

# PHIL 1101: Critical Thinking

## INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Celia Edell

## EMAIL

celiaedell@gmail.com

## CLASS TIME

Mondays & Wednesdays  
4:30 - 6:20 PM

## OFFICE HOURS

Wednesdays  
3:30 - 4:30 PM

Douglas College acknowledges that our campuses, where we live, learn, work and play, are located on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples of the qiqéyt (QayQayt) and kwikwəł'əm (Kwikwetlem) First Nations.

## COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines the basic nature of reasoning and the fallacies which prevent good reasoning. Emphasis will be on understanding the logical structure of argument and on recognizing the influence of emotional and rhetorical persuasion in media presentations, political discussions, advertisements, general academic writings and one's own arguments. Students may also have the opportunity for their own arguments to be assessed by others. Both the theory and practice of critical thinking are covered. Throughout the semester, students will work on improving their critical thinking skills through the study of informal and formal logic. Our course will place a special focus on the various sources of belief in our modern world (e.g., fake news, pseudoscience, echo chambers) and how to sort the knowledge from the nonsense.

## LEARNING MATERIALS

Lewis Vaughn and Chris MacDonald. The Power of Critical Thinking: Sixth Canadian Edition, Oxford University Press, 2023. Available via the bookstore. (5th and 4th editions are also fine).

Other readings and course material will be posted periodically on Blackboard.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING	EVALUATION
1	Jan 3	Introduction: What is critical thinking?	The Syllabus	
2	Jan 8, 10	The 'environment' of critical thinking	MacDonald and Vaughn, pp. 33-49	
3	Jan 15, 17	Analyzing Arguments: The anatomy of an argument	MacDonald and Vaughn, pp. 64-89	Homework 1
4	Jan 22, 24	Analyzing Arguments: Faulty Reasoning	MacDonald and Vaughn, pp. 175-197	
5	Jan 29, 31	Deductive Reasoning: Categorical Logic	MacDonald and Vaughn, pp. 215-242	Homework 2

6	Feb 5, 7	Deductive Reasoning: Propositional Logic	MacDonald and Vaughn pp. 249-270	Homework 3
7	Feb 12, 14	Review + test	No Reading	In-class midterm
8	Feb 19, 21	<b>No class – reading week</b>		
9	Feb 26, 28	Sources of Belief: Personal Experience	<a href="#">Loftus, “Creating False Memories”</a> <a href="#">Birnbbaum, “The Barnum Effect”</a>	Homework 4
10	Mar 4, 6	Sources of Belief: Fake News & Disinformation	<a href="#">Maheshwari, “How Fake News Goes Viral: A Case Study”</a> <a href="#">Hsu and Thompson, “Disinformation Researchers Raise Alarms About A.I. Chatbots”</a>	
11	Mar 11, 13	Sources of Belief: Pseudoscience and Conspiracy Theories	<a href="#">Jarry, “What’s Trending in the World of Pseudoscience”</a> <a href="#">Linse and Shermer, “Conspiracy Theories: Who Believes Them and Why, and How to Determine if a Conspiracy Theory is True”</a>	Homework 5
12	Mar 18, 20	Sources of Belief: Echo Chambers & Deepfakes	<a href="#">Nguyen, “Escape the Echo Chamber”</a> <a href="#">Rini, “Deepfakes and the Epistemic Backstop”</a>	
13	Mar 25, 27	Intellectual Humility	<a href="#">Leary, “What Does Intellectual Humility Look Like?”</a> <a href="#">Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”</a>	
14	Apr 3	<b>(no class April 1)</b>	No Reading	In-class presentations
15	Apr 8, 10	Review	No Reading	

## ASSIGNMENTS

PERCENT OF GRADE	ASSESSMENT
10%	Attendance and Participation
25%	5 homework assignments, worth 5% each.
20%	One in-class midterm test

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20%

**“Find a Bad Argument” assignment**

You will be expected to find an example of bad argument (e.g. in the news, in a movie, in a TV series, or even in a family reunion); to reformulate the bad argument using premises and a conclusion; and to explain why the argument is problematic, formally speaking. This assignment will take the form of a short oral presentation (3-5 minutes for a person on their own; 6-8 min for a team of 2).

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25%

**Final in-class exam, during exam period: exact date TBA**

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## INSTRUCTOR POLICIES

**Course communication:** Your questions about the course, assignment, readings, etc. are always welcome. Outside of class, please communicate with me via email (or in person during office hours). I'll get to your questions as quickly as I can. It may take me up to two business days to respond to your email. Longer questions might require us to arrange a meeting. **Please never hesitate to ask questions or additional help should you feel overwhelmed.** That's what I'm here for. There is no such thing as a bad question, and it's (almost) never too late to ask!

**Missed quizzes and exams:** There will be no makeup quizzes, or extensions permitted on quizzes, due to the nature of the assignment. Exceptional circumstances will be considered for makeup exams, provided that you reach out to me before the exam. Documentation (e.g. doctor's note) may be required.

**Late assignments:** Unexcused late submissions will be penalized at a rate of 5% per calendar day. I will consider serious requests for extensions (e.g. supported by adequate documentation, etc.), provided that they are made at least three days before the due date.

**Academic dishonesty:** This is a serious academic offense, and will be dealt with in accordance with college rules. See the college calendar for details.

**Attendance:** It is extremely important that you attend this course. Philosophy is an activity just as much as a body of knowledge, and you can't master the activity if you don't show up. NOTE: if you miss more than 30% of classes, you may receive an unsatisfactory in the course.

**Language competency standards:** See the college's language proficiency requirement (English 12 with a "C" or equivalent).