

REASONING

COURSE OUTLINE

OBJECTIVES: This course develops your ability to observe, investigate, evaluate, and respond to real-world problems. Experience is not always the best teacher, and memory is not always the best guide. Philosophy offers reasoning techniques that improve your ability to negotiate the unfamiliar. It also helps you identify and understand the belief systems that lie behind disagreements. You will practice dealing with real world problems and disagreements in three main ways: objectively reporting arguments and evaluating them; using listening skills to explore topics in discussion; comparing arguments to develop constructive recommendations. You will also apply what you learn to visual reasoning and to handling real-life problems.

TEXT: *Think It Through: Reasoning in Everyday Life*, M. Kloster & A. Anderson, Thomson Nelson Canada (2005), required.

EVALUATION: Critical thinking takes practice. There are 5 short (1-2 page) written exercises, one mini-project (a comparison of 2 arguments), a midterm, and a final examination. Class participation, in the form of notes from in-class activities, forms part of the final mark.

Distribution of marks:

5 in-class activities	5%
5 short written assignments, 10% each	50%
Midterm examination	10%
Mini-project (comparing arguments)	15%
Final examination	20%

Marking scheme: A+ = 87% and over. A = 84-86%. A- = 80-83%. B+ = 77-79%. B = 74-76%. B- = 70-73%. C+ = 67-69%. C = 64-66%. C- = 60-63%. P given only in exceptional circumstances. In-class-exercises are not graded: completion = 1/1.

NOTE: A grade of "C" indicates work that meets the basic expectations of the assignment. "B" indicates work that goes beyond the expectations by demonstrating originality of insights or a good understanding of how your answer relates to important current questions. "A" indicates both originality and understanding of current questions.

EXPECTATIONS: Attendance: Regular attendance is expected – most of the class notes, announcements, and handouts are available only in class. [NOTE: Weather can cause schedule problems until at least mid-February. Be aware of the UFV Severe Weather Procedure: **do not travel if it is not safe**. If you miss a class because of weather, or if the campus is closed, catch-up information will be available by e-mail: **check your UCFV student account**.] If you miss class for any reason other than weather, it is *your* responsibility to contact me promptly. If you need help to catch up or help to understand an assignment, it is my responsibility to find a reasonable way to help you catch up or get past your difficulties. **Participation:** In-class activities often require participation in small group discussion: active contribution to these activities is expected. Respectful behaviour is required: philosophy can often involve sensitive topics and evoke very strong feelings. **Assignments and marking:** Assignments must be easy to read: legible, and laid out clearly on the page. Assignments in the first half of the term which score 6/10 or less may be revised without penalty. Other assignments may be revised by special arrangement. Late papers are accepted without penalty provided a mutually acceptable alternate deadline has been arranged.

OFFICE HOURS: Office: Abb. D3091. Office hours will be announced in class. I am also available by phone and e-mail (phone numbers and e-mail address given in class).

OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

- Week 1:** The uses and limits of reasoning – and how is this course “philosophy”?
Jan. 11, 13
READING: Introduction of *Think it Through*
- Week 2:** Overview, with pictures: Observation, investigation, evaluation, and action
Jan. 18, 20
READING: Ch.1, *Think it Through*
- Week 3:** Observation: Identifying, understanding, and reporting arguments
Jan. 25, 27
READING: Chapter 2 of *Think it Through*
- Week 4:** Investigation of internal evidence: Figuring out argument structure and logical connections
Feb. 1, 3
READING: Chapter 5 of *Think it Through* (to page 174 only)
- Week 5:** Investigation of external evidence: Background research and fact checking
Feb. 8, 10
READING: Chapters 4 and 7 of *Think it Through*
- Week 6:** **NO CLASS** – reading break Feb. 15-19
Feb. 15, 17
- Week 7:** **MIDTERM** (*in class*) – 90 minutes – reviews weeks 1-5
Feb. 22, 24
- Week 8:** Investigation of context: identifying main issues and assumptions
Mar. 1, 3
READING: Chapter 6 of *Think it Through*
- Week 9:** Evaluation: judging arguments using the results of investigation
Mar. 8, 10
READING: Chapter 8 of *Think it Through*
- Week 10:** Evaluation: (i) judging emotions as reasons: why emotion is not bias.
Mar. 15, 17
(ii) judging visual, numerical, and auditory information
READING: Chapters 7 and 9 of *Think it Through*
- Week 11:** Evaluation: Comparing arguments to judge progress on an issue.
Mar. 22, 24
Response: Identifying key concerns and responding constructively to arguments
READING: Chapters 9 and 11 of *Think it Through*
- Week 12:** Response: Practical suggestions, problem-solving, and feedback
Mar. 29, 31
READINGS: Chapters 10 and Postscript of *Think it Through*
- Week 13:** Applications of critical thinking to solving problems and to interpersonal situations: sample scenarios
Apr. 5, 7
READING: Chapter 12 of *Think it Through*
- Weeks 14-16** *Final exam* as scheduled