

SYLLABUS

Course Title: **Critical Reasoning**

Course Number: **PHIL 200 Online (Fall 2011)**

Ticket Number: **18726**

Prerequisites: Completion of GE Analytical Reading/Expository Writing; either GE Mathematics or MATH 210.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Instructor: Dr. Weimin Sun
Office: Sierra Tower 505
Phone: 818-677-6461 (voice mail available at this number)
Email: weimin.sun@csun.edu (email checked everyday)
Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 2.00-3.30 PM, or by appointment

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Not open to students who have completed PHIL 100. Examination of the relationship between logic and language. Accelerated introduction to the concepts essential to the identification, analysis and evaluation of arguments, with attention to deduction, induction and common fallacies. Emphasis on the application of these concepts. (Available for **General Education, Basic Skills, Critical Thinking**)

INSTRUCTOR'S DESCRIPTION:

This course satisfies the Critical Thinking component of the Basic Skill section of the General Education Program, which recognizes critical reasoning as a fundamental competence. Their goals are to provide students with criteria and methods for distinguishing good reasoning from bad and to help students develop basic reasoning skills that they can apply both within a broad range of academic disciplines and outside the academic environment. Students are expected to acquire skill in recognizing the logical structure of statements and arguments, the ability to distinguish rational from non-rational means of persuasion, skill in applying the principles of sound reasoning in the construction and evaluation of arguments, and an appreciation of the value of critical reasoning skills in the pursuit of knowledge.

GOAL:

Students will analyze information and ideas carefully and logically from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will:

1. Explain and apply the basic concepts essential to critical examination and evaluation of argumentative discourse;
2. Use investigative and analytical thinking skills to examine alternative, explore complex questions and solve challenging problems;
3. Synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions;
4. Evaluate the logic and validity of arguments, and the relevance of data and information;
5. Recognize and avoid common logical and rhetorical fallacies.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

1. recognize an argument, identify its components, and evaluate its strength;
2. evaluate the reliability of various sources of belief, including media, expert, and personal experience;
3. recognize and avoid common logical and rhetorical fallacies;
4. recognize and evaluate deductive reasoning;
5. recognize and evaluate inductive reasoning and statistical reasoning;
6. recognize and evaluate basic scientific reasoning;
7. apply the truth table method and Venn diagram to check validity;
8. develop an attitude of critical thinking when evaluating statements and arguments.

The SLOs are targeted by the corresponding COs as follows:

SLOs	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Course Objectives	1-6	1-7	2, 5, 6	1, 4-7	3

REQUIRED TEXTS:

The Power of Critical Thinking, 3rd edition, by Lewis Vaughn. Oxford University Press.

Earlier editions are acceptable (as there are no significant changes), though all references in the syllabus and lectures will be based on the 3rd edition.

Online Course:

This is an **Online Course** offered completely on Moodle: all the course materials and assignments will be delivered online via Moodle, accessed at <http://moodle.csun.edu/>. You do not need to come to campus to take this class (though I am available physically in my office during office hours), but you do need to have reliable Internet access. There are also discussion forums for you to post questions and concerns, and chat rooms and Illuminate sessions will be available upon request.

I will maintain a weekly structure for this course. As you can see from the course schedule (the

last part of the syllabus), on each Monday of the week I will post the lecture of the week that you need to study together with the textbook. The lectures and the textbooks are complementary, and both are important as they explain the same materials from different angles. On Wednesday I will pose a practice quiz, and on Friday I will post the actual quiz. Practice quizzes don't count toward your final grade, but they are identical in format and similar in content to the actual quizzes, so they are excellent preparations for the actual quizzes.

This course will be available to all students who are enrolled in this class. Students who have registered for the class will be automatically added to Moodle. Students who register later should be added 24 hours after your registration. Once you log on CSUN moodle site with your student ID and password (the same as your portal ID and password), you can see this course under the name "**Phil200OL: Critical Reasoning**."

If you are not familiar with Moodle, please visit
<http://www.csun.edu/at/teaching/tools/moodle.html> for more information. In particular, visit
<http://www.csun.edu/at/training/moodle/lynda.com/students/> for a two-hour video training class.

Course Requirements:

1. Studying the course materials diligently and regularly, as required by the course schedule;
2. Working at the practice quizzes and relevant exercises in the textbook sets to master the materials.
3. Finishing all the required assignments, including quizzes, exams, and other homeworks.

Academic Honesty

Given the online nature of the class, students are allowed to use the textbooks and online lectures notes while completing quizzes or exams. Students are encouraged to form study groups to study the course materials together. However, students cannot help each other out in the exam-taking period. In particular, **students cannot copy other students' quizzes/exams or let their quizzes/exams be copied, and cannot disclose the content of quizzes or exams to other students under any circumstances**. Violation of such policies may result in failing the class and is subject to further disciplinary actions from the University. Please be reminded that the Moodle has tools to identify various ways of cheating.

For detailed information on CSUN policy on academic dishonesty, please refer to catalog: <http://www.csun.edu/catalog/appendices.html#E2>.

Strategies for Success in this class:

1. This is an **Online Logic** class. Logic is a difficult subject that needs a lot of your time and attention to details. To take the class online does not imply that you won't need an equal

amount of work; if anything, it is the contrary: you need to spend more time taking this course online than what you might need taking it on campus. You should be mentally prepared for the time required for this course.

