
[Fall 2017 – Spring 2018]
[Wednesday 1:00-2:15]

Critical Thinking

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Location: The Prometheus Academy

Overview

This class helps students to strengthen their ability to critically examine ideas, philosophies, and current events by learning about the many types of fallacious arguments and how to spot them. When students learn about how often these arguments are used in daily life, from their peers to the most influential and powerful people in our society, they begin to use and develop higher-order thinking skills. These new skills facilitate their ability to evaluate what they hear as well as what they think and say.

Goals

Class Discussion Objectives

- Present your opinion politely, without the use of inflammatory language.
- Define terms, so students are arguing about the same topic.
- Support your statement(s) with facts.
- Distinguish between opinion and verifiable topics of argument.

Logic Objectives

- Recognize simple forms of argument
- Identify logical fallacies in oral arguments and all forms of media presentation
- Identify common propaganda techniques used in advertising, politics and other media

Class Evaluation

Because this class relies heavily upon class discussion, 50% of the student's grade will be based upon class participation, while employing Class Discussion Objectives (above). Their content will not be evaluated, only their willingness to participate. The final grade will be an average of both Fall and Spring Semesters.

Fall Semester:

- 50% Class Participation
- 25% Homework
- 25% Exams

Spring Semester:

- 50% Class Participation
- 25% Homework
- 25% Exams

Materials

Please bring the following items to class each day:

- Pen or pencil
- Paper
- 1½ inch binder with all handouts, homework and exams, neatly organized

Important Dates

Fall Break – Prometheus Closed

[November 20th – November 24th]

Last Critical Thinking Class –

Fall Semester

[December 13th]

Winter Break – Prometheus Closed

[December 15th – January 14th]

Spring Semester – Classes Resume

[January 15th – January 19th]

Spring Break – Prometheus Closed

[March 12th – March 16th]

Last Critical Thinking class –

Spring Semester

[May 16th]

Summer Break – Prometheus Closed

[May 18th]

Books Used

The Art of Argument: an Introduction to the Informal Fallacies by Aaron Larsen and Joelle Hodge

Philosophy for Kids – 40 Fun Questions That Help You Wonder...About Everything! by David A. White, Ph.D.

Class Policies

- It is in the student's best interest to avoid absences. Missing more than 3 classes may make it difficult for the student to follow the material. If the student has multiple absences, and he or she is struggling in class, a parent-teacher conference may be necessary to determine how to proceed.
- If an exam is missed, I will work with the student and student's parents to arrange a time outside of class to make-up the test. It is the responsibility of the student to ask for all missed homework and to schedule a time for make-up exams.
- Please be on time! Late arrivals may disrupt a good discussion!
- No phones or other electronics are allowed in class. If a student chooses to bring such items out during class, the device may be taken away and held until the end of class. It will be the student's responsibility to retrieve it from me after class.
- All homework is due by the due dates listed on the syllabus. All make-up work should be finished and returned the week after receiving it. No work will be accepted after the last day of each semester, including missed exams or homework. Anything not turned in (Homework) or not completed (Exams) will be ungraded and therefore will receive a zero. I will not accept any unfinished work after the following dates:
 - Fall Semester – December 13, 2017
 - Spring Semester – May 16, 2018
- During class discussions, students must be kind and respectful to other students, even if they strongly disagree. They should listen and wait for the speaker to finish talking before offering their perspective. They should avoid talking over each other and wait patiently for their turn to speak. Failure to do so will result in a lower grade for Class Participation.
- There are a variety of topics and opinions that may be brought up during class discussions that could conflict with the student's family values or that are not usually discussed in polite conversation. There is absolutely no expectation that everyone should agree or that all must accept one "correct" worldview. However, in order to be a true critical thinker, it is necessary to listen to and consider another's reasons and conclusions. As the teacher, I have no intention of making my values or opinions known to the students, though at times I will offer alternate perspectives for the class to evaluate. Again, these perspectives may not be coherent with your family values (or mine) but they may help the students develop the reasoning they will use when supporting their conclusions.

