

Philosophy 145: Critical Thinking

Winter 2012, Sec. 001

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Office: Hagey Hall 362

Office hours: Tuesday 1:00–2:30

Lectures: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00–11:20, AL113

Text: *Clear Thinking in a Blurry World*, by Tim Kenyon (Thomson Nelson, 2008)

Course Description

The general goal of this course is to help students become better reasoners. This has both an evaluative and a constructive component. To become an excellent reasoner one must not only become proficient at evaluating the reasoning displayed by others, but they must make good judgements and communicate their reasoning to others in compelling ways. This course aims at developing these interrelated skills in a couple of different ways:

- This course includes a study of argumentation. Students will be introduced to concepts which can be used to identify, clarify, and evaluate arguments. Students will learn to spot common types of fallacious arguments, and they will learn strategies for constructing compelling arguments of their own.
- A more general investigation of reasoning will familiarize students with common, and often unreliable, patterns of thought. This will include an examination of the ways in which people reason about numbers, probabilities and statistics. It will also include an investigation of the cognitive and social factors that make people susceptible to reasoning errors.

Evaluation

Assignment 1	20%	Jan. 26
Exam 1	30%	Feb. 14
Assignment 2	20%	Mar. 15
Exam 2	30%	Mar. 29

Assignments: Each assignment will reflect the material from, roughly, half of the course. Printed copies of the assignments will be due at the beginning of lecture.

Exams: The course has two *noncumulative* in-class exams. Each exam will test students on half of the course material.

Late Assignments, Extensions and Deferred Exams

Late assignments will be subject to late penalties. A hard copy—no email submissions—of each written assignment should be turned in at the beginning of lecture on the day it is due. Under special circumstances (illness, family emergency, etc.) extensions may be granted. Appropriate documentation, like a doctors note, will be requested. If an extension is needed, it is incumbent upon the student, when possible, to make arrangements prior to the submission deadline. Also, under special circumstances exams may be deferred. However, requests to defer an exam will be accommodated only if students make arrangements at the first possible instance (again, whenever possible, prior to the exam date) and provide the appropriate documentation.

Course Communication

Outside of lecture there are two ways to get in touch with the instructor and teaching assistants.

Email: When contacting the instructor or teaching assistants via email you can expect a response within 48 hrs during business days (Monday–Friday excluding holidays). Be sure to leave ample time for a response when dealing with time sensitive issues. Also, please make sure that “Phil 145” is included in the email subject line.

Office Hours: No appointment or prior arrangements are required to make use of scheduled office hours. Students will be met with on a first-come-first-serve basis. Alternative meeting times are available by appointment.

Academic Integrity

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Information about this is available through the *Office of Academic Integrity* (Online: <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infoacad/index.php>).

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate Associate Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71](#) (Student Discipline). For typical penalties check the “Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties,” <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm>.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under [Policy 70](#) (Student Petitions and Grievances) (other than a petition) or [Policy 71](#) (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72](#) (Student Appeals).

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70](#), Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt please be certain to contact the departments administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

In addition to those mentioned above, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the following policies: [Policy 33](#) (Ethical Behaviour); [Policy 69](#) (Conflict of Interest); [Policy 73](#) (Intellectual Property Rights). Each is linked to the following page: http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/Students/stdt_basics.html.