

I do not feel obligated to believe that the same God who endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect had intended for us to forgo their use...

- Galileo Galilee (1564 – 1642)

Philosophy 004 – Critical Thinking

Section 10

Spring 2014

M/W 1:30 PM – 2:45 PM

Room: Mendocino Hall 4008

Satisfies General Education Area A3 (see course objectives/requirements below)

Instructor: J. P. Carboni

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 11:00 AM –
12:00 PM, Mendocino Hall 3032

Course Description

Course Catalogue: “Study of the basic skills of good reasoning needed for the intelligent and responsible conduct of life. Topics include: argument structure and identification, validity and strength of arguments, common fallacies of reasoning, use and abuse of language in reasoning, principles of fair play in argumentation.”

When questioned about the beliefs that one holds, many individuals will claim that their beliefs are strong, secure and qualify as knowledge. This makes sense. After all, the beliefs that we hold (which number far more than we may initially think) form the basis of our understanding of the world around us. In essence, our beliefs determine how we interact with that world and how we interact with others whom we live with. However, there is a problem. Many of these beliefs that are determined to be true are either outright false or based on faulty reasoning. The question is how do we know this? How *can* we know this? How *can* we evaluate beliefs that are so vital to our daily lives? How can we evaluate the beliefs of others? To state that it is often confusing and, more than not, difficult is certainly an understatement. It is important to understand, however, that difficulty does not necessitate ignoring the problem.

This class is designed to help us understand the proper forms of reasoning and the methods we can use to determine the strength of our beliefs and the beliefs of others through an understanding of proper and improper argument forms. We will discuss what good reasoning is, different argument forms, effective methods of communication (both verbal and written) how to evaluate information and we will review various logical fallacies that we often encounter but fail to recognize.

Required Textbook

The textbook for this class can be found at the following link:

<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/d/dowdenb/#logicalreasoning>

It may also be linked through Prof. Dowden’s personal webpage at

<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/d/dowdenb/index.htm>)

Learning Objectives

- Students will study about and consciously develop skills in critical thinking
- Students will learn how to identify proper methods of reasoning and argumentation
- Students will learn to identify proper relationships between argument premises and argument conclusions
- Students will learn to identify the basic (and often encountered) formal and informal fallacies
- Students will learn and develop proper forms of rational/logical communication and will be required to express proper methods of argumentation in written and verbal form
- Develops basic skills, applicable to a variety of academic subjects and to the fulfillment of such roles as citizen, consumer, leader and moral agent by demonstrating the following:
 - o Skill in evaluating the validity, strength and relevance of arguments
 - o A sense of logical structure of both inductive and deductive forms
 - o Awareness of uses and abuses of argument language, including connotation, ambiguity and definition
 - o Skill in handling a variety of arguments in variety of contexts
 - o Ability to argue fairly and to handle bias, emotion, and propaganda
- Student Learning Objectives for Area A3 courses can be viewed at:
<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/Portfolios/GE/geareaA3.stm>

These learning objectives will be met through a variety of practical assessments including quizzes, group work, essay writing and verbal communication (class/group participation).

Student Standards of Conduct

Plagiarism and/or cheating will not be tolerated in this class. All those who engage in these activities will receive a zero on the associated assignment. In addition, all incidents of cheating and/or plagiarism will be reported to the department chair and to the Judicial Officer in the Office of Student Affairs. It is your responsibility to both know and adhere to Sac State's Academic Honesty Policy. This policy can be found at the following address:
<http://www.csus.edu/umannual/student/UMAO0150.htm>

In-Class Participation: Purposely “obstructing” the viewpoint of another student in the classroom during classroom discussions is prohibited. This class will involve many discussions concerning the material assigned for homework and the material presented during the classroom lectures. This being a philosophy course, many of these discussions *may* challenge certain beliefs that you hold. Open dialog and proper methods of argumentation are not only expected but required for this class.

