

# Phil 210—Logical Thought

Mount Holyoke College

Fall 2014

Instructor: Daniel Hagen  
Office: Skinner Hall, Room 213A  
Office hours: Wednesday, 2:00–4:00 p.m. and by appointment  
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## MEETINGS:

Tuesday/Thursday, 1:15–2:30 PM, Reese 302

## DESCRIPTION:

This course cultivates sound reasoning. Students will learn to see the structure of claims and arguments and to use those structures in developing strong arguments and exposing shoddy ones. We will learn to evaluate arguments on the strength of the reasoning rather than on the force of their associations and buzzwords. (From the course catalog.)

## OBJECTIVES:

The principal aim of this course is to develop your skills of logical thought so that you may become better at assessing the arguments you confront and the arguments you produce. You will learn to identify the building-blocks of arguments and to see how they give structure to arguments. You will hone your ability to assess a range of argument types, including both deductive and non-deductive arguments. And you will begin to grapple with some of the philosophical questions raised by reflection on our practice of argumentation, such as questions about the role of emotion in arguments and about our ethical responsibilities as individuals who give and receive arguments.

## TEXT:

The course textbook is available for purchase at the Odyssey Bookshop. There will also be a copy on reserve at the MHC Library.

- Govier, Trudy, *A Practical Study of Argument*, Enhanced Seventh Edition, Cengage Learning (January 1, 2013), ISBN-10: 1133934641. Abbreviated as ‘PSA’ in the schedule below.
  - Although the official text for the course will be the Enhanced Seventh Edition, to my knowledge there are no substantive difference between this edition and the previous one (the Seventh Edition). Feel free to use either.
- Any additional readings will be distributed as .pdfs through the course Moodle site.

Note: The retail price for a new copy of this textbook is quite expensive (nearly \$200), so I encourage you to explore other options for acquiring a text before purchasing one new. Here are a few suggestions:

- Look for a used copy on Amazon.com.
- Rent a paperback copy through Amazon.com.
- Rent or purchase an electronic copy through Amazon.com
- Rent a paperback copy or purchase an electronic copy through the publisher's website:
  - URL: <http://www.cengagebrain.com/micro/1-1VK6PY1>
- Use Google to explore other possibilities.

## READINGS:

Readings listed on the schedule below are required unless otherwise noted. You should plan to do the readings in advance of the session for which they are listed.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

### Unit I: Seeing the structure of arguments

#### Week 1: (short week) Introduction

- Session 1 (Th, 9/4)
  - *Reading*: none

#### Week 2: Identifying arguments

- Session 2 (T, 9/9)
  - *Reading*: PSA, pp. 1–11
- Session 3: Thursday, 9/11
  - *Reading*: PSA, pp. 13–17
  - *Recommended reading*: chapter summary and review of key terms, PSA, pp. 20–21 (these are recommended for every chapter; henceforth I won't note this on the syllabus).

#### Week 3: The structure of arguments

- Session 4 (T, 9/16)
  - *Reading*: PSA, pp. 22–31
- Session 5 (Th, 9/18)
  - *Reading*: PSA, pp. 34–39

#### Week 4: The structure of arguments, cont.

- Session 6 (T, 9/23)
  - *Reading*: PSA, pp. 41–52
- Session 7 (Th, 9/25)
  - *Reading*: review above readings as needed

### Week 5: Language, emotion, and argument

- Session 8 (T, 9/30)
  - *Reading*: PSA, pp. 57–58 and 64–69
- Session 9 (Th, 10/2)
  - *Reading*: PSA, pp. 58–62
  - *Supplementary reading*: George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language” [Moodle]

### Week 6: the ethics of argumentation; review

- Session 10 (T, 10/7)
  - *Reading*: PSA pp. 51–52 (on charitable interpretation) and pp. 154–157 (on the straw man fallacy)
- Session 11 (Th, 10/9)—**in-class review**
  - *Reading*: review as needed

