Logic and Critical Thinking (Phil 1313.22736 Honors)
Spring 2019
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Office Hours: Wednesdays: 1:30-2:30pm and by appointment

Topic
In our lives, we deal with arguments everyday. These arguments are often silly and for entertainment. For example, we might engage in an argument over whether Fast and the Furious is a better movie franchise than Hunger Games. However, our arguments also involve matters of utmost importance. For example, we may engage in an argument over the role that race and gender play in our society, and we may then argue over how best to tackle the problems, if any, that arise from these roles. Not only do we always engage in arguments, everyone engages in arguments. Friends, family, social media, journalists, educators, and politicians use arguments every day. They are used to defend one’s own views and beliefs as well as persuade others. So it is absolutely crucial to our lives that we be able to identify and evaluate arguments. This is the purview of logic and critical thinking. Logic is the study of arguments and reasoning. And in this class, we will learn what types of arguments there are as well as the principles that govern the goodness and badness of these arguments. More importantly, we will learn how to apply these principles in the evaluation of arguments and reasoning.

It is worth stressing that the primary goal of this course is to develop and train your ability to critically evaluate arguments. And it is absolutely important that the aim is the development of a know how. In order to know how to ride a bike, you must not only learn how a bike works and what it takes to ride one, you must actually develop the ability to ride a bike. This ability is a know how and can only be gained through practice, practice, and more practice. Therefore, the course will involve regular practice, both in class and out of class.

Course Materials
I wrote a free open-access textbook for the course, which will be available on the course website.

Requirements

Participation (5% total) Your participation grade will come into affect if you are close to the grade up or grade down. See Grading policies below.

Assignments (15% total) Assignments will be checked for completion but will not be graded. Some of these assignment will be assigned and completed in class.

Quizzes (10% total) The number of quizzes is to be determined but there will be at least 3 and no more than 6. Some will be announced in advanced. Some will not.

Four Exams (70% total, 23.3% each) Exams may cover material from a previous exam.

NB: Your scores for each component of the grade are weighted according to the percentages here. If you don’t know how to calculate a weighted grade, please ask.
Topics and Schedule

Tentative exam schedule: 1st exam (6th week), 2nd exam (9th week), 3rd exam (13th week), and 4th exam (TBD)

Class Policies

- First and foremost, this class is meant to be a safe environment of mutual respect. For that reason, the following two policies apply: (1) NO LAPTOP USE in class unless necessary as a college-approved accommodation. (2) Put your cellphones away and silence them. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade.

- No Late Assignments or Makeup Quizzes- The general policy is that I don’t allow late assignments are make-up quizzes. The only exception is if you miss class for a medical reason or another pre-approved excuse.

- Make-up Exams: If you talk to me in advance or have a medical emergency, then we can deal with this on a case by case basis.

- Email Policy: I usually set aside a time in the late afternoon (before 4pm) each weekday to reply to emails. If you email me before then I will typically reply the same day, otherwise, I will reply the next day. Also, if you ask me a question whose answer can be found either on the syllabus or on the class website, then you will not receive an answer. So if you don’t receive an email within a day or two, then it means the answer is on the syllabus or the website.

- The attendance and participation grade is meant to reward those who regularly attend AND participate in class. An A means that you did both, a B means that you simply attended, a C means that you missed a significant amount of class (> 4 classes), a D or F means that you were a distraction in class and/or you missed much of class (> 6 classes).

- I reserve the right to adjust the final grade for significant improvement from the beginning to end of the class. This is only meant to reward those who improve and will be applicable in cases where your final grade is very close to the next letter grade up.

- As a matter of fairness, there will be no extra credit offered on an individual basis.

Academic Honesty

Oklahoma State University is committed to the maintenance of the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct of its members. This level of ethical behavior and integrity will be maintained in this course. Participating in a behavior that violates academic integrity (e.g., unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, multiple submissions, cheating on examinations, fabricating information, helping another person cheat, unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, and fraudulently altering academic records) will result in your being sanctioned. Violations may subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment, examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript (F!), and being suspended from the University. You have the right to appeal the charge. Contact the Office of Academic Affairs, 101 Whitehurst, 405-744-5627, academicintegrity.okstate.edu.

For further information about university policies, see: https://academicaffairs.okstate.edu/sites/default/files/Fall%202017%20Syllabus%20Attachment.pdf