

Philosophy 11009/001/16298
Critical Thinking
Spring 2024

9:55 - 10:45 am, MWF, BOW 224

Instructor: Clarence G. Uher
Office: Philosophy Department – 320 Bowman Hall, Room M

Office Hours: M W 9:00 - 9:45 AM, and 3:45-5:30 PM and by appointment

Phone: (330) 672-2337 [Office M] (330) 672-2315 [Department]

E-Mail: cuher@kent.edu

[Important: Please identify the course you are taking (days and times) in your email.]

A. Course Description

Every judgment you make is based on what you know or believe to be true. Acquiring the knowledge needed to make good judgments involves critical thinking. Most people feel so confident in their ability to think that they do not reflect for a moment about the process. This course gives you the opportunity to closely examine critical thinking and the important role it plays in your life. The main objective of the course is to develop a greater awareness of the skills and techniques that improve the effectiveness of your critical thinking, as well as, the problems that undermine good critical thinking.

This course examines some of the basic processes of thinking that involve the gathering and evaluation of information. The course focuses on information that comes in the form of **arguments, explanations, or claims**. Much of the time you spend in college involves gathering information. If we want to use information effectively to make good judgments and solve problems, that information must be examined critically. This course will focus on the elements of critical thinking that contribute to gathering information and using that information effectively.

The first part of the course will examine *critical thinking as a concept* and the elements that influence one's ability to think critically. The second part of the course will focus on *evaluation* of the basic forms of information (arguments, explanations, and claims) and the basic tools of logic used to evaluate human reasoning. This second part will involve the development of rules and techniques for evaluating those basic forms of information. Some of the topics we will examine will include: fallacies, deductive vs. inductive reasoning, and inference to the best explanation. The last part of the course examines critical thinking in relation to scientific reasoning.

B. Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to identify the basic and essential elements of effective critical thinking.
- Students will be able to recognize and appreciate the emotional, psychological, and philosophical influences that affect effective critical thinking.
- Students will gain practical experience analyzing common forms of information presented as *statements*, *arguments*, and *explanations*.

C. Kent Core Component

This course may be used to satisfy a Kent Core requirement. The Kent Core as a whole is intended to broaden intellectual perspectives, foster ethical and humanitarian values, and prepare students for responsible citizenship and productive careers. Critical Thinking skills are an essential component for lifelong learning. The success of every expert, regardless of discipline, often depends on effective critical thinking skills.

D. Text

[*The Power of Critical Thinking, 6th ed., Lewis Vaughn, ebook*](#)

E. Graded Assignments

- (a) There will be eight (8) quizzes during the term. Your three lowest quiz scores will be dropped. **A missed quiz is counted as a dropped quiz. There are no make-ups offered for missed quizzes until the dropped quizzes are exhausted.** There are exceptions to this policy (e.g.: Military Service, University sanctioned events, participation in athletics, Band and field trips required by a University course). All the aforementioned **exceptions will require documentation.** (20 points each.)
- (b) Two midterm exams will cover the course material completed up to the date of the exam. (50 points each.)
- (c) The final exam **will be comprehensive** and will follow a similar format as the mid-term exams. (100 points.)
- (d) **Please note; all quizzes and exams will be taken in class.**
- (e) **Class absence:** The Philosophy Department Procedure for handling student absence is in conformity with the Student Academic Policy and Procedures set down as University Policy in the [University Policy Register 3 - 1.2.](#) <http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/administrative-policy-regarding-class-attendance-and-class-absence> Students should contact me as soon as possible (please use your KSU email account) when absent. Keep in mind that any make-up work that you are eligible for will require some form of

documentation. Please note: **Attendance is NOT part of your grade** even though your attendance will be recorded on a sign-in sheet every class meeting.

F. Grades

Your final letter grade is based on the total amount of points you acquire during the semester. The chart below indicates the minimum point total needed for the corresponding letter grade. Your final grade will be composed of the following:

5 Quizzes @ 20 points each	100 points
2 Midterm Exams @ 50 points each	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
	<u>300 points total</u>

Minimum Points	0	180	204	210	219	234	240	249	264	270	279
Grade	F	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A

G. Make-ups

Please contact me as soon as possible if your absence has caused you to miss graded coursework. Students will be permitted to make up missed quizzes (**after the three dropped quizzes are exhausted**) or exams due to an excused absence (e.g., a doctor's excuse). **If a student does not have the proper documentation, they will not be permitted to take a make-up exam. A request of make-up form must be completed prior to taking the make-up assignment. Make-up work must be completed in a timely manner. In most cases, work must be completed on the day the student returns to class.**

H. Testing Your Faith Act (HB 353)

The University welcomes individuals from all different faiths, philosophies, religious traditions, and other systems of belief, and supports their respective practices. In compliance with University policy and the Ohio Revised Code, the University permits students to request class absences for up to three (3) days, per term, in order to participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization. Students will not be penalized as a result of any of these excused absences.

The request for excusal must be made, in writing, no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of instruction in a particular course and include the date(s) of each proposed absence or request for alternative religious accommodation. The request must clearly state that the proposed absence is to participate in religious activities. The request must also provide the particular accommodation(s) you desire.

You will be notified by me if your request for accommodation is approved, or, if it is approved with modification. I will work with you in an effort to arrange a mutually agreeable alternative arrangement. For more information regarding this Policy, you may contact the Student Ombuds (ombuds@kent.edu).

I. Course Material On-line

There will be some course material found in the course “Modules” on Canvas. Students can find the course syllabus, course notes, and assignments by clicking on the course link. The “course notes” found online are not intended to be an alternative to attending lectures or as a substitute for the student’s own notes on course material. All e-mails are sent to students using the Kent State University e-mail account.