Attendance/Participation: Students are expected to attend each class session. This class will involve many in-class discussions and in-class group work. Students are expected to have completed the readings and participate in all in-class discussions. Role will be taken at the beginning of every class session. Attendance and participation will factor into the final participation grade at the conclusion of the term (see “Total Point Breakdown” below).

Cell Phones and Computers: Please set your phone to vibrate before class! Cell phones are not to be used in class – for any reason. If you must take a call (which I discourage unless an emergency) please step outside before you answer. No texting or Internet use will be allowed in class (unless directed by me).

Disability Accommodations

If you have a disability and require accommodations, you will need to provide disability documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008, (916) 278-6955. Please discuss your accommodation needs with me after class or during my office hours early in the semester.

Evaluation/Homework Assignments

Quizzes: Every Wednesday there will be a *group* quiz where students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the material discussed that week. The first quiz will be held on Wednesday, February 5th (please see the reading and assignment schedule at the conclusion of this syllabus for a complete quiz schedule). You will be evaluated as a group, and each quiz will be worth a total of 15 points. The lowest score on one quiz will be dropped at the conclusion of the semester. Students will be assigned by random selection to a group on Wednesday, January 29th (the second day of class) and will remain with that same group throughout the semester. There will be a total of 185 possible quiz points at the conclusion of the term. There will also be a number of in-class group exercises throughout the semester that will be worth a total of 40 possible points. Before the final lecture on May 14th, students will be required to evaluate each of their group members. These evaluations will factor into the participation grade (see “Total Point Breakdown” below). There will be no make-up quizzes if you miss a quiz.

Essays: There will be two essays in this class. For each assignment, you will be provided with a short argument in essay form, which you will then be required to evaluate using the methods of evaluation that we discuss in class. You will be provided with complete assignment details and a grading rubric two weeks prior to the due date for each essay. Essays must be handed in at the beginning of class on the day that they are due. Late essays will be docked 5 points for every day that they are late (not every class session). If your essay is late, you must arrange a method to hand in the essay with me after the class that the essays are due.

Essay #1 Due: Wednesday, March 12th

Essay #2 Due: Wednesday, May 7th

Students are expected to adhere to the guidelines posted in “How to Analyze a Philosophical Essay” that is located on the Sacramento State Department of Philosophy webpage. Below is the link to this page: <http://www.csus.edu/phil/Guidance/How%20to%20Write%20an%20Analysis.htm>

Examinations: There will be two in-class examinations in this class (a midterm and a final exam). There will be a comprehensive review held on the Wednesday before each exam. There will be no make-ups on exams - except with “extraordinary” circumstances - so schedule outside activities accordingly. Note: Extraordinary circumstances do not include athletic activities, vacations, car not starting, not feeling like it, etc. A doctor’s note (or something similar) will be required to schedule a make-up exam.

Midterm Exam: Monday, March 17th (Week 8)

Final Exam: TBA (Held during finals week May 19th – May 23rd)

Grading Scale

All exams/essays will be graded based upon a 100 pt scale where 1pt = 1% of the total.

A Outstanding (96 – 100 pts)
B+ Above Satisfactory (86 – 89 pts)
B- Below Satisfactory (80 – 82 pts)
C Average (73 – 75 pts)
D Poor (60 – 69 pts)

A- Very Good (90 – 95 pts)
B Satisfactory (83 - 86 pts)
C+ Above Average (76-79 pts)
C- Below Average (70 – 72 pts)
F Unacceptable (59 and lower pts)

Total Point Breakdown

Quizzes: 185 possible pts

Essay #1: 100 possible pts

Essay #2: 100 possible pts

Examinations: 200 possible pts

In Class Group Work: 40 possible points

Participation (determined through class participation, group participation and group evaluations) 35 possible points

