



Course syllabus: Critical Thinking & Reasoning  
 College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
 PHIL-1533-X20  
 Spring semester

<b>Course Title</b>	Critical Thinking & Reasoning
<b>Course Prefix, Number, and Section</b>	PHIL-1533-X20
<b>Professor</b>	Dr. Daniel Murphy
<b>Term</b>	Spring 2023
<b>Meeting Times</b>	Online
<b>Email Address</b>	<a href="mailto:daniel.murphy@msutexas.edu">daniel.murphy@msutexas.edu</a>

**General Course Information**

<b>Learning outcomes</b>	<p>Drawing upon introductory elements of argumentative reasoning, and as well upon other resources and perspectives, students will be challenged to hone and apply their reasoning and critical thinking skills by analyzing, critiquing, and defending different points of view, positions, and arguments.</p> <p>By the end of the course, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand and work with basic concepts of argumentative reasoning</li> <li>- Identify components of arguments (premises, conclusions, etc.)</li> <li>- Identify and work with certain basic types of arguments (also in context)</li> <li>- Distinguish between deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning</li> <li>- Identify fallacies and apply basic elements of argument evaluation (also for arguments presented in context)</li> <li>- Develop well-formed arguments in written pieces so as to support positions they are defending</li> </ul>
<b>Textbook and readings</b>	<p>David Kelley, <i>The Art of Reasoning</i> 4th ed. (Norton, 2014).</p> <p>In addition to the textbook readings, there will also be other readings that will be freely available online and/or in .pdf format on D2L/Brightspace.</p>

**Plan for course (week-by-week)**

<b>Week/Date(s)</b>	<b>Brief description of topics and readings – see our D2L platform for assignments, due dates, textbook and .pdf readings, and other details for each weekly module/cycle</b>
Week 1: 1/16 – 11:30 pm on 1/22	Introduction to course

Week 2: 1/23 - 11:30 pm on 1/29	Mullen reading
Week 3: 1/30 – 11:30 pm on 2/5	“Introduction”, “Language and Reasoning”, and Chapter 1 (classification) in Kelley text
Week 4: 2/6 – 11:30 pm on 2/12	Chapter 3 (propositions) in Kelley text
Week 5: 2/13 – 11:30 pm on 2/19	Harrington reading
Week 6: 2/20 - 11:30 pm on 2/26	Chapter 4 (argument analysis) in Kelley text
Week 7: 2/27 – 11:30 pm on 3/5	Chapter 4 (argument analysis) in Kelley text (cont.)
Week 8: 3/6 – 11:30 pm on 3/12	Chapter 5 (fallacies) in Kelley text
Week 9: 3/13 – 11:30 pm on 3/19	<i>As this weekly cycle overlaps with spring break, there are no new readings or assignments for this weekly cycle</i>
Week 10: 3/20 – 11:30 pm on 3/26	Chapter 5 (fallacies) in Kelley text (cont.)
Week 11: 3/27 – 11:30 pm on 4/2	Chapter 6 (categorical propositions) in Kelley text (cont.)
Week 12: 4/3 – 11:30 pm on 4/9	Chapter 6 (categorical propositions) in Kelley text
Week 13: 4/10 – 11:30 pm on 4/16	Chapter 7 (categorical syllogisms) in Kelley text
Week 14: 4/17 – 11:30 pm on 4/23	Chapter 7 (categorical syllogisms) in Kelley text (cont.)
Week 15: 4/24 - 11:30 pm on 4/30	Chapter 12 (inductive generalizations); final exam-essay due on 4/30

### Course Components: Required Assignments

<b>11 Quizzes (38.5%)</b>	The maximum credit (total point value) that can be earned for each quiz is 100 points. Each quiz is worth 3.5% of the overall grade for the course. Some quizzes are shorter, and some are longer. The grading system for these quizzes will be as follows: 90 - 100 points: “A” range 80 - 90 points: “B” range 70 - 80 points: “C” range 60 - 70 points: “D” range Fewer than 60 points: “F”
<b>1 Final Exam-Essay (15%)</b>	The maximum credit (total point value) that can be earned for the final exam, which will be an essay assignment, is 100 points. The essay is worth 15% of the overall grade for the course. For additional rubric and grading information, see below.

<b>2 Short Essays (15%)</b>	The maximum credit (total point value) that can be earned for each of these essays, which are shorter than the final exam-essay, is 100 points. These essays are each worth 7.5% of the overall grade for the course. For additional rubric and grading information, see below.
<b>9 Discussion Forum Assignments (31.5%)</b>	The maximum credit that can be earned for each forum assignment is 100 points. Each forum assignment is worth 3.5% of the overall grade for the course. For additional rubric and grading information, see below.

