

# PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

## Department of Arts and Sciences

### Philosophy

### 213.13 – PHIL: Critical Thinking

Semester: Winter 2010 Credit hours: 3

Class hours: Mondays 9:50 - 11:05 a.m. & Thursdays 12:40 - 1:55 p.m. Classroom: 1

Instructor: Hendrik van der Breggen, Ph.D. Office: 2A16

Office hours: Fridays 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (by appointment)

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## SYLLABUS

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### A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a course in practical logic, designed to help students think clearly and critically by learning to identify, evaluate, and present arguments. The course includes the study of basic types of reasoning, the structure of argument, criteria of argument assessment, formal and informal fallacies, plus problems of clarity and meaning.

### B. COURSE OBJECTIVES

After the successful completion of this course, the student will have gained an introductory level of understanding concerning the basic concepts and principles of critical thinking; the student will have improved his/her skill in employing these concepts and principles in the art of argument analysis, evaluation, and construction; and the student will have achieved increased clarity on some philosophical topics relevant to critical thinking (e.g., truth, skepticism, the virtues of a critical thinker).

### C. COURSE TEXTS AND SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

#### 1. Required Textbook

Govier, Trudy. *A Practical Study of Argument*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Belmont, California: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2010.

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**Special note to students:** It is your responsibility to retain course syllabi for possible future use to support applications for transfer of credit to other educational institutions.

## 2. Recommended (but not required) booklet

Beilby, James & David K. Clark. *Why Bother with Truth? Arriving at Knowledge in a Skeptical Society*. Norcross, Georgia: Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, 2000.

## 3. Supplementary Readings

Some notes and articles will be distributed in class or electronically or made available in the college library.

## D. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Listening to lectures and participation in class discussions. (See Course Policies below regarding attendance, punctuality, and appropriate in-class behaviour.)
2. Reading of assigned portions of the textbooks plus assigned supplementary readings.
3. Completion of each of the following:
  - (a) Exams. There will be a midterm and final exam. The purpose of each exam is twofold: to encourage the student to keep up with his/her understanding of the course readings and lectures, and to monitor that understanding. Each exam will cover primarily the course material prior to it only (since the beginning of the course or since the previous exam, as the case may be).
  - (b) Assignments. A short assignment will be completed almost every week (not including the first two weeks); exact number of assignments will be determined by instructor as the course progresses. The purpose of each short assignment is threefold: to encourage the student to keep up with his/her understanding of the readings and lectures, to monitor that understanding, and to provide an opportunity for the student to apply what has been learned and thereby develop his/her critical thinking skills. Some short assignments will be longer and/or more difficult than others, but they will each count the same mark-wise. Assignments will be electronically distributed early in the week and will be due in hard copy at the beginning of the next week. One assignment with student's lowest mark will be dropped from the final grade calculation. (No substitute short assignments will be provided for short assignments missed due to illness, sports outings, etc.; all missed assignments receive 0 points.)

## E. GRADING SUMMARY

### 1. Grade Components

|                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| Exams (25% each) | 50%        |
| Assignments      | <u>50%</u> |
| Total            | 100%       |

## 2. Grading Scale

Final course letter grades and their Grade Point equivalents will be calculated using the following scale:

| <u>Quality</u>           | <u>Letter</u> | <u>GP</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Satisfactory/Average</u> | <u>C+</u>        | <u>2.5</u> | <u>67-69</u> |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------|----------|-----------------------------|------------------|------------|--------------|
| Exceptional<br>Excellent | A+            | 4.0       | 93-100   | Adequate                    | C                | 2.0        | 63-66        |
|                          | A             |           | 85-92    |                             | C-               |            | 60-62        |
|                          | A-            |           | 80-84    |                             | Marginal<br>Poor |            | D+           |
| Superior<br>Good         | B+            | 77-79     | D        | 53-56                       |                  |            |              |
|                          | B             | 73-76     | D-       | 50-52                       |                  |            |              |
|                          | B-            | 70-72     | Failure  | F                           | 0.0              | <50        |              |

## F. COURSE POLICIES

### 1. Class Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected as well as highly recommended. Your instructor's lectures will add clarity to the contents of the course textbook and supplementary readings, and your instructor's lectures will sometimes address topics not covered by the course textbook and supplementary readings. Also, much will be learned from class discussions.