Fall Schedule

- **August 30th**
 - What is Critical Thinking and why is it important?
 - Set up binder – please bring 1 ½ inch binder, lined paper, a set of 5 dividers, index cards and at least two pencils; these items must be brought to every class throughout the school year
 - Look through required text for class, *The Art of Argument* by Aaron Larsen and Joelle Hodge
 - Discuss expectations and how to do assignments
 - Both parent and student should read, sign, and return to me *Class Policies* – Due September 6th
- **September 6th – What is Logic?**
 - Let's Argue! (page 5)
 - Fight Fair! How to Make an Argument Without Starting an Argument (page 7)
 - Critical Thinking as a Way of Life (page 10)
 - Additional Discussion: Are you a fair and just person? [Plato]
 - Homework:
 - Complete Section A, pg. 12 – Due September 13th
 - Define: reason, relevance, debate, presumption, clarity and premises – Due September 13th
- **September 13th**
 - Review and correct homework
 - Formal vs. Informal Logic (page 14)
 - Dialogue on Logic...and Propaganda (page 19)
 - Additional Discussion: How do you know who your friends are? [Aristotle]
 - Homework:
 - Define: formal logic, informal logic, logic, valid, sound, categorical logic, propositional logic, deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning, fallacy, relevance, persuasion, and propaganda– Due September 20th
 - Read: Unit 1: Relevance (page 24-25) – Due September 20th
- **September 20th – Ad Fontem Arguments**
 - Review and correct homework
 - Finding the Main Issue...and Asking the Right Questions (page 26)
 - Dialogue on Winning an Argument...Sort of, While Losing a Friend (page 27)
 - Chapter 1: The *Ad Fontem* Arguments: Arguments Against the Source (page 31)
 - Additional Discussion: Should you be rewarded for your efforts in school? [Confucius]
 - Homework:
 - Define: Ad Fontem Arguments and Ad Hominem– Due September 27th
 - Review all definitions twice before September 27th
- **September 27th**
 - Fallacy 1: *Ad Hominem* Abusive (page 32)
 - Fallacy Discussion on *Ad Hominem* Abusive (page 35)
 - Fallacy 2: *Ad Hominem* Circumstantial (page 37)
 - Fallacy Discussion on *Ad Hominem* Circumstantial (page 40)
 - Additional Discussion: Should you let little things bother you? [Marcus Aurelius]
 - Homework:
 - Define: *Ad Hominem* Abusive, *Ad Hominem* Circumstantial, *Tu Quoque* and Genetic Fallacy– Due October 4th
 - Review all definitions twice before October 4th
- **October 4th**
 - Fallacy 3: *Tu Quoque* (page 42)
 - Fallacy Discussion on *Tu Quoque* (page 45)
 - Fallacy 4: Genetic Fallacy (page 47)

- Begin Chapter 1 Review (page 51)
- Additional Discussion: Should you ever tell a lie? [Immanuel Kant]
- Homework:
 - Complete Chapter 1 Review
 - Chapter 1 Exam (open book)
- **October 11th – Appeals to Emotion**
 - Collect Chapter 1 Review and Chapter 1 Exam
 - Chapter 2 Appeals to Emotion (page 52)
 - Dialogue on Appeals to Emotion (page 53)
 - Fallacy 5: Appeal to Fear or *Argumentum Ad Baculum* (page 58)
 - Fallacy Discussion on Appeal to Fear (page 62)
 - Additional Discussion: Are there Times when you should be violent? [Martin Luther King, Jr.]
 - Homework:
 - Define: Appeal to Emotion, Appeal to Fear, non-argumentative persuasion– Due October 18th
 - Answer questions 1-5 on page 59– Due October 18th
- **October 18th**
 - Collect homework
 - Fallacy 6: Appeal to Pity (page 63)
 - Fallacy Discussion on Appeal to Pity (page 67)
 - Fallacy 7: Mob Appeal (page 69)
 - Additional Discussion: What makes something you say true? [Aristotle]
 - Homework:
 - Define: Appeal to Pity and Mob Appeal– Due October 25th
 - Review all definitions– Due October 25th
 - Make your own ad (page 73) – Due October 25th
- **October 25th**
 - Collect homework
 - Fallacy 8: Snob Appeal (page 75)
 - Fallacy 9: Appeal to Illegitimate Authority: *Argumentum Ad Verecundiam* (page 80)
 - Fallacy Discussion on Appeal to Illegitimate Authority (page 85)
 - Additional Discussion: Can you doubt that you exist? [René Descartes]
 - Homework:
 - Define: Snob Appeal and Appeal to Illegitimate Authority– Due November 1st
 - Write the meaning of the following: The Wrong or False Experts, The Biased Experts, The unnamed Experts, and The Celebrity Experts (page 80) – Due November 1st
 - Complete the Cumulative Fallacy Worksheet (pages 78 and 79) – Due November 1st
- **November 1st**
 - Collect Homework
 - Fallacy 10: Chronological Snobbery (page 87)
 - Begin Chapter 2 Review (page 91)
 - Additional Discussion: Does a tree make a sound if it falls in a forest with no one around? [George “Bishop” Berkeley]
 - Homework:
 - Define: Chronological Snobbery– Due November 8th
 - Complete Chapter 2 Review (page 91) – Due November 8th
 - Complete Cumulative Fallacy Worksheet (pages 94 and 95)
 - Study for Chapter 2 Exam and review all Chapter 2 definitions
 - Bring your textbook to class on November 8th