### Grading Rubrics for Essays and Discussion Forum Assignments

<b>Grading rubric for essay assignments</b>	<p><i>The essays will be evaluated using the criteria listed below. Study these criteria carefully. Simply putting in time and doing all of the work will not guarantee a high grade. Quality is what counts!</i></p> <p><b>Criteria for "A" range grades:</b> Students show that they understand the material very well and are able to construct an essay which expresses the relevant ideas, concepts, and arguments in their own words, which incorporates their own insights, and which is presented in a clear, well-organized form. The essay has a well-supported thesis, incorporates relevant distinctions, definitions, and other issues raised by the materials covered. The essay has solid supporting evidence and arguments. The essay is well-written and has few or no grammatical mistakes and/or mechanical errors. The assignment directions have been followed, and the essay has been submitted on time.</p> <p><b>Criteria for "B" range grades:</b> Students show that they understand the material well but their own contribution is more limited. The arguments and/or evidence provided are not as convincing, and the materials covered are less well incorporated. There may be a few issues regarding the clarity of writing, grammar, syntax, and/or other mechanical errors, but generally, the essay is still easy to follow. All assignment directions have been followed, and the essay normally has been submitted on time.</p> <p><b>Criteria for "C" range grades:</b> The essay reflects that students understand some issues, but miss some important points. The essay is not as well-written and lacks some clarity, but it can still be followed. The arguments and/or supporting evidence are unconvincing, perhaps because key issues are missed or because the writing (grammar, syntax, etc.) is poor enough to significantly affect the content of the essay. Some assignment directions were not followed. The essay may have been submitted late.</p> <p><b>Criteria for "D" range grades:</b> The essay does not show sufficient understanding of the key issues. The content that the essay was meant to treat is substantially missing. The supporting evidence and/or supporting arguments for the thesis are missing, sparse, or of poor quality. The writing itself is generally of poor quality, with numerous clear flaws and errors in grammar, syntax, and/or other mechanical errors, so that the essay runs the risk of being unintelligible. Some or most of the assignment directions were not followed. The essay may have been submitted late.</p> <p><b>Criteria for an "F" grade:</b> The essay shows little understanding of the key issues. The content that the essay was meant to cover is largely or entirely missing. Supporting evidence and supporting arguments are very</p>
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	<p>sparse, of very poor quality, or not present at all. Writing is very disorganized, with many significant flaws and errors in grammar and syntax, to the point that the essay cannot be understood at all. Most or all of the essay assignment directions were not followed. The essay may have been submitted late.</p> <p>'Perfect' A essay will be recorded as 100/100 points- well done! A essay (but a bit less than 'perfect') will be recorded as 95/100 points</p> <p>A- essay will be recorded as a 91.5/100 points B+ essay will be recorded as 88/100 points B essay will be recorded as 85/100 points B- essay will be recorded as 81.5/100 points C+ essay will be recorded as 78/100 points C essay will be recorded as 75/100 points C- essay will be recorded as 71.5/100 points D+ essay will be recorded as 68/100 points D essay will be recorded as 65/100 points F essay will be recorded as 50/100 points or 0/100 points (incomplete or violating academic integrity)</p>
<p><b>Grading rubric for discussion forum assignments</b></p>	<p><i>Posts made on D2L by the assignment deadline will be graded using the criteria listed below.</i></p> <p><u>A range:</u> Posts have substantial content. They are well organized and very well written, with conciseness, style and insight. Posts normally have at most one grammatical, spelling, or punctuation mistake. Posts stand out as short written pieces.</p> <p><u>B range:</u> Posts have substantial content which reflect and respond to the forum topic, are relatively well organized, and are acceptably written. Posts likely contain one or more grammatical, spelling or punctuation mistakes. Posts are satisfactory for the demands of the assignment, but do not stand out.</p> <p><u>C range:</u> Posts have a little more substantial content, but drift off topic and/or suffer from weak organization, and also likely have several grammatical, spelling or punctuation mistakes. Post are marginally acceptable as short written pieces. Posts may be missing.</p> <p><u>D range:</u> Posts have a bit of substantial content. However, they make only marginal reference to course content, readings, or forum topic, and contains several grammatical, spelling, or punctuation mistakes. They likely suffer from a combination of these kinds of deficiencies, and posts are also poorly organized. Posts are mostly unacceptable as short written pieces. Posts may be missing.</p> <p><u>F:</u> Posts have very little substantial content, do not seriously reflect the course content, readings, or forum topic, contain numerous significant grammatical, spelling or punctuation mistakes, and likely suffer from a combination of these kinds of deficiencies. Posts are very badly organized. Posts may be missing. Overall, posts are unacceptable as short written pieces.</p> <p>'Perfect' A forum will be recorded as 100/100 points- well done! A forum (but a bit less than 'perfect') will be recorded as 95/100 points A- forum will be recorded as a 91.5/100 points B+ forum will be recorded as 88/100 points B forum will be recorded as 85/100 points B- forum will be recorded as 81.5/100 points C+ forum will be recorded as 78/100 points</p>

