# **PHIL 1533 Critical Thinking and Reasoning**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to critical thinking, the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information in order to think through a problem clearly and communicate a solution effectively. Although students will learn to recognize, analyze, evaluate, and compose arguments—the primary instrument of critical thinking and reasoning—and will investigate the various forms arguments take, addressing both formal and informal methods of argumentation and distinguishing between good arguments and bad arguments, the principal focus of the course is not on learning and applying critical thinking methodologies *as such*. Rather, foremost emphasis is placed on exploring the role that critical thinking plays in the development, articulation, and analysis of ideas, values, and beliefs in various cultural contexts as well as the creative products through which these ideas, values, and beliefs are expressed.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students in PHIL 1533 will develop the following skills at the culmination of this course:

* The ability to understand the role of critical thinking in the development, articulation, and analysis of ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture that express and affect human experience.
* The ability to understand and implement the rudiments of critical thinking and reasoning in both formal and informal contexts.
* The ability to identify arguments and understand the basic rules of argumentation.
* The ability to evaluate arguments by analyzing reasoning and evidence, particularly as they feature in the articulation and defense of ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture that express and affect human experience.
* The ability to construct sound arguments in support of their points of view.
* The ability to communicate their points of view, as well as the arguments in support of their points of view, clearly and effectively.
* The ability to appreciate the relevance of critical thinking and reasoning in ethical and political decision-making at both individual and social levels.

## Assessment of THECB core objectives for LANGUAGE, PHILOSOPHY, & CULTURE

* **Critical Thinking**
	+ To assess a student’s critical thinking, the Phil 1533 Writing rubric will be applied to the Final Paper.
* **Communication**
	+ To assess a student’s critical thinking, the Phil 1533 Writing rubric will be applied to the Final Paper.
* **Personal Responsibility**
	+ To assess a student’s critical thinking, the Phil 1533 Writing rubric will be applied to the Final Paper.
* **Social Responsibility**
	+ To assess a student’s critical thinking, the Phil 1533 Writing rubric will be applied to the Final Paper.

## COURSE EXPECTATIONS

All students enrolled in this course are expected to:

* Maintain regular attendance;
* Come to class on time;
* Complete all assignments, including course readings, on time;
* Participate regularly and productively in class discussions;
* Refrain from engaging in rude, inconsiderate, or disruptive behavior (e.g., sleeping, whispering, using cell phones or laptops, etc.);
* Treat the instructor and fellow students with respect and courtesy;
* Observe proper etiquette when communicating with the instructor, especially by email;
* Notify the instructor in the event of absences, whether planned or unplanned;
* Ask questions about course policies, course assignments, and course material, including readings;
* Seek the instructor’s help when needed;
* Communicate concerns to the instructor in an open, honest, and constructive way;  Take themselves seriously not just as students but also as *scholars* and *philosophers*.

## ASSIGNMENTS

Final grades for this course will be based on the following:

* Weekly quizzes: 20%
* Attendance and class participation: 15%
* 2 in-class examinations: 20%
* Final paper (approximately 6-7 pp.): 45%

## ATTENDANCE

* Regular attendance is mandatory. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor in a timely fashion regarding any planned or unplanned absences. In order for an absence to be excused, the absentee must provide a reasonable explanation for his or her non-attendance as well as any documentation (e.g., a doctor’s note) that the instructor requests. Failure to do so will result in a penalty.
* Students are allowed maximum of 2 unexcused absences without penalty. For each unexcused absence beyond the first 2, the instructor will reduce the absentee’s final grade by 5%.
* Students with 3 or more unexcused absences beyond the first 2 are required to attend a conference with the instructor. Students with 5 or more unexcused absences beyond the first 2 will automatically fail the class.
* Tardiness will not be tolerated. Students who are 15 or more minute late for class will be considered absent. It is the student’s responsibility to communicate with the instructor regarding any planned or unplanned tardiness.

## PARTICIPATION

Participation in class discussion is mandatory and accounts for approximately 13% of the final grade (40 points). Examples of participation include, but are not limited to:

* Asking questions about assigned readings or lectures;
* Answering questions posed by the instructor;
* Expressing and defending a point of view regarding the philosophical issue(s) under discussion;
* Responding constructively to other students’ points of view regarding the philosophical issue(s) under discussion.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Week 1 – The Nature, Purpose, and Value of Critical Thinking

* Readings to Be Discussed

* + Plato, *Apology* and *Crito*  o Aristotle, *De Interpretatione* and *Categories* o Kant, *What Is Enlightenment*?
	+ Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations.”