- **November 8th**
 - Review and collect all homework assignments
 - Chapter 2 Exam
 - Additional Discussion: Are you certain that the law of gravity is really a law? [David Hume]
- **November 15th – Red Herrings**
 - Chapter 3: Red Herrings (page 96)
 - Fallacy 11: Appeal to Ignorance (page 97)
 - Fallacy Discussion on Appeal to Ignorance (page 100)
 - Fallacy 12: Irrelevant Goals or Functions (page 102)
 - Additional Discussion: How can you tell when you know something? [Immanuel Kant]
 - Homework:
 - Define: Red Herring, Appeal to Ignorance, and Irrelevant Goals or Functions– Due November 29th
- **November 20th – November 24th** - Fall Break (Prometheus Closed)
- **November 29th**
 - Fallacy 13: Irrelevant Thesis (page 105)
 - Fallacy Discussion on Irrelevant Goals or Functions and Irrelevant Thesis (page 108)
 - Fallacy 14: Straw Man Fallacy (page 110)
 - Begin Chapter 3 Review (page 114)
 - Additional Discussion: Do you perceive things as they are or only as they seem to be? [Bertrand Russell]
 - Homework:
 - Define: Irrelevant Thesis and Straw Man Fallacy– Due December 6th
 - Complete Chapter 3 Review (pages 114 and 115)– Due December 6th
 - Complete Cumulative Fallacy Worksheet (pages 116 and 117) – Due December 6th
 - Review all Chapter 3 definitions and Study for Chapter 3 Exam
 - Bring your textbook to class on December 7th
- **December 6th**
 - Review and collect all homework
 - Chapter 3 Exam
 - Additional Discussion: Can you lie to yourself? [Jean-Paul Sartre]
 - Study for Unit 1 Exam - this includes all fallacies and definitions for Chapters 1, 2, and 3.
- **December 13th**
 - Unit 1 Exam
 - All ungraded homework should be turned in by the end of this class period.
 - Any make up exams should be completed by end of the day.
 - I will not accept any unfinished work after this date. Anything not turned in or completed will be ungraded and therefore will receive a zero.

December 15th – January 14th - Winter Break (Prometheus Closed)

Spring Schedule

- **January 17th – Presumption**
 - Unit 2: Presumption, Definitions Summary (page 118)
 - Fallacies of Presumption (page 120)
 - Chapter 4: Fallacies of Presupposition (page 121)
 - Additional Discussion: Can you think about nothing at all? [Parmenides]
 - Homework:
 - Define: Fallacies of Induction, Fallacies of Presupposition, axioms, enthymeme – Due January 24th

- **January 24th – Fallacies of Presupposition**
 - Fallacy 15: Begging the Question or *Petio Principii* (page 122)
 - Fallacy Discussion on Begging the Question (page 126)
 - Additional Discussion: Does anything ever happen by chance? [Democritus]
 - Homework:
 - Define: Begging the Question, Loaded Question, Loaded Label, Loaded Definition, and Circular Reasoning – Due January 31st
 - Review all definitions from Chapter 1 – Chapter 4, page 127
- **January 31st**
 - Fallacy 16: Bifurcation or False Dilemma (page 128)
 - Dialogue on Presumption (page 132)
 - Fallacy Discussion on Bifurcation (page 136)
 - Additional Discussion: Is time what you see when you look at a clock? [St. Augustine]
 - Homework:
 - Define: bifurcation and review all Chapter 4 definitions – Due February 7th
- **February 7th**
 - Fallacy 17: Fallacy of Moderation (page 138)
 - Additional Discussion: If the universe came from the Big Bang, where did the Big Bang come from? [St. Thomas Aquinas]
 - Homework:
 - Define: Fallacy of Moderation – Due February 14th
 - Review all definitions from Chapter 1 - Chapter 4, page 141
- **February 14th**
 - Fallacy 18: Is-Ought Fallacy (page 142)
 - Fallacy Discussion on the Is-Ought Fallacy (page 145)
 - Fallacy 19: Fallacy of Composition (page 147)
 - Additional Discussion: Are you the same person you were five years ago? [John Locke]
 - Homework:
 - Define: Is-Ought Fallacy and Fallacy of Composition – Due February 21nd
 - Review all definitions for Chapter 4
- **February 21st**
 - Fallacy 20: Fallacy of Division (page 150)
 - Fallacy Discussion on Composition and Division (page 153)
 - Begin Chapter 4 Review (page 155)
 - Additional Discussion: Do you have free will? [Thomas Hobbes]
 - Homework:
 - Complete Chapter 4 Review (pages 155-157) – Due February 28th
 - Complete Cumulative Fallacy Worksheet (page 158-159) – Due February 28th
 - Review all Chapter 4 definitions
- **February 28th**
 - Go over Chapter 4 Review (pages 155-157) and Cumulative Fallacy Worksheet (page 158-159)
 - Collect homework
 - Chapter 4 Exam
 - Additional Discussion: Does anything depend on everything? [Georg Hegel]
- **March 7th – Fallacies of Induction**
 - Chapter 5 Fallacies of Induction (page 160)
 - Fallacy 21: Sweeping Generalization or accident (page 163)
 - Additional Discussion: Is it important to speak and write so you can be understood?

