



CLEAR & CRITICAL THINKING

PHIL 195 | MTWRF 3:15-5:15pm, Maguire 104 | May 23 - June 17, 2016

Instructor:
Francisco Gallegos
ftg2@georgetown

Course Syllabus

Philosophy 195 | Clear & Critical Thinking

Instructor: Francisco Gallegos — ftg2@georgetown.edu
Summer 2016 Pre-session: May 23 – June 17
Mon-Fri, 3:15-5:15pm, Maguire 104

Course Description

On any given day, we are likely to be bombarded by all sorts of attempts to persuade us to think or act in certain ways. In this course, we will practice the skills involved in “critical thinking”—the process by which we develop and support our beliefs and evaluate the strength of arguments. **The central goal of this course is to empower you to think more clearly and analytically about what you believe and be more effective in arguing for your views.** You will develop your mastery of various strategies for making and evaluating arguments, and you will develop expertise in recognizing and avoiding common barriers to critical thinking—including bias, groupthink, and ideology. Throughout the semester, we will emphasize the application of course material to real-world issues.

What to Expect

It takes practice to master the skills involved in critical thinking. **For most class sessions, you will be expected to do some reading, and then do some homework problems from the textbook.** Plan to set aside around enough time to do the reading and homework for each class session. As long as you keep up with the reading and homework as we go, the course should not be overly demanding. In fact, be prepared to have fun with this fascinating material!

Student Learning Outcomes

A student who completes this course successfully will be able to:

- Describe the characteristics of effective deductive and inductive reasoning.
- Detect logical fallacies in moral, political, and scientific arguments.
- Formulate arguments with sound and persuasive reasoning.
- Identify common psychological barriers to logical and critical thinking.
- Examine the student’s own weaknesses in critical thinking and implement strategies to address them.
- Evaluate competing arguments in a controversy in a field that interests the student.



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Required Text

Lewis Vaughn, *The Power of Critical Thinking: Effective Reasoning About Ordinary and Extraordinary Claims—Fifth Edition*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

- Please be sure you get the **fifth edition** of the textbook. If the price of textbook is a concern (it is expensive), please note that **the text is significantly cheaper to rent**.

All other readings will be available via Blackboard.

About the Instructor

I am a PhD candidate in the philosophy department at Georgetown University. My scholarly work focuses on phenomenology, moral psychology, Latin American philosophy, and social and political thought. Learn more about my work on my website:

FranciscoGallegos.weebly.com.

I love teaching philosophy, and I strive to make myself available to students, give prompt feedback, and accommodate all my students' abilities and needs. **I am here for you, so please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions, concerns, or suggestions!** The best way to reach me is by email: ftg2@georgetown.edu. I will make every effort to answer emails within 24-48 hours.

Office Hours

Because of the unusual schedule of the Summer Pre-session, **I will be holding office hours by appointment only**. Some students feel uncomfortable requesting a meeting, but please do not hesitate to do so! I hope and expect to meet with students regularly, so just email me and let me know a few times that work for you. We can meet on campus (most likely on the 2nd floor of Lauinger Library, outside of Midnight Mug) or online using the Zoom tool on Blackboard.

Course Protocols

Attendance

Because of the condensed summer schedule, you are expected to attend all course sessions. Absences will be excused only in the case of an emergency. Each unexcused absence will lower your final grade by 1.5 points. More than three unexcused absences may result in withdrawal from the course.



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Laptops & phones

The use of phones is not permitted in the classroom. You may use laptops in the classroom only during Week 3, when our readings will be available online. Of course, if you require the use of technology for any reason, please let me know right away so that we can make arrangements.

Civility & participation

The success of this course depends upon students contributing to a thoughtful and sincere class discussion. Each student is expected to take an active role in creating a classroom atmosphere that is safe, engaged, and capable of bringing out the best in all students. Make an effort to get to know your classmates, learn their names, and work with them in a collaborative and constructive spirit.

If you are struggling to find a voice in the class, or if you feel uncomfortable with anything that happens during class discussion, please let me know, and I will also reach out to you, so that we can work together to make this course the best it can be.

Honor code & plagiarism

You are required to uphold standards of academic honesty and to be familiar with GU's Standards of Conduct and the Georgetown Honor System. I will not tolerate plagiarism and will report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the Honor Council. I reserve the right to fail any student for the entire course upon demonstration of a violation. If you have any questions about standards of conduct in this course, please let me know.

Grading

Your final grade in the course will be calculated as follows:

Homework	45 points (3 points each)
Quizzes	30 points (10 points each)
Short essays	15 points (5 points each)
Final exam	10 points

A	93 or more points	C	73-76 points
A-	90-92 points	C-	70-72 points
B+	87-89 points	D+	65-69 points
B	83-86 points	D	60-64 points
B-	80-82 points	D-	55-59 points
C+	77-79 points	F	54 or fewer points



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Extensions & late assignments

If you need an extension on any assignment, please contact me with a brief explanation at least 24 hours before the assignment is due. Assignments submitted late without prior approval will not be accepted. Likewise, the midterm and final exam will only be rescheduled in the case of an excused absence.

Appealing grades

If you feel that I have not graded your work fairly, I welcome your feedback. Grading is difficult, and I do not always get things right the first time. To appeal a grade, send me an email briefly making a case for revising your grade. Keep in mind, though, that if I review your work, I reserve the right to revise your grade upward or downward.