	<p>C forum will be recorded as 75/100 points  C- forum will be recorded as 71.5/100 points  D+ forum will be recorded as 68/100 points  D forum will be recorded as 65/100 points  F forum will be recorded as 50/100 points or 0/100 points (incomplete or violating academic integrity)  F post will be recorded as 50/100 points or 0/100 points (incomplete or violating academic integrity)</p>
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### Course Policies (1): Submitting Assignments Online; Missed and Late Assignments

<p><b>Submitting online assignments: general remarks</b></p>	<p>Above is the list of the assignments that will receive grades, and as well the basic week-by-week plan of the course that provides the topics. On D2L, you will find the required readings, graded assignments for each week, due dates, etc.. In order to be able to receive full credit for the graded assignments, you will have to complete the graded assignments by their specified deadlines. Here are a few additional details regarding each of the different kinds of assignments:</p> <p><b>For quizzes:</b> You will submit your replies to quiz questions on D2L directly, which normally will automatically grade the quiz and present you with your score out of 100.</p> <p><b>For discussion forum assignments:</b> Please make sure that you follow the instructions for each assignment, and that you post in the appropriate forum on D2L (do not attach a separate document which contains your forum assignment, and do not email your forum assignment to me). There are posting topics and instructions for each discussion forum, along with a due date for each post that you are required to make in a forum assignment.</p> <p><b>For the short essays and the final exam-essay:</b> You are to write or cut/paste your essay directly into the appropriate place on D2L for the essay assignment.</p> <p><i>For all assignments, please make sure you click on the appropriate buttons on D2L when you are ready to submit the assignment, in order to complete the submission of the assignment properly! Not doing this properly may result in the assignment getting to me late or in not getting to me at all, and in that case you are likely to lose credit.</i></p>
<p><b>Policy for essays not turned in</b></p>	<p>As a general rule, if an essay is not turned in then it will receive a grade of 0 points, and a student could receive an F for the course if either or both of the essays are not turned in. All final decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, but do note that this policy is normally maintained.</p>
<p><b>Policy for essays turned in late</b></p>	<p>I reserve the right to subtract part of a letter grade (from a B+ to a B, for example) for each day that an essay is late. If an essay is late, then students have one week after the original essay deadline to submit the essay. Once that week is up, the student normally receives a 0 for the essay, and normally the essay will no longer be accepted. All final decisions regarding late essays will be made on a case-by-case basis, but do note that this lateness policy is typically maintained.</p>
<p><b>Policy for forum assignments not turned in</b></p>	<p>As a general rule, any forum assignment not turned in will receive 0 points, and a student could receive an F for the course if forum assignments are not turned in. All final decisions regarding forum</p>

	assignments not turned in will be made on a case-by-case basis, but do note that this policy is normally maintained.
<b>Policy for forum assignments turned in late</b>	I reserve the right to subtract five points for each day that any part of a forum assignment is late. If any part of the forum assignment is late, then students have 72 hours after the forum assignment deadline to submit the forum assignment. Once the 72 hours are up, the student normally receives a 0 for the forum assignment, and normally the forum assignment will no longer be accepted. All final decisions regarding late forum assignments will be made on a case-by-case basis, but do note that this lateness policy is typically maintained.
<b>Policy for quizzes not turned in</b>	As a general rule, any quiz not turned in will receive 0 points, and a student could receive an F for the course if quizzes are not turned in. All decisions regarding quizzes not turned in will be made on a case-by-case basis, but do note that this policy is normally maintained.
<b>Policy for quizzes turned in late</b>	I reserve the right to subtract ten points for each day that a quiz is late. If the quiz is late, then students have 48 hours after the quiz deadline to submit the quiz. Once those 48 hours are up, the student normally receives a 0 for the quiz, and normally the quiz will no longer be accepted. All final decisions regarding late quizzes will be made on a case-by-case basis, but do note that this lateness policy is typically maintained.