- Homework:
 - Define: Fallacy of Induction and Sweeping Generalization – Due March 21st
 - Review all definitions from Chapter 1-Chapter 4
- **March 12th - 16th** - Spring Break (Prometheus closed)
- **March 21st**
 - Fallacy 22: Hasty Generalization or Converse Accident (page 167)
 - Fallacy 23: False Analogy (page 170)
 - Fallacy Discussion on False Analogy (page 173)
 - Additional Discussion: Should you always listen to the opinions of others?
 - Homework:
 - Define: Hasty Generalization and False Analogy – Due March 28th
 - Review all definitions from Chapter 1-Chapter 5, page 174
- **March 28th**
 - Fallacy 24: False Cause (page 175)
 - Additional Discussion: Should you criticize people of the opinions people have?
 - Homework:
 - Define: False Cause Fallacy – Due April 4th
 - Review all Chapter 5 definitions
- **April 4th**
 - Fallacy 25: Fake Precision (page 180)
 - Begin Chapter 5 Review (pages 184-185)
 - Additional Discussion: Why is “because” such an important word?
 - Homework:
 - Define: Fake Precision and review all Chapter 5 definitions– Due April 11th
 - Complete Chapter 5 Review (pages 184-185)
 - Complete Cumulative Fallacy Worksheet (pages 186-187)
- **April 11th**
 - Go over Chapter 5 Review (pages 184-185) and Cumulative Fallacy Worksheet (page 186-187)
 - Collect homework
 - Chapter 5 Exam
 - Additional Discussion: Is it always easy to tell what causes things to happen?
- **April 18th - Clarity**
 - Unit 3: Clarity (page 188)
 - Chapter 6: Fallacies of Clarity (page 189)
 - Dialogue on Fallacies of Clarity (page 191)
 - Additional Discussion: If many people believe that something is true, is it true?
 - Homework:
 - Define: Fallacies of Clarity – Due April 25th
 - Review all definitions from Chapter 1-Chapter 5
- **April 25th**
 - Fallacy 26: Equivocation (page 195)
 - Fallacy Discussion on Equivocation (page 199)
 - Fallacy 27: Accent (page 201)
 - Additional Discussion: Do two wrongs balance out and make an action right?
 - Homework:
 - Define: Equivocation and Accent – Due May 2nd
 - Review Chapter 6 definitions
- **May 2nd**
 - Fallacy 28: Distinction Without a Difference (page 204)
 - Fallacy Discussion on Distinction Without a Difference (page 207)

- Begin Chapter 6 Review (pages 209-210)
- Additional Discussion: “I am lying.” True or False?
- Homework:
 - Define: Distinction Without a Difference and review all Chapter 6 definitions – Due May 9th
 - Complete Chapter 6 Review (pages 209-210) – Due May 9th
 - Complete Cumulative Fallacy Worksheet (pages 211-212)
- **May 9th**
 - Go over Chapter 5 Review (pages 209-210) and Cumulative Fallacy Worksheet (page 211-212)
 - Collect homework
 - Chapter 6 Exam
 - Additional Discussion: “I wonder...” what it means to define something?
 - Homework:
 - Study Final Exam which covers the entire text and all 28 fallacies
- **May 16th**
 - Final Exam
 - Last day of class and end of year celebration
 - All ungraded homework should be turned in by the end of this class period.
 - Any make-up tests should be completed by the end of the day.
 - I will not accept any unfinished work after this date. Anything not turned in or completed will be ungraded and therefore will receive a zero.