Total Points Possible 660

Final Grade Breakdown: A 660 – 631 pts; A- 630 – 591 pts; B+ 590 – 565 pts; B 564 – 545 pts; B- 543 - 525 pts; C+ 523 – 499 pts; C 498 - 479 pts; C- 478 – 459 pts; D 458 – 393 pts; F 392 or lower points

Reading/Assignment Schedule

- Week 1: Class Introduction – What Is Philosophy, What Is Critical Thinking and Why We Are Not Entitled to Our Opinions?
Reading: For Mon: Class Overview
For Wed: Chapter 1 – “How to Reason Logically”
- Week 2: How To Reason Logically
Reading: For Mon/Wed: Chapter 1 Cont. – “How to Reason Logically”
For Wed: Group Quiz, In-Class Group Work & Discussion
- Week 3: Effective Communication
Readings: For Mon: Chapter 5 – “Obstacles to Better Communication”
For Wed: Group Quiz, In-Class Group Work & Discussion
- Week 4: Evaluating Information
Reading: For Mon/Wed: Chapter 4 – “How to Evaluate Information and Judge Credibility”
For Wed: Group Quiz and Review For Essay #1
- Week 5: Claims, Issues and Arguments: what is an argument?
Reading: For Mon/Wed: Chapter 2 – “Claims, Issues and Arguments”
For Wed: Group Quiz and Chap 2 Cont.
- Week 6: Writing Logically
Readings: For Mon: Chapter 3
For Wed: Chapter 6
For Wed: Group Quiz
Essay #1 Due: Wednesday, March 12th

- Week 7: Understanding That Bad Information Is All Around Us
*Reading: For Mon/Wed: Chapter 7 – “Defending Against Deception”
 For Wed: Group Quiz and Review for Midterm Examination*
- Week 8: *For Monday: Midterm Exam
 For Wed: Group Exercises (How Consistent Are Our Beliefs)*
- Week 9: Spring Break March 24th – 30th
- Week 10: Fallacies and Being Consistent
*Readings: For Wed: Group Quiz on Chapter 8 – “Detecting Fallacies”
 Please also read Chapter 9 – “Consistency and Inconsistency”
 Monday March 31st – Holiday (no class held)*
- Week 11: Deductive Reasoning
*Reading: For Mon/Wed: Chapter 10 – “Deductive Reasoning”
 For Wed: Group Quiz, Deductive Reasoning Cont. and Group Practice*
- Week 12: Logical Forms and Evaluations
*Readings: For Mon: Chapter 11 – “Logical Form and Sentential Logic” Pgs 330 – 351
 For Wed: Chapter 11 – “Logical Form and Sentential Logic” Pgs 351 – 363
 For Wed: Group Quiz and Truth Table Group Exercise*
- Week 13: The Birth of Logic in Aristotle and How to Evaluate Using Venn Diagrams
*Readings: For Mon: Chapter 12 – “Aristotelian Logic and Venn-Euler Diagrams” Pgs. 374 – 380
 For Wed: Chapter 12 – “Aristotelian Logic and Venn-Euler Diagrams” Continued Pgs 380 – 393
 For Wed: Group Quiz and Review of Essay #2*
- Week 14: Venn/Euler Diagrams Continued – Learning to Diagram Arguments
*Assignments:
 For Mon/Wed: In-Class/Group Work on Categorical Arguments and Venn Diagrams
 For Wed: Group Quiz*
- Week 15: Inductive Reasoning
*Reading: For Mon: Chapter 13 – “Inductive Reasoning” Pgs. 404 - 422
 For Wed: Chapter 13 – “Inductive Reasoning” Pgs. 422- 441
 For Wed: Group Quiz and Review for Final Examination
Essay #2 Due: Wednesday, May 7th*
- Week 16: Every Effect Must Have a Cause
*Reading: For Mon: Chapter 14 – “Reasoning about Causes and Their Effects”
 For Wed: Final Examination Review and Practice Exercises*

Week 17: *Final Examination - Date TBA*

Welcome to Philosophy 004!