

**PHIL 2020: Critical Thinking**  
University of West Georgia, Fall 2011

Common Syllabus for:  
Section 02 (80266): M/W 2:00 - 3:15 PM, Pafford 109  
Section 03 (80267): M/W 3:30 - 4:45 PM, Pafford 109

Dr. Thomas J. Brommage  
Email: brommage@westga.edu  
Website: <http://brommage.freeshell.org>

Office: TLC 1114-B  
Office Phone: (678) 839-5487  
Office Hours: M/W 11 AM – 2 PM & by appt.

**Course Description:** This course is designed to strengthen students' skills in reasoning about problems and issues of everyday life by helping them to distinguish between good and bad arguments. Students work to achieve these goals through studying the structure of inductive arguments, rhetorical fallacies, and the connection between logic and belief. The second half of this course will stress information literacy, developing critical thinking skills necessary for each. Topics will include television and print media reports, advertising, maps and the internet. Throughout the course, the student will develop the skills necessary to become a better consumer of information.

**Learning Objectives:** Throughout this course, the student will learn to:

- identify deductive and inductive argumentation;
- distinguish fact and informed opinion from mere opinion in a variety of argumentative contexts;
- organize evidence and compose persuasive arguments, both orally and in writing;
- identify and distinguish formal and informal fallacies of reasoning;
- identify, develop, and analyze reasons in support of a conclusion.

These course-specific learning outcomes contribute to the departmental learning outcomes of the Philosophy Program by enabling students to better:

- ask philosophical questions and differentiate their types;
- incorporate a philosophical position in oral and written communications;
- critically outline and analyze philosophical issues;
- exhibit critical thinking skills.

**Required Text\*:**

Kahane and Cavender, *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric* 11th ed. (Wadsworth, 2010). ISBN: 9780495-804116, \$89

\*This will be our primary textbook for this course. Unless otherwise noted, all page numbers refer to the Kahane/Cavender book. Other readings may be assigned, available for download on my website. They are denoted on the schedule below with an '[E]'

## Course Schedule:

All dates and content scheduled below are tentative, and subject to change by the Instructor!

DATE	ASSIGNMENT	TOPIC
22 Aug:	Introduction	What is critical thinking?
24 Aug:	Martin Heidegger, "Memorial Address" [E]	Thinking about Thought
29 Aug:	Kahane, pp. 1-20; Ex. 1-1 and 1-2	The Basics of Arguments
31 Aug:	Kahane, pp. 23-29, 38-43	Background Beliefs
5 Sept:	Labor Day: No Class!!	--
7 Sept:	Russell, "On Induction"	The Character of Inductive Arguments
12 Sept:	Kahane, Chapter 3 (pp. 47-65)	Fallacious Premises
14 Sept:	Ex. 3-1 (pp. 66-70)	Identifying Fallacious Premises
19 Sept:	Kahane, Chapter 4 (pp. 73-86)	Rhetorical Fallacies
21 Sept:	Ex. 4-1 (pp. 86-90)	Identifying Rhetorical Fallacies
26 Sept:	Kahane, Chapter 5 (pp. 93-111)	Fallacious Inferences
28 Sept:	Ex. 5-2 and 5-3 (pp. 113-120)	Identifying Fallacious Inferences
3 Oct:	Inductive Logic Review	--
5 Oct:	Exam #1	--
10 Oct:	Kahane, Chapter 6 (pp. 123-146)	Impediments to Careful Reasoning
12 Oct:	Kahane, Chapter 7 (pp. 151-176)	Language Games
17 Oct:	Clarification and Linguistic Analysis	Analyzing Language
19 Oct:	Kahane, Chapter 10 (pp. 233-267)	Selling Belief: Advertising
24 Oct:	Kahane, Chapter 11 (pp. 271-317)	Scrutinizing the Media
26 Oct:	Kahane, Chapter 12 (pp. 323-354)	Textbooks, maps and other spooky stuff
31 Oct:	Information Literacy Review	--
2 Nov:	Exam #2	--
7 Nov:	Media Projects	--
9 Nov:	Media Projects	--
14 Nov:	Media Projects	--
16 Nov:	Media Projects	--

21-23 Nov:	Thanksgiving Break: No class!!	--
28 Nov:	Media Projects	--
30 Nov:	Media Projects	--
5-9 Dec:	Final Exam (see schedule below)	--

**Evaluation:** One major point of evaluation—which will consist of a 3-5 page paper and a short oral presentation—I will call the 'media project.' The media project is designed to provide the student with application of some of the skills learned throughout the semester by, critically analyzing rhetorical or persuasive methods in media reports or advertising (amongst other information sources). Guidelines for this assignment to be announced.

