best explanation.

## Learning Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to (i) identify the difference between deductive and inductive arguments, (ii) assess the former for validity and soundness, the latter for strength, (iii) identify argument patterns, (iv) diagnose their own thoughts, (v) reason better, (vi) manage their studies in a responsible and timely manner.

## Required Textbook

From 09/08/2015, students must bring to lecture the following textbook:

- 'The Power of Critical Thinking: Effective Reasoning about Ordinary and Extraordinary Claims', 4th edition, by Lewis Vaughn (Available from the campus book store as well as online retailers)
- (Note also the useful companion website for the book:  
<http://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780199856671/student/>)

## Requirements

- *Workload*: Successfully completing this course requires a minimum commitment of 6 hours per week.
- *6 Problem Sets* administered through Blackboard. First problem set due in Week 3. Begin problem sets once they are available and modify/complete over the availability period.
- *2 Exams*: There is an open-book in-class mid-term and cumulative take-home final.
- *Attendance*: Roll call will be taken from Week 1. 0.5 point per class up to a maximum of 10 points. Excludes Week 1 & 2 and mid-term exam
- *Grade Distribution*: 6 Problem sets—10 points each (60 total); Mid-term—20; Final—25; Attendance—0.5 point per class (10 total).
- *Grade Breakdown*:

96–115	A		77–79	C+
90–95	A-		73–76	C
87–89	B+		70–72	C-
83–86	B		60–69	D
80–82	B -		0–59	F

## Policies

- *Student Responsibility:* This syllabus outlines the required text, assignments, requirements, and policies for this course. By taking this course, you agree to read this syllabus and be bound by those requirements and policies.
- *Late work & Make-up Policy:*
  - All assignments must be submitted through Blackboard by 1:00 pm on the due date (see assignment schedule below).
  - No make-ups or late work accepted under any circumstances. No exceptions. But note that there are 115 points available with 96+ being required for an A.
  - Blackboard difficulties are rare and automatically reported to instructors. Under no circumstance will a student's report of a Blackboard difficulty be reason for an extension. It is your responsibility to contact blackboard support for help: [dlsupport@njcu.edu](mailto:dlsupport@njcu.edu).
- *Attendance:* You are considered absent if you are (i) not present during roll call, or (ii) leave early, or (iii) leave without permission, (iv) leave for an extended period of time, or (v) fail to bring your textbook to class.
- *Electronic devices:* Use of electronic device, including, but not limited, to smart-phones, dictaphones, tablets, laptops, is prohibited. Recording a lecture is in violation of Copyright. Penalties include, but are not limited to, a lost of attendance grade for the day of violation. Repeat offenders will be reported to the Dean of Students.
- *Conduct:* Distracting and disrespectful behavior, including but not limited to eating, leaving your seat, talking out of turn, aggression is prohibited. Penalties include, but are not limited to, a lost of attendance grade for the day of violation. Repeat offenders will be reported to the Dean of Students.
- *Communication:* To comply with Federal Privacy Laws (FERPA) and NJCU policies, all communication will be through Blackboard and/or official NJCU email, e.g., I will not respond to email from gmail, yahoo, hotmail, etc. Check both your NJCU email and Blackboard daily. Messages will be responded to within two days of receiving them.
- *Grading Schedule:* Grades will be available within 1 week of an assignment being submitted.

- *Statement for students with disabilities:* If you are a student with a disability and wish to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, please register with the Office of Specialized Services and Supplemental Instruction (OSS/SI). To begin this process, complete the registration form available on the OSS/SI website at [www.njcu.edu/Specialized\\_Services.aspx](http://www.njcu.edu/Specialized_Services.aspx) (listed under Student Resources-Forms). Contact OSS/SI at 201-200-2091 or visit the office in Karnoutsos Hall, Room 102 for additional information.

## Plagiarism

- You are bound by [NJCU's Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- Penalty for plagiarism:
  - 1st infraction: 0 for the assignment.
  - 2nd infraction: 0 for the entire course & application for permanent record on student's transcript. (Repeated violations can lead to expulsion from NJCU).

## Weekly Course Schedule

Dates refer to the first day of the week:

1. 08/31 Introduction, no class on Mon.
2. 09/07 The Basics, ch.1., no class on Mon.
3. 09/14 Continued, ch.1
4. 09/21 Arguments Introduced, ch.3, (especially pp.62–78)
5. 09/28 Judging Arguments, ch.3, (especially pp.78–91)
6. 10/05 Deduction: Translations, ch.6, (especially pp.209–223)
7. 10/12 Deduction: Validity ch.6, (especially pp.223–242)
8. 10/19 Review
9. 10/26 Mid-term (Mon), Induction (wed) ch.8
10. 11/02 Enumerative Induction, ch.8
11. 11/09 Analogical and Causal Arguments, ch.8

12. 11/16 Fallacies and Persuaders, ch.5
13. 11/23 Continued, ch.5
14. 11/30 Inference to the Best Explanation. ch.9
15. 12/07 Continued, ch.9
16. 12/14 Exam Review, Final exam (take-home) distributed, (class on Mon., no class Wed)

## Assignment & Exam Schedule

Dates refer to the due date. All assignments must be submitted through Blackboard by 1:00pm. No late work accepted. No make-ups. No exceptions.

1. 09/18/2015, Problem Set 1 (covers ch.1)
2. 10/02/2015, Problem Set 2 (covers ch.3)
3. 10/16/2015, Problem Set 3 (covers ch.6)
4. 10/26/2015, Mid-term
5. 11/13/2015, Problem Set 4 (covers ch.8)
6. 11/25/2015, Problem Set 5 (covers ch.5)
7. 12/11/2015, Problem Set 6 (covers ch.9)
8. 12/18/2015. Final exam due, submit hard copy between 11:00–13:00 in our regular class room.