Three absences are allowed (though not recommended): i.e., three 1.25-hour class meetings may be missed without penalty or documentation of excuse. Thereafter a 3 percent deduction from the final course grade is levied per missed class (unless the absence is excused for a good reason such as serious illness, extreme emergency, or death, verified by a reasonable authority such as a medical doctor; in these cases the student must fill out an Absence Form as well as submit appropriate documentation). (The Absence Form can be found at the end of the online version of this syllabus.)

Arriving to class late is a seriously frowned upon behaviour. If a student is late for class, he/she is advised to enter the class quietly from the rear of the room and be seated quietly at the rear of the room. At the end of the class the late student should advise the professor of the late student's attendance to avoid being recorded as absent (the late student should do this *after* the professor has finished talking with all other students about matters relating to course content).

Inappropriate behaviour while attending class (e.g., talking without instructor's approval) is unacceptable. Such behaviour may result in a 5 or more percent deduction from the final grade, depending upon the severity of the inappropriate behaviour (as judged by the instructor). By

maintaining his/her registration in the class, the student agrees to abide by the following ground rules for discussion:

- Rule 1 – Show your hand when you wish to speak.
- Rule 2 – Speak only when asked to speak.
- Rule 3 – When you begin to speak state your name clearly.
- Rule 4 – One person speaks at a time.
- Rule 5 – Be quiet when another person is speaking.
- Rule 6 – Feel free to voice disagreement, but do so with gentleness and respect.
- Rule 7 – Try to make each other feel comfortable enough to make mistakes: i.e., don't scoff or laugh in a put-down sort of way. (Note: Good thinking requires practice, and practice usually involves the making of mistakes—and the making of mistakes in a class discussion often leads to greater understanding for everyone.)
- Rule 8 – Stop the talking/discussion when your instructor says stop. (Your instructor has material that has to get covered during the course. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a discussion or lecture, then feel free to make an appointment with your professor to continue the discussion.)

## **2. Information and Communication Technologies in Class**

Student use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as laptop computers for purposes other than class note-taking is not allowed in the classroom, because students are expected to give their total attention to class activities. Use of cell-phones or ipods is never appropriate in the classroom, nor is the use of laptop computers to play games, chat with others, browse the internet, or engage material not related to the class. Such use of ICTs is distracting to classmates and disrespectful to the instructor. Unlike some other post-secondary institutions, Providence has not yet found it necessary to ban laptops from the classroom or prevent wireless internet access in classrooms. Only judicious use of laptops will keep it that way.

## **3. Late Assignment Policy**

Late assignments will not be accepted (except in cases of serious illness, extreme emergency, or death, verified by a reasonable authority such as a medical doctor; in these cases the student must fill out a Late Assignment Submission Form as well as submit appropriate documentation). (The Late Assignment Form can be found at the end of the online version of this syllabus.)

## **4. Missed Exams**

Students who miss exams other than a final exam are responsible to contact the professor within one week of the exam date if they still wish to write the exam. Permission to do so will be given to only those students who present evidence or reasonable grounds acceptable to the professor for having missed the exam (e.g., serious illness, extreme emergency, or death, verified by a reasonable authority such as a medical doctor; in these cases the student must fill out a Late Assignment Submission Form [see below in the online version of the syllabus, but this form will

be adjusted for a *missed exam*] as well as submit appropriate documentation). The format of the exam will be at the discretion of the professor, with essay questions likely. Students who do not write an exam by at most two weeks after the exam date will receive a grade of zero for that component of the course. Exceptions to final exams must be processed by appeal to the Academic Committee. All requests to have a final exam rescheduled must be approved by the Academic Committee in accordance with the Early Leave Policy (available in the College Academic Calendar).

## 5. Plagiarism

Students are expected to demonstrate academic integrity in all its various forms and will be held accountable for doing so by the policy on Academic Dishonesty in the Student Handbook: [http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/student\\_life/](http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/student_life/). One particularly problematic breach of academic integrity is plagiarism, which is stealing from the ideas and writings of another person and passing them off as one's own. For an elaboration of the nature, types, and prevention of plagiarism, see documents "How to Cite Sources and Avoid Plagiarism" and "Students' Guide to Preventing and Avoiding Plagiarism" which are both available on the Providence website: [http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/library/information/use\\_a\\_style\\_guide\\_or\\_create\\_a\\_bibliography/](http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/library/information/use_a_style_guide_or_create_a_bibliography/).

