

# University College of Fraser Valley

## Critical Thinking

Philosophy 100 (AB5)

Summer 2007 (May – June)

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. J. Bruin  
**OFFICE HOURS:** T/R 1130-1230  
**Room:** ABA 269  
**CLASS TIMES:** T/R 8:30-11:20  
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**REQUIRED TEXT:** *Understanding Arguments*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, Robert J. Fogelin & Walter Sinnott-Armstrong

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course is designed to develop the student's ability to critically evaluate arguments—to be able do such things as take an argument apart, and tell whether the conclusion of that argument is supported by its premises. This ability to evaluate an argument is essential in both assessing arguments made by other people and in constructing arguments of one's own. Since an understanding of what technically constitutes an argument should enhance one's *practical* ability to think critically, some stress will also fall on the "theory" of argumentation.

*For the structure of this course—the things to be covered—see the 'Syllabus' at the end of this outline.*

### GRADING SCHEME:

- 1) Assignment 1 (20%)
- 2) Test 1 (20%)
- 3) Assignment 2 (20%)
- 4) Test 4 (20%)
- 5) Spot quizzes (20%) – ten of them; 2% each

The date of each test will be announced at least two weeks before you have to write it.

### GRADING PROFILE:

A+ 95+; A 90-94%; A- 85-89%; B+ 80-84%; B 75-79%; B- 70-74%; C+ 65-69%; C 60-64%; C- 55-59%; P 50-54%; NC 49%-

### OPERATIONAL DETAILS:

**(1) Policy on Plagiarism and Cheating:** Students are hereby warned about academic dishonesty and college policies regarding this matter. Please ensure that you are familiar with the College's policy on these matters. (For further information see Course Calendar.)

### Details Specific to This Course:

**(2) Missed Test Policy:** A student who misses a test will receive a mark of "0" for that test, with the exception of absence justified by a medical certificate or some circumstance that the instructor, at his discretion, deems sufficiently 'extenuating'. As for a late submission of a take-home assignment (if there is any), the instructor reserves the right to subtract five percentage points from the assignment per day, and return the paper without comments.

**(2.1) There is a make-up test in this course.** It is strictly optional. It will count for the lowest of the first three tests. I will assign the make-up test, to be held in-class on the 14<sup>th</sup> week of classes. What is on the make-up test is entirely up to the discretion of the instructor. (It may be comprehensive, or it may be specific to a section in the course. But that is up to the instructor.) Also, comments on the returned make-up will be kept to a minimum.

**(2.2) There are no “make-ups” for missed quizzes.**

**(3) About assignments:**

- Make sure you keep a spare copy of any take-home work that you submit to your instructor. (Also, make sure you keep any returned materials, tests as well as assignments.)
- Submission of any take-home work must be typed (minus 5% if it's not), unless otherwise indicated. And the work must be stapled (minus 5% if it's not).

**(4) Class attendance and participation:** students will be expected to attend class regularly, and must complete assigned readings and informal homework exercises in preparation for specific classes. Regular class attendance is *mandatory*; lectures will integrate and augment material not found in the required readings. **A student who misses more than 30 percent of class-time will risk automatically receiving an ‘unsatisfactory’ for the final grade. A student who misses more than three classes will risk an automatic zero for the participation grade.**

**(5) Classroom protocol:**

- Turn off cell-phones in class. If the phone rings, either turn it off straightaway or immediately go out of the room.
- Test protocols: No talking as you leave the class-room if other students are still working on their test.
- Everybody sits as close to the front of the class as possible.

**(6) On Emailing:** The student's having regular access to his or her email account is required. Required also is the student's ability to print out any materials the instructor sends out (e.g., an outline of a lecture). My email is NOT for sending handouts and lecture materials for students who miss classes; and it is NOT for conveying marks. You can use it to ask me philosophical questions, or use it as a substitute for voice mail, or to set up an appointment. *In fact, I prefer email to voice mail.* In any case, please don't abuse it. No courtesy, no reply.

**(7) A study buddy:** You should find yourself a study buddy, who can help you in the event that you've missed a class and need to get hold of lecture notes, handouts, and whatnot. Although the instructor will try his best, he cannot guarantee supplying handouts from a previous class.

**Here's our rough-and-ready syllabus, subject to an amendment here and there. The sequence of topics roughly corresponds to sequence of topics covered in Fogelin/Armstrong book.**

### **Background Considerations**

1. Chapter 1: What is an argument and how does it fit into the 'speech-world'? Materials drawn mainly from the first chapter. About the notions of speech acts, one of which is called an 'argument'; of 'conversational rules' and violating those rules, and what these rules have to do with arguments.
2. Very briefly: Materials drawn mainly from the second chapter: rhetoric (rhetorical questions, overstatement, understatement, irony, metaphor).
- 2.0 Additional discussion: on the burden of proof (see Fogelin index), which is in the background of most arguments; and appeal to force. (In a way, an argument—an appeal to reasoning—is just the very opposite of the use of force!)
- 2.1 A discussion about William Clifford's 'The Ethics of Belief'.

3. Chapter 3: On the Language of Argument: 'reason indicators'; talk of validity, truth, and soundness (48ff). It's not in the text, but I'd like to talk about the notion of the 'acceptability' of a claim, as opposed to the truth of a claim; the notion of contentiousness, to which an argument is a response; 'common sense'. And THEN we'll bring this business about 'acceptability' to bear on what's at the end of Chapter 3: on phrases that modify a given claim, by way of either 'assuring', 'guarding', or 'discounting'.
4. Beginning of Chapter 5: 'Getting down to Basics', and on diagramming (105ff) arguments.
5. About things in arguments that we can't see:
  - 5.1 A bit further into Chapter 5): On implicit components (be they premises or conclusion). (109ff)
  - 5.2 (Not in Fogelin): About assumptions or 'presuppositions' in an argument.
  - 5.3 A few words about 'false dichotomies'; see also 7.1 (ibe).
6. A few classes on this, but almost certainly no more than that: On the ABC's of propositional logic (Chapter 6). Some basic forms of argument: disjunctive elimination, affirming the antecedent, denying the consequent, conditional series, and maybe a few more, but that's it!

### **Inductive Arguments:**

- 7.0 Analogical arguments:
- 7.1 About explanations: (how they're different from arguments; factors and '*explanandum*'; excuses, apologies, and alibis). [See index in Fogelin.] *After this*, we'll look at 'inferences to the best explanation' (254ff).
- 7.2 Reasoning about Causes

8. Probability (Chapter 10). Maybe we'll go into, maybe we won't. If we do, we should go no further than 'Some Fallacies of Probability'.
9. Fallacies of clarity (Chapter 11): vagueness, heaps, slippery slopes, ambiguity/equivocation, and definitions.
10. Fallacies of relevance: ...Kinds of relevance-fallacies:
  - 'Red herrings', straw-man arguments (Chapter 13)
  - Attacking the source (Chapter 12): *ad hominem*; appeals to authority
11. Fallacies of vacuity (Chapter 12): circular reasoning, begging the question, self-sealers; falsification.
12. Refutations (Chapter 13): counterexamples, *reduction ad absurdum*, 'refutation by parallel reasoning'.