In addition, there will be three exams given during the regularly scheduled class time (dates subject to change):

- Exam #1 (Informal Logic): 5 October
- Exam #2 (Information Literacy): 7 November
- Final Exam (cumulative): 5-9 December (see below)

Anyone who cannot take either exam must make arrangements to make it up at least one week prior to the scheduled exam date. Failure to do so will result in a grade of "F" for that exam.

The final exam schedule is as follows:

Section 2: Monday, Dec. 5, 2 - 4 PM  
Section 3: Friday, Dec. 9, 2 - 4 PM

The following weighting will be used to calculate your grade:

Attendance and Participation	20%
Exam #1	20%*
Exam #2	20%*
Media Project	20%
Final Exam	20%*

\* = Those who score well enough on the first two exams have the option of using these two scores (at weighting of 30% each) in lieu of taking the final exam.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Plagiarism is the ultimate mortal sin of academia. Please, cite properly and document accordingly anything that may appear in your written work for this class. If you are unclear about how to properly document a paper, simply ask me. But err on the side of caution: clear-cut cases of plagiarism (deemed so by myself) will result in the possibility of up to and including a "F" for this class, and possible disciplinary action taken. *Don't try me, I will catch you.* All submissions for this class will be cleared through electronic methods to detect plagiarism.

If you are unsure of what plagiarism constitutes, I highly recommend you view the tutorial at the following link: <http://www.cte.usf.edu/plagiarism/index.html>. Ignorance of the law, as they say, is no excuse.

**Students with Disabilities:** I will be happy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Feel free to self-disclose to me privately any disability that may present challenges for you in the course. Please contact the Office of Disability Services (678-839-6428) if you expect to need special accommodations.

**Expectations, Suggestions and Mandates for an efficient class:**

1. Please arrive to class on time and expect to stay the entire duration of the class. If this is an impossibility, please make every attempt to notify me in advance of tardiness or absence.
2. Especially true in philosophy more than most other areas of study, diligence is important. The difficulty of the subject is indirectly proportional to the amount of work put into the course. Expect to have up to five hours a week of reading and practice in order to get an "A" for the course. Additionally, for these reasons, attendance is of vital importance.
3. Please come to class prepared (i.e., any reading assigned read, any questions concerning exercises or lectures prepared, etc.)
4. Please be respectful of each other in the class. There will be times when students disagree about a topic discussed in class. This is a didactic process, not a combative one.
5. Due to the great excess of material and limited time in which we must cover ground, please do not create a disruption for those people who are attempting to learn. Disruptions include blurting out answers, name calling, chiding each other, snoring, etc. Laughing at the Instructor's jokes is obviously exempted from this policy. In addition, personal audio devices (except those in use to record lectures) and loud crunching snack foods are prohibited from the classroom. ***PLEASE TURN OFF your cellphones in class.***
6. Please feel free to make mistakes. We all will from time to time, even your omniscient instructor.
7. Please feel free to make use of my office hours. Waiting until the last moment in the semester to catch up is not advisable. I am excellent at fixing small problems, but horrendous at fixing large ones. The only difference between small and large problems is time.
8. This is a discussion-based class, and your effective participation is a part of your final grade. "Effective" participation is a function of the quality, not the quantity, of one's overall participation in class. Thus, if you find yourself someone who is naturally reticent, please make an effort to participate and have your voice heard; likewise if you find yourself someone who is naturally garrulous, please allow others to be heard.
9. Have fun! The material is only as dry as you make it out to be. Sharpening one's mind can be an exhilarating process.