Week 2 – The Nature and Structure of Deductive Arguments

* Readings to Be Discussed

* + Aristotle, *Categories* and *Posterior Analytics*
	+ *The Upanishads*, “Classical Modes of Interpretation and Analysis” o Maimonides, “Demonstration” (from *The Guide to the Perplexed*)

Week 3 – Recognizing and Evaluating Deductive Arguments in Ordinary Language / Deductive Fallacies

* Readings to Be Discussed

* + Plato, *Euthyphro* and *The Republic* o St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*
	+ St. Anselm, *Proslogion*
	+ Nagarjuna, *Yuktiṣāṣṭika*

Week 4 – Introduction to Propositional Logic / Week 5 – Translating Ordinary Language

Statements and Arguments / Week 6 – Truth Tables / Evaluating Deductive Arguments in Propositional Logic

* Readings to Be Discussed

* + Leibniz, *Monadology* o Spinoza, *Ethics* o Descartes, *Meditations*
	+ Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* o Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* o *The Talmud*

Week 7 – Introduction to Categorical Logic / Week 8 – Venn Diagrams / Evaluating Syllogisms in Categorical Logic

* Readings to Be Discussed

* + Plato, *Meno*  o Aristotle, *Categories* and *On Interpretation* o William of Ockham, *Summa Logicae*

Week 9 – The Nature and Structure of Inductive Logic / Week 10 – Recognizing and Evaluating Inductive Arguments: Inductive Fallacies

* Readings to Be Discussed

* + St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* o Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* o Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* Weeks 11 & 12 – Recognizing and Evaluating Inductive Arguments: Enumerative Induction and Analogical Induction

* Readings to Be Discussed

* + St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*
	+ William Paley, *Natural Theology or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*
	+ *The Upanishads*

Weeks 13 & 14 – Recognizing and Evaluating Inductive Arguments: Causal Induction and Inference to the Best Explanation

* Readings to Be Discussed

* + Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* o Mill, *Induction*

Week 15 – Review

## QUIZ AND EXAM SCHEDULE

Week 3 – Quiz #1

Week 4 – Quiz #2

Week 5 – Quiz #3

Week 6 – Quiz #4

Week 7 – Midterm Examination

Week 8 – Quiz #5

Week 9 – Quiz #6

Week 10 – Quiz #7

Week 11 – Quiz #8

Week 12 – Quiz #9

Week 13 – Quiz #10

Week 15 – Final Exam

# **Phil 1533 Writing Rubric**

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| **Criterion**  | **Performance/Point Value**  |
| **Excellent/4**  | **Good/3**  | **Satisfactory/2**  | **Unsatisfactory/1**  | **0**  |
| **COMMUNICATION**  | The essay uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.  The essay demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing  The essay uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually errorfree.  Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable and is skillful and makes the content of the presentation cohesive.   | The essay uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.   The essay demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.  The essay uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.   Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable within the presentation.      | The essay uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.   The essay demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.   The essay uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.    Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is intermittently observable within the presentation.      | The essay uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.   The essay demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.      The essay uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.     Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is not observable within the presentation.      | Does not meet benchmark criteria  |

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| **Communication**, cont. | Language choices are imaginative, memorable, and compelling, and enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.  A variety of types of supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that significantly supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.  The essay’s central message is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported.)  | Language choices are thoughtful and generally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.  Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that generally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.   Central message is clear and consistent with the supporting material.  | Language choices are mundane and commonplace and partially support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.  Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that partially supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.     Central message is basically understandable but is not often repeated and is not memorable.  | Language choices are unclear and minimally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is not appropriate to audience.  Insufficient supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make reference to information or analysis that minimally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.    Central message can be deduced, but is not explicitly stated in the presentation.  |  |
| **CRITICAL THINKING**  | The issue/problem to be considered critically within the essay is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.   Information in the essay is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/ evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. The essay thoroughly questions the viewpoints of experts.  The essay’s conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student’s informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.  | Issue/problem to be considered critically within the essay is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.    Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.   The essay’s conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.  | Issue/problem to be considered critically in the essay is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.   Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.   The essay’s conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.  | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description. Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.  Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.  | Does not meet benchmark criteria |
| **PERSONAL** **RESPONSIBILITY**  | The essay clearly and compellingly identifies the underlying *ethical* assumptions and implications of the position(s) under discussion, including the student’s own position(s).   | The essay adequately identifies the underlying *ethical*  assumptions and implications of the position(s) under discussion, including the student’s own position(s).  | The essay provides an incomplete, unclear, or otherwise inadequate explanation of the *ethical* assumptions and implications of the position(s) under discussion, including the student’s own position(s).    | The essay fails to identify or explain the *ethical* assumptions and implications of the position(s) under discussion, including the student’s own position(s).   | Does not meet benchmark criteria  |
| **SOCIAL** **RESPONSIBILITY**  | The essay explains and evaluates how historical, political, social, economic, and/or cultural context shape, inform, and otherwise bear upon the ideas under analysis. The essay recognizes, understands, and clearly explain differing perspectives and/or possible objections to its own position.  | The essay explains and The essay explains and evaluates how historical, political, social, economic, and/or cultural context shape, inform, and otherwise bear upon the ideas under analysis but fails to recognize, understand, and clearly explain differing perspectives and/or possible objections to its own position (or vice versa)  | The essay provides an incomplete, unclear, or otherwise inadequate explanation of how historical, political, social, economic, and/or cultural context shape, inform, and otherwise bear upon the ideas under analysis *AND/OR* but fails to adequately recognize, understand, and clearly explain differing perspectives and/or possible objections to its own position (or vice versa)  | The essay fails to explain how historical, political, social, economic, and/or cultural context shape, inform, and otherwise bear upon the ideas under analysis *AND* to recognize, understand, and clearly explain differing perspectives and/or possible objections to its own position.   | Does not meet benchmark criteria  |