Calculating final grades

Borderline grades will be adjusted upward to reflect regular and productive class participation, and downward to reflect rare or unproductive class participation. Additionally, at my discretion, final grades may be adjusted to reflect improvement over the term or anomalous performance on an assignment, to compensate for inconsistencies in grading, or to take account other relevant factors. Grades are not scaled, but the performance of others in the class is taken into account in assigning grades.

Resources

Technology

UIS Help Desk <https://uis.georgetown.edu/>
Phone: (202) 687-4949; email: help@georgetown.edu
Assistance with all technological issues, available 24/7.

Academic

Academic Resource Center <http://ldss.georgetown.edu>
Leavey Center 335; email: arc@georgetown.edu
Accommodations for students with disabilities and assistance with study skills

Writing Center <http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu>
217A Lauinger Library; email: writingcenter@georgetown.edu
One-on-one assistance with academic writing skills (the website also lists many helpful links)

Scholarly Research and Academic Integrity

Resources and links: <http://www.library.georgetown.edu/tutorials/academic-integrity/refresher-tipsheet>



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Health and Wellness

The Counseling and Psychiatric Service <http://caps.georgetown.edu>
Eastern side of Darnall Hall; phone: (202) 687-6985; *24-hour doctor on call: (202) 444-PAGE*
Primary mental health resource assisting students in overcoming difficulties that interfere with the attainment of their personal and educational goals

Health Education Services <http://healthed.georgetown.edu/>
207 Village C West; phone: (202) 687-8949
Health professionals available to help students deal with a range of personal health topics, including pregnancy, alcohol and drug use and abuse, adult children of alcoholics, nutrition, eating disorders, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking and general health promotion. All services are individualized, confidential, and free for students.

Student Health Center <http://shc.georgetown.edu/>
Darnall Hall (ground floor); Appointments: (202) 687-2200; General info: (202) 687-4500

Other Resources

LGBTQ Resource Center <http://lgbtq.georgetown.edu/>
325 Leavy Center; phone: (202) 687-3546, email: lgbtq@georgetown.edu

The Women's Center <http://womenscenter.georgetown.edu>
327 Leavy Center; phone: (202) 687-6359; email: womenscenter@georgetown.edu

Campus Ministry <http://campusministry.georgetown.edu>
Serving Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and Orthodox Christian students, providing links to resources for Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, LDS and Sikh students.

Veterans' Resources <http://www.georgetown.edu/campus-life/office-resources/veterans/>
Car Barn 224; email: veteransservices@georgetown.edu

Resources Relating to Sexual Misconduct <http://sexualassault.georgetown.edu>



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Course Schedule

** Note: This schedule is schematic, meant to give you a general idea of how the term will proceed. A more detailed and finalized course schedule will be provided at the beginning of the term.*

Week 1: Argument Basics		
Date	Topic	To do before class
M. May 23	Introduction to the course	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 1, “The Power of Critical Thinking”
T. May 24	Obstacles to critical thinking	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 2, “Obstacles to Critical Thinking” <i>Homework:</i> TBA
W. May 25	Argument basics	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 3, “Making Sense of Arguments,” pt. 1 <i>Homework:</i> TBA
R. May 26	Argument patterns	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 3, “Making Sense of Arguments,” pt. 2 <i>Homework:</i> TBA
F. May 27	Reasons for belief and doubt	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 4, “Reasons for Belief and Doubt” <i>Homework:</i> TBA Quiz #1
Week 2: Fallacies & Moral Arguments		
M. May 30	Fun with fallacies	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 5, “Fallacies and Persuaders,” pt. 1 Short Essay #1 due by 3:15pm
T. May 31	More fun with fallacies	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 5, “Fallacies and Persuaders,” pt. 2 <i>Homework:</i> TBA
W. June 1	Moral arguments	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 11, “Critical Thinking in Morality and the Law,” pt. 1 <i>Homework:</i> TBA
R. June 2	Moral arguments	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 11, “Critical Thinking in Morality and the Law,” pt. 2 <i>Homework:</i> TBA
F. June 3	Moral arguments	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 11, “Critical Thinking in Morality and the Law,” pt. 3 <i>Homework:</i> TBA Quiz #2
Week 3: More Obstacles to Critical Thinking		
M. June 6	Open-mindedness	<i>Read:</i> Schwitzgebel, “The Essence of Jerkitude” (Bb) <i>Listen:</i> This American Life, “Red State Blue State,” prologue & Act One—29 min. (Bb); Short Essay #2 due by 3:15pm
T. June 7	Worldviews	<i>Watch:</i> “The overview effect” (19 min); Peter Gould, “When I Die”



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		(9 min) (Bb) <i>Homework:</i> TBA
W. June 8	Implicit bias	<i>Read:</i> Vedantam, "See No Bias" (Bb) <i>Do:</i> Take three implicit association tests (Bb) <i>Homework:</i> TBA
R. June 9	Ideology	<i>Watch:</i> Zizek, <i>The Pervert's Guide to Ideology</i> (Bb) <i>Homework:</i> TBA
F. June 10	Groupthink	<i>Read:</i> TBA <i>Homework:</i> TBA
Quiz #3		
Week 4:		
M. June 13	Induction	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 8, "Inductive Reasoning," pt. 1 Short Essay #3 due by 3:15pm
T. June 14	Causal arguments	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 8, "Inductive Reasoning," pt. 2 <i>Homework:</i> TBA
W. June 15	Inference to the best explanation	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 9, "Inference to the Best Explanation" <i>Homework:</i> TBA
R. June 16	Judging scientific theories	<i>Read:</i> Chapter 10, "Judging Scientific Theories" <i>Homework:</i> TBA
R. June 17	Bringing it all together	<i>Review:</i> Final Exam study guide In-class Final Exam