## G. COURSE OUTLINE

### 1. Daily Class Format

- (a) Welcome
- (b) Attendance
- (c) Misc. announcements/clarifications
- (d) Brief overview of day's lecture
- (e) Lecture and discussion

### 2. Course Schedule/ Outline

**Note 1:** The outline below is somewhat tentative (we may at times lag behind or leap ahead of the schedule). Dates concerning exams are quite firm.

**Note 2:** Readings from the main textbook are listed below and, unless otherwise notified, students will be expected to read *all* of the assigned main textbook readings.

**Note 3:** At various junctures during the course, the student will be assigned various supplementary readings. Students will be expected to read *all* assigned supplementary readings (hereafter SR). SRs will be handed out in class, or made available in the library, or distributed electronically (check student portal often).

**January 14**

Topics: Introductions to course, each other, and philosophy; preliminary conceptual “tool sharpening” (i.e., a look at the principle of non-contradiction, some radical skepticisms, and the concept of truth)  
Readings: SR

**January 18, 21**

Topics: Conceptual “tool sharpening” continued; What is an argument?  
Readings: SR, Govier chapter 1

**January 25, 28**

Topics: Pinning down argument structure; Looking at language  
Readings: Govier chapters 2 & 3

**February 1, 4**

Topics: Looking at language continued  
Readings: Govier chapter 3  
*Missio Dei* – February 4 – no class

**February 8, 11**

Topics: Introduction to good arguments; Premises—what to accept and why  
Readings: Govier chapters 4 & 5

**February 15, 18**

*Louis Riel Day* – February 15 – no class  
Topics: Premises, continued  
Readings: Govier chapter 5

**February 22, 25**

Topics: Working on relevance  
Readings: Govier, chapter 6  
*Midterm exam* – February 25

**March 1-5**

*Reading days* – no classes

**March 8, 11**

Topics: Deductive arguments—propositional logic  
Readings: Govier chapter 8

*March 12 – last day for voluntary withdrawal from course*

**March 15, 18**

Topics: Deductive arguments—propositional logic, continued  
Readings: Govier chapter 8

**March 22, 25**

Topics: Introduction to inductive arguments  
Readings: Govier chapter 9

**March 29, April 1**

Topics: Causal inductive arguments  
Readings: Govier chapter 10

**April 5, 8**

Topics: Analogies—reasoning from case to case  
Readings: Govier chapter 11

**April 12, 15**

Topics: Conductive arguments and counterconsiderations  
Readings: Govier chapter 12

**April 19-23**

*Final exam* – exact date, time, and location will be announced

## **H. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

The course bibliography can be seen on the online version of this syllabus.

# H. BIBLIOGRAPHY

## 1. INTRODUCTIONS TO PHILOSOPHY

### Internet

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/index.html>

### Books

Cowan, Steven B. & James S. Spiegel. *The Love of Wisdom*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009.

Law, Stephen. *Philosophy*. Eyewitness Companions series. London & New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2007.

Morris, Tom. *Philosophy for Dummies*. Foster City, California: IDG Books Worldwide, Inc., 1999.

Pojman, Louis P. *Philosophy: The Pursuit of Wisdom*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Belmont, California: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2006.

## 2. LOGIC & CRITICAL THINKING (a.k.a. practical/applied logic)

### Internet

Fallacies (*Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*): <http://www.iep.utm.edu/fallacy/#Straw%20Man>

### Books

Baillargeon, Normand. *A Short Course in Intellectual Self-Defense*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007.

Damer, T. Edward. *Attacking Faulty Reasoning*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Belmont, California: Wadsworth/Thomson, 2009.

Govier, Trudy. *A Practical Study of Argument*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Belmont, California: Wadsworth/Thomson, 2010.

Groarke, Leo A. & Christopher W. Tindale. *Good Reasoning Matters!* 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Hacking, Ian. *An Introduction to Probability and Inductive Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Huff, Darrell. *How to Lie with Statistics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1954. Reprint, 1993.

Johnson, R. H. & J. A. Blair. *Logical Self-Defense*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1993.

Moore, Brooke Noel & Richard Parker. *Critical Thinking*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006.

Moreland, J. P. *Love Your God With All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1997. (Chapter 5)

Salmon, Wesley C. *Logic*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984.

Vaughn, Lewis & Chris MacDonald. *The Power of Critical Thinking*, Canadian edition. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Warburton, Nigel. *Thinking from A to Z*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. London & New York: Routledge, 2007.