## Course Policies (2): Grading, D2L Usage, Communication, etc.

<b>Grading Criteria and Weighting</b>	<p><b><u>Grade component weighting</u></b></p> <table> <tr> <td>Quizzes</td> <td>38.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Short essays</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Final exam-essay</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Discussion Forums</td> <td>31.5%</td> </tr> </table> <p><b><u>Final Course Grade</u></b></p> <p>Throughout the course, you can look to D2L to see your overall percentage to date, and the corresponding letter grade. This allows you to see how you are doing in the course. The percentage margins that correspond to the final overall letter grade for the course are as follows:</p> <p><i>Weighted total grade between...</i></p> <p>93.5% and up to 100% = A  89.5% and less than 93.5% = A-  86.5% and less than 89.5% = B+  83.5% and less than 86.5% = B  79.5% and less than 83.5% = B-  76.5% and less than 79.5% = C+  73.5% and less than 76.5% = C  69.5% and less than 73.5% = C-  66.5% and less than 69.5% = D+  59.5% and less than 66.5% = D  any percentage less than 59.5% earns an F for the course</p>	Quizzes	38.5%	Short essays	15%	Final exam-essay	15%	Discussion Forums	31.5%
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Final exam-essay	15%								
Discussion Forums	31.5%								
<b>D2L Usage</b>	Especially as this is a fully online course, students need to have regular access to a computer and Internet for email, submitting assignments on D2L, and accessing all course content on D2L. The course is run through D2L, and the course requires that students know how to use D2L. Use of MSU email by students is required.								

<b>Communication and receiving grades and feedback</b>	<p>Students are welcome to contact me about the course at any time. When a student contacts me by email, he/she can expect a reply within a day or so, including weekends.</p> <p>In terms of receiving grades and feedback, quizzes are normally graded automatically through D2L, so students can expect to receive their grade on a quiz directly after having completed the quiz. For discussion forum assignments, students can usually expect to receive a grade and some comments on the assignment within a few days after the due date of the last post in the assignment.</p>
<b>PowerPoint notes to guide you</b>	<p>On our D2L platform, you will find several sets of notes (PowerPoint notes) that trace and reflect the readings and course content and are intended to help guide you with respect to the readings and assignments. These notes are recommended for your use as you progress through the course, but they are not required reading.</p>
<b>Plagiarism and Cheating</b>	<p>All issues involving academic integrity and/or plagiarism will be dealt with according to D2L guidelines. As a general rule, a plagiarized essay normally receives 0 points, and more severe penalties (including an "F" for the course, and/or penalties more severe than that) are possible. Plagiarized forum assignments normally receive 0 points, and more severe penalties (including an "F" for the course, and/or penalties more severe than that) are possible. Submitted quizzes that violate academic integrity normally receive 0 points, and more severe penalties (including an "F" for the course, and/or penalties more severe than that) are possible.</p>

**Course polices (3): Other Policies**

<b>Syllabus and auditing</b>	<p>Any and all parts of the syllabus are subject to change; auditing of the course is not permitted</p>
<b>Deadlines and online coursework</b>	<p>Odd things happen in cyberspace - computers crash, emails get lost, servers disconnect temporarily, and logins fail. Do not wait for the last minute to do your work. <i>Allow time to meet deadlines!</i> Have backup computer access should your computer fail, such as at a neighbor's or friend's place, or at work. As we will be using D2L for the course, make sure you know how to submit your assignments on D2L. I will give you the help that I can in terms of D2L usage, but ultimately, you are responsible for knowing how to use D2L, and you are responsible for getting any training you need in order to use D2L. You are also responsible for resolving all technical and IT-related issues that affect your using D2L for the course, and that affect any aspect of your participation in the course.</p> <p>You are responsible for submitting your assignments on time, no matter what kinds of problems you might have – including (but not limited to) personal problems, time management problems, work problems, family problems, and computer/IT problems. Exceptions for turning in assignments late – for whatever reason – will be made only in the most extraordinary of circumstances, and will be made on a case-by-case basis.</p>
<b>IT/ D2L /email-related technical problems</b>	<p>You are responsible for resolving any IT/technical issues, including those involving D2L, so that you can complete your assignments on time and engage with the course normally. If you claim that any kind of IT or D2L issue has inhibited you from completing the assignments on time and/or submitting them in the correct fashion, then I will do what I can to help. However, there are limitations to how much I can help, and in cases where you need more technical help with D2L, you are responsible for going to the relevant MSU technical staff and for getting</p>

	<p>an assessment of the problem and why it inhibited your completing the assignments, and you are also responsible for getting the problem resolved.</p>
<p><b>Extra credit and end of course</b></p>	<p>Opportunities for extra credit assignments are occasionally made available to students, but this does not happen so often. However, if I decide to make extra credit opportunities available to the class, then I will announce this to the class toward the end of the course. Do note that the amount of credit to be earned from these possible opportunities is usually rather minimal. So in any case, students should not expect to depend on possible extra credit assignments to boost their grade very much.</p> <p>The course ends on <b>11:30 pm on Sunday, 5/7/23</b>. Normally, no assignments will be accepted after this deadline. Assignments which have <i>already</i> received a grade of 0 due to poor performance, lateness, academic integrity violations, etc. will normally <i>not</i> be considered for submission or re-submission before or after the <b>5/7/23 deadline</b> (so, any grade of 0 will normally remain a 0).</p>