*Mid-semester break: 10/11–10/14*

### Week 7: (short week) Midterm exam

- Session 12 (Th, 10/16)—**midterm exam**
  - *Reading*: review as needed

## Unit II: Assessing the quality of arguments

### Week 8: The ARG conditions; confronting biases

- Session 13 (T, 10/21)
  - *Reading*: PSA, pp. 87–115 (all of chapter 4)—*Note*: this is a lot of reading, but the chapter is really more of an overview of material we will study in much more detail in the weeks to come; many of the concepts introduced in Chapter 4 will become clearer as we deal with more concrete applications in subsequent chapters.
- Session 14 (Th, 10/23)
  - *Required reading*: reread PSA pp. 59–60 (on the “Our Side Bias”) and p. 106 (on confirmation bias); read Ch. 2 of *Good Reasoning Matters* [Moodle].
  - *Optional reading*: Holroyd, “Responsibility for Implicit Bias”; Kunda, “The Case for Motivated Reasoning.”
  - *Activity*: For this session I also strongly recommend that you take the Implicit Bias Test at some point before coming to class. You can find the test here:  
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>  
You are not required to take this test and even if you do take it, I will not require you to share any of its results with me or anyone else.

### Week 9: The Acceptability of premises

- Session 15 (T, 10/28)
  - *Required reading*: PSA, pp. 116–128
  - *Optional reading*: Goldman, “Experts: which ones should you trust?”
- Session 16 (Th, 10/30)
  - *Required reading*: PSA, pp. 131–135
  - *Optional reading*: Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”

**Week 10: The Relevance of premises**

- Session 17 (T, 11/4)
  - *Reading*: PSA, pp. 148–172 (on the fallacies involving relevance)
- Session 18 (Th, 11/6)
  - *Reading*: reread Ch. 6 as needed.

**Week 11: Good (and bad) deductive arguments**

- Session 19 (T, 11/11)
  - *Reading*: PSA, pp. 216–241.
- Session 20 (Th, 11/13)
  - *Reading*: reread PSA, pp. 216–241 as needed.

**Week 12: Deductive arguments, cont.**

- Session 21 (T, 11/18)
  - *Reading*: review PSA pp. 216–241 as needed.
- Session 22 (Th, 11/20)
  - *Reading*: cont. reviewing PSA and lecture notes, as needed

**Week 13: Deductive arguments, cont.**

- Session 23 (T, 11/25)—note: attendance at this session is optional
  - *Reading*: none required; review lecture notes and textbook on deductive logic.

*Thanksgiving break: 11/26–11/30*

**Week 14: Analogical reasoning**

- Session 24 (T, 12/2)
  - *Reading*: PSA, Ch 11
- Session 25 (Th, 12/4)
  - *Reading*: Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion,” Cohen, “The Camping Trip,” and handout “Some additional arguments from analogy”

**Week 15: Review for final exam**

- Session 26 (T, 12/9)
  - *Reading*: review material from the semester as needed.

*Reading period: noon, 12/16–7 p.m., 12/12*

*Finals period: 7 p.m., 12/12–noon, 12/16*

## REQUIREMENTS:

- Attendance & Participation: 15%
- Problem sets: 40%
- Midterm exam: 15%
- Final exam: 30%

## ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:

Your attendance and participation is essential to the success of this course. We will cover material in class that is not contained in our text. You will also be completing work in class that will offer a important opportunity to practice the skills you will be developing this semester. Thus:

- Attendance is required. (Be sure to bring your book to class.) If, for whatever reason, you cannot attend a class, please contact me *as soon as possible* and *in advance of the class you expect to miss*.
- Participation in class is required. One of the most important ways you can participate is by asking clarificatory questions. If you're feeling confused, you're probably not the only one. And if you're confused, but don't say anything, it's harder for me to help resolve your confusion. So be courageous and let me know when you're confused! Another way you can participate in class is by helping answer any questions your peers might have. Teaching a concept or skill to someone else is a great way to improve your own mastery of that concept or skill. Finally, you can participate in class by being actively engaged with in-class assignments. (Texting is not a form of active engagement with in-class assignments—see note on gadgets, below.)
  - *Note:* I will be setting up a discussion forum on the course Moodle site. Posting questions/comments to the forum or responding to other people's questions/comments will count toward your participation grade, but neither is required. Think of the forum as another way to participate.
- **On-going assignment: Arguments in the Wild.** Over the course of the semester, you will be engaged in an on-going assignment I'm calling "Arguments in the Wild." Here's what's expected of you:
  - This semester I want you to be on the alert for arguments. These could be arguments you read online or in the MHC newspaper or elsewhere. (One thing you might consider doing is making a habit of regularly reading the opinion section of an online news source, such as the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*.)
  - **Twice** this semester—once before the midterm and once after the midterm—you are required to write a post on the "Arguments in the Wild" discussion forum (this will be a distinct forum from the general class discussion forum) on the class Moodle site. You should: (i) provide a direct quote of the relevant portion of your source along with a link or full reference to the original, and (ii) offer some commentary on the argument. Your commentary should display facility with the skills you'll be developing this semester: seeing the structure of arguments and assessing the quality of arguments.
  - **Four times** this semester—twice before the midterm and twice after the midterm—you are required to respond to someone else's post or comment. [Note: you may respond to a peer's comments on your own post.]