- a. The online aspect of class does have some benefits: it fits your schedule better, and it gives more chance of practices. Logic is about skill development, and practices are of crucial importance for skill developments.
 - b. **Not all students are fit for online classes**, especially a logic class. Some students find it much easier to learn logic in person. **If that is the case for you, please do consider taking a regular critical reasoning class, instead of an online one.**
 - c. In order to succeed in this class, be sure to consider the strategies listed below.
2. **Carefully** plan your study time each week, so that you can devote a set period of time for studying this course. Some chapters are more difficult than the others, so you may want to have some free time planned for each week. It is important to know that critical reasoning courses have a strong degree of continuity – if you are not doing well in the beginning, it will be very difficult for you to do well on the later materials since they rely on earlier knowledge.
 - a. Find your pace of work in the week as soon as possible. Work out your schedule with this course in the first couple of weeks and stick to it.
 - b. Finish everything by the end of the week. **Do not procrastinate!**
 3. **A typical weekly plan:** Study the lecture and textbook first; then work on the practice quizzes; analyze your answers, and pay particular attention to the parts you have got wrong. It is very important to be able to learn from one's own mistakes. If you still could not understand, come to my office or post your questions to Moodle forum. After you feel completely confident, attempt the actual quiz.
 - a. Make sure you finish all the assignments on time. With the online classes, self-discipline is a necessity.
 4. **Come to my office if you have any questions, concerns, or simply feel that you are struggling in class.**
 - a. This is a difficult class for many students! Many students have failed in the past. If you feel you are struggling, you are not alone and you need to seek help at the earliest stage.
 - b. From my past experiences, it is quite clear that the students who came to my office often had improved significantly. You may struggle with a question for a couple of hours, yet all you need is a hint to see the light. If you cannot make it to my regular office hours (see the top of syllabus), you can make an appointment to see if I am available at other times.

Course Grading:

- 12 Quizzes 30%
- Two exams 70 % (35% each)
 - Exams are not cumulative.
 - Quizzes are the best study guide for the exams. There will be no makeups for exams or quizzes.
- Extra credits are available.
 - I may assign extra credit assignment with some writing assignments. The primary purpose is to help you apply the critical reasoning skills in your ordinary reading and writing, and it can also help you earn some extra credit toward your overall grade.
- Final grade is a weighted sum of all the above components calculated by percentage.
The final letter grade will be based on the following table:

Final %	≥ 92	90-91.9	88-89.9	82-87.9	80-81.9	78-79.9	72-77.9	70-71.9	68-69.9	62-67.9	60-61.9	<60
Letter Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F

COURSE SCHEDULE and READING ASSIGNMENTS

We'll try to follow this schedule as best as we can.

Date	Content	Reading Assignment (Chapters refer to the Vaughn Textbook; lectures are online)
Week 1: 8/29	Introduction to the course;	Ch. 1 The Power of Critical Thinking Recommended: Course Syllabus; Lecture 1;
Week 2: 9/5	Basic Notions Quiz 1	Ch. 2: Obstacles to Critical Thinking Lecture 2;
Week 3: 9/12	Argument Basics & Argument Analysis Quiz 2	Ch. 3 Making Sense of Arguments Lecture 3;
Week 4: 9/19	Reasons for Belief (and Doubt) Quiz 3	Ch. 4 Reasons for Belief and Doubt Lecture 4;
Week 5: 9/26	Common Fallacies in the Reasoning Quiz 4	Ch. 5 Faulty Reasoning Lecture 5;
Week 6: 10/3	Statistical Reasoning Quiz 5	Ch. 8: Inductive Reasoning – Enumerative Induction (pp. 284-297) Lecture 6;

Week 7: 10/10	Analogical Induction; Causal Reasoning Quiz 6	Ch. 8: : Inductive Reasoning – Analogical and Causal (pp. 302-327) Lecture 7;
Week 8:	Exam I (Midterm Exam)	Recommended: All above Lecture 8 (review);
Week 9: 10/24	Propositional Logic-1: Logical connectives and the Truth table Symbolization Quiz 7	Ch. 6 Propositional Logic- Part I: (pp. 217-228) Lecture 9;
Week 10: 10/31	Propositional Logic-2: Validity check Quiz 8	Ch. 6 Propositional Logic- Part II (pp. 231-238) Lecture 10;
Week 11: 11/7	Categorical Logic-1: Categorical Statements Quiz 9	Ch. 7 Categorical Logic – Part I (pp. 251-268) Lecture 11;
Week 12: 11/14	Categorical Logic-2: Validity check with Venn Diagram Quiz 10	Ch. 7 Categorical Logic – Part II (pp. 269-276) Lecture 12;
Week 13:	Thanksgiving Break;	
Week 14: 11/28	Scientific Reasoning—Inference to the Best Explanation Quiz 11	Ch. 9: Inference to the Best Explanation Lecture 13;
Week 15: 12/5	Evaluation of Hypothesis Quiz 12	Ch. 10: Judging Scientific Theories Lecture 14;
Week 16: 12/12	Prep for Exam II (Final Exam) Exam Date to be Decided	Recommended: everything since Exam I; Lecture 15 (review);