***NOTICE OF MY COPYRIGHT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS.** Any intellectual property displayed or distributed to students during this course (including but not limited to power points, notes, quizzes, examinations) by the instructor remains the intellectual property of the instructor. This means that the student may not distribute, publish or provide such intellectual property to any other person or entity for any reason, commercial or otherwise, without the express written permission of the instructor.*

J. Conduct in the Classroom

Proper conduct in the classroom will be expected of every member of the class. Let us make kindness extended to everyone our goal. Personal conversations, frequently coming to class late, or leaving class early are disruptive behaviors that are disrespectful to others in the class. **Cell phones should not be on desktops or in your lap; please keep cell phones in your pocket or in a book bag during the entire lecture.**

Students should request permission to record course lectures and discussions. Use of laptops and notebooks will be permitted in class. Laptops and notebooks must only be used to access course material. Laptops and notebooks must not be used to check e-mail, or “surfing the web”.

K. Cheating and Plagiarism Policy

University policy 3342-3-01.8 deals with the problem of academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism. None of these will be tolerated in this class. The sanctions provided in this policy will be used to deal with any violations. If you have any questions, please read the policy at <https://www.kent.edu/policyreg/administrative-policy-regarding-student-cheating-and-plagiarism> and/or ask.

L. Grievance procedure

The Philosophy Department Grievance Procedure for handling student grievances is in conformity with the Student Academic Complaint Policy and Procedures set down as University Policy 3342-4-16 in the University Policy Register. For information concerning the details of the grievance procedure please see the Departmental Chairperson.

M. Student Accessibility

Kent State University is committed to inclusive and accessible education experiences for all students. University Policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided

reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to course content. Students with disabilities are encouraged to connect with Student Accessibility Services as early as possible to establish accommodations. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on a disability (including mental health, chronic medical conditions, or injuries), please let me know immediately.

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) Contact Information:

Location: University Library, Suite 100

Email: sas@kent.edu

Phone: 330-672-3391

Web: www.kent.edu/sas

Students who are using SAS should meet with me to discuss their accommodations and how those accommodations will be implemented for this course.

N. Registration Requirements

The last day to “Add” or change sections of courses for Spring 2024 is **1/22/2024 (Monday)**. The course withdrawal deadline (without a “W”) is **1/29/2024 (Monday)** and (with a “W”) is **4/1/2024 (Monday)**. *University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Each student must confirm enrollment by checking his/her class schedule (using Student Tools in FlashLine) prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline.*

The course withdrawal deadline is 4/1/2024.

There are **no prerequisites** for this course.

Requirements for success in this course:

1. Complete the reading assignment **BEFORE** the lecture.
2. Take reading notes as you complete the reading assignment. Try to identify: important questions that arise, definitions, and concepts that are discussed in the reading.
3. Ask questions in class, or during office hours, that will help you conceptualize the topics we entertain.

4. See me for help, if you have low quiz or exam scores. **Do this early**, so we can discuss how you might become more effective at studying philosophy.

Please note: The following tentative reading schedule is based on the 15 weeks of the semester. There are no specific page numbers listed for each day we meet for lecture. A general guide for dividing up the reading for the week: if the course meets twice a week divide by ½, three days a week divide by 1/3.

J. Tentative Reading Schedule

Week Dates (M-F)	Assignment
1 (1/15 - 1/19)	Introduction to the course & 1 st Day Assignment. First Day Lecture. Chapter 1, pp. 3-7 ** (up to "How It Works") .
2 (1/22 - 1/26)	Chapter 1, Critical Thinking Basics, pp. 8-25.
3 (1/29 - 2/2)	Chapter 2, Obstacles to Critical Thinking pp. 26-49, Notes on Emerging Modern Science found in Module 1, of Canvas.
4 (2/5 - 2/9)	Chapter 3, Making Sense of Arguments, pp. 62-101.
5 (2/12 - 2/16)	Finish Chapter 3, exercises, and review for exam. Midterm Exam #1.
6 (2/19-2/23)	Chapter 4, Reasons for Belief and Doubt, pp. , and Plato's, "Allegory of the Cave." Found on Canvas.
7 (2/26 - 3/1)	Chapter 7, Deductive Reasoning: Propositional Logic, pp. .
8 (3/4 - 3/8)	Finish Chapter 7, review exercises. Chapter 9, Inductive Reasoning, pp. (up to Causal Arguments)

- 9
(3/11 – 3/15) Chapter 9, (Causal Arguments) pp. .
Review Chapters 4, 7, and 9 for Exam #2.
- 10
(3/18 – 3/22) **Midterm Exam #2.**
Chapter 6, Fallacies and Persuaders, pp. .
- 11
(3/25 – 3/29) **SPRING BREAK!**
- 12
(4/1 – 4/5) Review exercises for Chapter 5, Start Chapter 9,
Inference to the Best Explanation, pp. 315-361.
- 13
(4/8 – 4/12) **Solar Eclipse, 4/8, Monday Ethics Class Canceled.**
Chapter 10, Inference to the Best Explanation, pp. .
- 14
(4/15 – 4/19) Chapter 11, Judging Scientific Theories, pp. 362-416.
- 15
(4/22 – 4/26) Finish Chapter 11,
- 16
(4/29 and 5/3) Review for Final Exam

Final Exam: Friday, May 10, 2024, 9:45-12:00.

The instructor reserves the right to change, correct, or amend the syllabus and reading schedule during the semester. It is the responsibility of students to check email messages and course announcements to stay current in the courses.