### 3. PHILOSOPHICAL/ THEORETICAL STUDIES IN INFORMAL LOGIC

#### Internet

Informal logic (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*): <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2003/entries/logic-informal/>

#### Books

Blair, J. A. & R.H. Johnson. "Misconceptions of Informal Logic." *Teaching Philosophy* 14:1 (March 1991): 35-52.

Govier, Trudy. *Problems in Argument Analysis and Evaluation*. Dordrecht, Holland: Foris Publications, 1987.

Govier, Trudy. *The Philosophy of Argument*. Newport News, Virginia: Vale Press, 1999.

Govier, Trudy, editor. *Selected Issues in Logic and Communication*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1988.

Hansen, Hans V. & Robert C. Pinto, editors. *Fallacies: Classical and Contemporary Readings*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.

Johnson, Ralph H. *Manifest Rationality: A Pragmatic Theory of Argument*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000.

Johnson, Ralph H. & J. Anthony Blair. *The Rise of Informal Logic*. Newport News, Virginia: Vale Press, 1996.

Lipton, Peter. *Inference to the Best Explanation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London & New York: Routledge, 2004.

Toulmin, Stephen. *The Uses of Argument*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958.

### 4. ON TRUTH (with a lower case "t")

(Readings marked with \* are highly recommended; check annotations—especially S. Jaki's *Means to Message*.)

\* Beilby, James & David K. Clark. *Why Bother with Truth? Arriving at Knowledge in a Skeptical Society*. Norcross, Georgia: RZIM, 2000. (Booklet; see especially chapters 1-6.)

Blackburn, Simon. *Truth*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Boghossian, Paul. *Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructivism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006. (High calibre philosophical defence of knowledge of the actual world.)

\* Creel, Richard E. *Thinking Philosophically*. Malden & Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001. (See chapter 10, "What is Truth?")

Frankfurt, Harry G. *On Truth*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006. (This is a very insightful little treatise on truth written by the author of another insightful little treatise provocatively titled *On Bullshit*.)

- \* Groothuis, Douglas. *Truth Decay*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000. (Chapter 4, “The Truth about Truth,” is very helpful.)
  - \* Jaki, Stanley L. *Means to Message: A Treatise on Truth*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999. (Jaki’s thesis is simple but deeply profound: Any philosophy that is written in a book must account for [1] the fact—the reality—of the book in which the philosophy is written and [2] the fact—the reality—that the message of the book can be accurately understood by the book’s readers.)
  - \* Luntley, Michael. *Reason, Truth, and Self: The Postmodern Reconditioned*. London & New York: Routledge, 1995. (Luntley’s concept of “simple truth” is especially helpful, giving all of us an objective handle on a common reality; see chapter 5.)
- Moreland, J. P. “Truth, Contemporary Philosophy, and the Postmodern Turn.” In *Whatever Happened To Truth*, edited by Andreas Köstenberger, pp. 75-92. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2005.
- Nagel, Thomas. *The Last Word*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Rorty, Richard & Pascal Engel. *What’s the Use of Truth?* New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.
- Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1912, 1967. (See chapter 12, “Truth and Falsehood.”)
- \* Van der Breggen, Hendrik. “Reasonable Skepticism about Radical Skepticism.” *Christian Research Journal*, Volume 31, Number 5 (2008): 30-38. (Four radical scepticisms about our knowledge of truth about the external world are shown to fail. Because the burden of proof rests on the shoulders of those who deny the obvious, when the skeptics’ arguments fail, the obvious—i.e., that we can know the external world at least to some extent—remains.)

**Late Assignment Submission Form**  
**Providence College**

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**Student Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student number: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Assignment information**

Title of Assignment: \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment Submission Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Lateness: *Please provide an explanation for the lateness of the assignment.*

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N.B. Please provide all relevant documentation (e.g. Doctor's note)

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Instructor's Use Only**

Date Assignment Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Late Penalty Waived / Assessed

Late Penalty: \_\_\_\_\_%

Faculty Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Absence Form  
Providence College**

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**Student Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student number: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Absence Information**

Date of Absence: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please provide an explanation for the absence\*.*

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\*Please provide all relevant documentation (e.g. Doctor's note)

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Instructor's Use Only**

Date Absence Form Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Absence Waived / Assessed

Faculty Signature: \_\_\_\_\_