

## PHL239: Critical Reasoning (Fall 2021)

### Course Description

This course focuses on how to detect bad arguments, improve weak ones, and create good arguments. Skills at identifying, analyzing, improving and creating arguments are critical thinking skills. In this course you will analyze the structure of arguments, identify common fallacies in them, evaluate the strength and weakness of arguments and learn how to improve them, using course terms with precision.

### Teaching Team

Instructor: Steve Coyne ([steven.coyne@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:steven.coyne@mail.utoronto.ca))

*Zoom Office Hours:* Wednesday 12-2PM (bookable), Wednesday 2-3PM (drop-in). See the Quercus website for the link.

*E-mail:* For written communication, please contact me via e-mail (and not Quercus, which I don't regularly check.) Make sure to identify the course (PHL239) in the title of your e-mail. I make every attempt to respond to administrative questions (e.g. about course registration, groupwork, etc) within 24 hours, as well as quick questions about course content. I'm also happy to answer quick, specific questions about course content by e-mail, though I will ask you to see me in office hours about more complicated questions.

### Course Flow

This is an online synchronous course on Zoom. (The Zoom link is available on the Quercus website with a passcode. Be careful, it's not the same as my office hours link.) Lectures run from 3-5PM on Mondays and 4-5PM on Wednesdays. Starting September 15<sup>th</sup>, the Wednesday lectures will always be used for tests, groupwork, or practice problems. Questions are always welcome during lecture.

I will post slides before lecture, and recordings afterwards (barring some calamity). In general, we will be following the material in the textbook fairly closely. Keep an eye out for specially marked slides where I make a point not found in the textbook or readings.

### Readings

William Hughes and Jonathan Lavery, *Critical Thinking: An Introduction to the Basic Skills* (Seventh **Canadian** Edition)

This textbook is available through the bookstore or the publisher's website (in digital copy).

Any other readings can be found on Quercus.

### Evaluation

Course Component	Percentage of Grade	Date(s) due
Tests	10% x 4 = 40%	September 29, October 27, November 10, December 6
Assignments 1-3	10% x 3 = 30%	October 1, October 22, November 12
Final Assignment	20%	December 3

Groupwork	10%	Throughout the course
-----------	-----	-----------------------

Note that all assignments should be submitted through Quercus through the corresponding links under ‘Assignments’. Please submit all assignments in .doc, .docx, or .pdf.

*Quizzes:* You will be required to complete four timed quizzes (available on Quercus). Each quiz will be 50 minutes, and will be composed of multiple choice questions (and possibly a short answer question).

*Assignments:* You will be required to complete three shorter written assignments. They will be more like short essays than problem sets.

*Final Assignment:* You will be required to complete a longer final assignment (an argumentative essay).

*Groupwork:* You will be required to complete some ‘low-stakes’ assignments in small groups during many of our Wednesday classes. I will take the first seven groupwork assignments that you complete – this means that you can miss one without penalty.

### Missed Tests and Late Assignments

If there are special considerations that cause you to miss an **assignment** or **test**, you should get in touch with the **philosophy department undergraduate advisor** (Jane Medeiros) to arrange an accommodation. I do not arrange accommodations for assignments or tests for this class. See here for more information:

<https://philosophy.utoronto.ca/utm/utm-philosophy-undergraduate/special-consideration-requests/>

Without official accommodation, make-up tests will not be given, late assignments will receive 5% penalty a day, and no assignment submitted more than a week late will be accepted. Note that any make-up tests will likely take a different form than the original version (e.g. short answer instead of multiple choice).

If there are special considerations (e.g. illness, conflicting exam, personal emergency) that cause you to miss **groupwork**, you should get in touch with **Steve** within 24 hours with an explanation of why you have missed it. (Note that I will generally ask you to use your “free” absence first.) In these cases it may be possible to complete it afterwards as an individual assignment. Note that in case of multiple absences from groupwork, I may ask you to seek an official accommodation from the department.

### Accessibility

If you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodation, please get in touch with me and Accessibility Services (<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/accessibility/welcome-accessibility-services>).

### Plagiarism and Course Conduct

*Assignments:* If you do use any external resources, you must provide both page number citations *and* a full bibliographical entry. Remember that any use of an external source (whether directly quoting it, paraphrasing it, or using an idea taken from it) must be credited, otherwise it is plagiarism. Please do not plagiarize. I am required by the code of conduct to report all instances of plagiarism to administration, who may impose a serious penalty on you.

“Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).”

### Anonymous Feedback

I’ve set up a google poll for you to send me anonymous feedback during the course. Please make use of it if there’s anything I can do to better facilitate your learning in the course.

### Course Schedule

*(Readings may be changed, depending on course flow, etc.)*

Wednesday, September 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Readings</li> </ul>
Monday, September 13 <i>Introduction to Critical Reasoning / Definition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hughes and Lavery, Chapters 1, 2 (skip 2.2)</li> </ul>
Wednesday, September 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groupwork Session 1</li> </ul>
Monday, September 20 <i>(Charitably) Reconstructing Arguments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hughes and Lavery, Chapters 3, 4.1-4.5</li> </ul>
Wednesday, September 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groupwork Session 2</li> </ul>
Monday, September 27 <i>The Structure of Arguments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hughes and Lavery, Chapters 4.6-4.8, 5</li> </ul>
Wednesday, September 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Test 1 (in-class)</b></li> </ul>
Friday, October 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assignment 1 due</b></li> </ul>
Monday, October 4 <i>Deductive Arguments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hughes and Lavery, Chapter 9</li> <li>• Van Cleeve, 2.14-2.17</li> </ul>
Wednesday, October 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groupwork Session 3</li> </ul>
Monday, October 12	Reading Week! (No classes)
Monday, October 18 <i>Assessing Truth and Relevance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hughes and Lavery, Chapters 6 (skip 6.1), 7</li> <li>• Karl Popper, “Science as Falsification”</li> </ul>
Wednesday, October 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groupwork Session 4</li> </ul>

Friday, October 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assignment 2 due</b></li> </ul>
Monday, October 25 <i>Assessing Adequacy; Miscellaneous Fallacies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hughes and Lavery, Chapters 8 (skip 8.6), 15</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
Wednesday, October 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Test 2 (in-class)</b></li> </ul>
Monday, November 1 <i>Inductive Arguments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hughes and Lavery, Chapter 10</li> <li>• Van Cleeve, 3.6-3.10</li> </ul>
Wednesday, November 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groupwork Session 5</li> </ul>
Monday, November 8 <i>Moral Reasoning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hughes and Lavery, Chapter 12</li> </ul>
Wednesday, November 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Test 3 (in-class)</b></li> </ul>
Friday, November 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assignment 3 due</b></li> </ul>
Monday, November 15 <i>Scientific Reasoning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hughes and Lavery, Chapters 8.6, 11</li> </ul>
Wednesday, November 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groupwork Session 6</li> </ul>
Monday, November 22 <i>Arguing Back; Writing an Argumentative Essay</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hughes and Lavery, Chapter 14, 17</li> </ul>
Wednesday, November 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groupwork Session 7</li> </ul>
Monday, November 29 <i>Cognitive Biases; Game Theory</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading TBD</li> </ul>
Wednesday, December 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groupwork Session 8</li> </ul>
Friday, December 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Assignment due</li> </ul>
Monday, December 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Test 4 (in-class)</b></li> </ul>