- There will be an initial assignment (the 0th problem set) that will require you to post an argument to the forum, but without commentary. **This won't count toward your two posts, but commenting on any of these initial posts will count toward your four comments.**
- This assignment will be graded pass/no pass. Any contributions beyond the minimum requirements outlined here will count extra toward your overall course participation.
- *A note on gadgets:* laptops, iPads, and so forth are permitted in class as long as you're using them to take notes, to refer to assigned readings, or to run software that assists with either of these functions.<sup>1</sup>

## PROBLEM SETS:

- A major portion of your work for this class will be the problem sets. They present an opportunity to practice the skills you'll be developing.
- There will be problem sets most weeks. I will post the problem sets on Thursday evenings by 10 pm and they will be due on Monday mornings by 8 a.m.
- You should submit your problem sets through Moodle.

## MIDTERM EXAM:

- There will be a take-home midterm exam.
- The midterm will cover material from the first half of the course.
- Additional details on the midterm forthcoming.

## FINAL EXAM:

- There will be a final exam during the exam period.
- The final exam will be comprehensive.
- Additional details on the final exam forthcoming.

## EXTENSION POLICY

- Three “no-questions asked” 24-hour extensions per semester. (For use on problem sets.)
- **These may not be combined.** *You must request the extension in advance of the original deadline.*
- No other extensions (except for exceptional circumstances)

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<sup>1</sup>See <http://bit.ly/1ihJUXL> for some evidence that suggests multitasking (e.g., looking at Facebook during class) is bad for learning.

## IMPORTANT DATES:

- Most Mondays by 8 a.m.: problem sets due on Moodle.
- Thursday, 10/16: take-home midterm exam
- Sometime during finals period (exact date/time TBD): final exam

For other important college-wide dates, consult the Registrar's academic calendar.<sup>2</sup>

## ACADEMIC HONESTY:

As students at Mount Holyoke College, you have each agreed to live by the following code of honor: "I will honor myself, my fellow students, and Mount Holyoke College by acting responsibly, honestly, and respectfully in both my words and deeds." Pages 55–59 of the Student Handbook<sup>3</sup> describe the application of the Honor Code to academic matters. In particular, note that "It is the responsibility of each student to read *A Guide to the Uses and Acknowledgment of Sources* and the *Student Handbook*, which define the standards adopted by the College; to observe the established procedures in preparing assignments and writing papers and examinations, and to submit as one's own only that work that she or he has originated" (p. 56). I will expect you to be mindful of these responsibilities when producing work for this course. Additionally, I will expect you to have reviewed *The Proper Use of Sources Tutorial*.<sup>4</sup> Remember: when in doubt, cite—and, of course, you can always check with me. Whatever you do, don't plagiarize. ***Plagiarism could result in failure on the assignment or in the course as a whole.***

## ASSISTANCE:

- You should always feel free to contact me about any questions or concerns you have about the course. Write me an email, visit my office hours, intercept me on campus!
- This course will also have a teaching assistant: Cortney Creswick. Cortney is a senior philosophy major and will be a great resource over the semester. She will hold regular office hours and will also be available by appointment.
- The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program<sup>5</sup> provides support for Mount Holyoke students whose first language is not English. For more information, contact the ESOL Coordinator, Mark Shea (markshea@mtholyoke.edu).
- If you have a disability and would like to request accommodations, please contact AccessAbility Services, located in Wilder Hall B4, at (413)-538-2646 or [accessability-services@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:accessability-services@mtholyoke.edu). If you are eligible, they will give you an accommodation letter which you should bring to me as soon as possible. That way we can work together to make sure all of the course content is accessible to you.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.mtholyoke.edu/registrar/calendar>.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.mtholyoke.edu/sites/default/files/deanofstudents/docs/mhcstudenthandbook.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup><http://www.mtholyoke.edu/lits/ris/Plagiarism/>.

<sup>5</sup><http://www.mtholyoke.edu/esol>.

<sup>6</sup>More information on AccessAbility Services here: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/accessability>.