

Critical Thinking, PHI 2108-0M01 (Mixed Mode), Fall 2016

Mondays, 6:00 p. m.- 7:15 p.m., PSY 226

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Mundale

Office: Dept. of Philosophy, Psychology Building, Room 230

Office hours: M/W 2-4, or by appointment. Online chats scheduled as needed (class and individual).

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IMPORTANT NOTICE!

The message below is from The Office of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs:

“As of Fall 2014, all faculty are required to document students’ academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please complete the following academic activity by the end of the first week of classes or as soon as possible after adding the course.... Failure to do so may result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.”

Required Academic Activity: Take the “Attendance Verification Quiz”, in Quizzes area of course website. This quiz will not count toward your course grade. It opens Monday, August 22, and closes Monday, August 29.

Course Description

This course is intended to introduce students to critical thinking, reasoning and analysis, from a broad perspective that includes common biases and barriers, highlights from cognitive studies, some formal elements of logic, as well as a review of common fallacies, and other topics. As an “M”, or mixed-mode course, much of the content of this course is taught online, with limited face-to-face time. In this course mode, it is not possible for me to convey all that you will need to learn during the weekly face-to-face meetings; much of that will need to be done from the online sources. Please try to reserve class meeting time for questions and for reviewing the most difficult material. You are also welcome and encouraged to see me during office hours for any questions you may have or any additional help you may need. From time to time, I will also hold optional, online chats, through the course website.

Required Texts

You are not required to purchase any materials for this course. All required reading materials are available free, electronically through the course website. Note that many of these materials are subject to copyright restrictions, and are only to be used for the purposes of this course. They are not to be sold, shared, or otherwise disseminated except for the purposes of this course.

Preparation

Students are required to carefully read and prepare the assigned materials and remain current with all the assigned lessons, readings, tests, announcements, practice quizzes, lectures, and other components of this course. Checking your email regularly is very important, as I will send course announcements to you this way (see notes about e-mail, below). With respect to the material itself, critical thinking is a subject that

requires a sustained and cumulative effort. New lessons build on previous material; therefore, you are well-advised to keep up with the new material as it is released. Failure to read your assignments and work through the lessons in a timely fashion will make it increasingly difficult to regain lost ground.

Makeups

I do not routinely grant makeups. If I do grant a makeup, depending on the circumstances, your makeup may be at the end of the course, and will likely be more difficult than the original test. On the other hand, if you know ahead of time that you will need to miss a test, see me well in advance of the test date, and, if possible, I will arrange for you to take the test early. Cases of extreme or extended duress will be handled on a case-by-case basis, at the instructor's discretion, provided the student discusses the issue with me in a responsible and timely fashion and can provide some documentation of the difficulty. (For example: E-mailing me late in the semester to tell me you missed three tests because you were sick or otherwise unable to take a test is neither responsible nor timely). If you miss a test, you will receive a score of zero for the missed test. Remember: Your lowest test grade will be dropped, so a missed test isn't cause for panic, assuming you do well with the rest.

Grades

I use the plus/minus grading convention (A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F)

- Best 4 of 5 Tests (20% each, drop lowest/keep 4 best test scores): 80%
- Final Exam: Cumulative, will not be dropped: 20%

E-mail

E-mail is an essential part of this course, and you are responsible for its contents. The university requires that students use their Knight's e-mail account for all official university communication, such as course communications. Please make sure to check it, as you are responsible for anything I send via e-mail.

Please note that I use regular e-mail, not Canvas email, because I find regular e-mail more reliable and convenient. It will help me to answer you more quickly if you observe the following tips:

- Use reasonable grammar and punctuation in your e-mail messages; in other words, don't write as if it were a text message. We all make a few errors from time to time, but I will not respond to messages that are excessively sloppy or whose meaning is indiscernible. Have enough respect for yourself and your words to write them carefully: if you don't, others likely won't either.

- Please be patient. Don't always expect an immediate response when you send a message. Generally, two days is considered reasonable amount of time to receive a reply, not counting weekends.

- Include descriptive "Subject" headings: something that is descriptive and relevant to the subject of your e-mail. If you just hit reply to my last message, be sure to change the subject; otherwise, it bespeaks lack of proper attention to what you are attempting to say, and it won't readily catch my attention amidst all the usual spam that accumulates.

- Do not discuss grades or anything confidential in e-mail. Likewise, **I cannot send your grades or test scores in email, as it violates privacy restrictions.** Generally, I will not even respond to emails in which I am requested to do so.

- **Include your name and your class** on your e-mail messages (I may have hundreds of students in a given semester, and surely more than one class, so identify yourself).

Technical Resources

For further assistance:

- UCF Home Page - a search will help find UCF resources - <http://www.ucf.edu>
- Helpdesk - <http://helpdesk.ucf.edu/> - You can also call the helpdesk at 407-823-5117.
- Techrangers - <http://techrangers.cdws.ucf.edu/support/> , or 407-823-3808
- Learning Online - <http://learn.ucf.edu> This URL also includes access to information on study skills for distance learners, the library and the writing center.

If your own equipment fails, there are many computer labs on campus and virtually every public library offers Internet access.

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty are a disgrace. If caught, I will punish cheaters to the fullest extent allowed through the Office of Student Conduct. If you don't have enough integrity to do your own work, drop the class now and re-examine your purpose in life and at UCF. The official UCF guidelines can be found here for your reference:
<http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu>.

Extra Credit

An important opportunity for extra credit comes at the end of course – Critical Thinking Optional Lesson Part I and Part II. The material from these two optional lessons introduces Propositional Logic, and will be included in Extra Credit questions, on the final exam only. This material is not required. There is also a practice quiz for this material, and that practice quiz is also optional, and included just for review. It is possible additional opportunities will become available over the course of the semester, but this one is certain.

Advisory Note

Many students find the material in the second half of the course (Lessons 7-12) more difficult than the material from the first half of the course. Please be aware of this, and do not allow yourself to start missing class, neglecting the material, or falling behind at that point in the semester. This is a natural progression in the difficulty of the material itself, so please be mindful of it, and see me if you find you are having difficulties. I will be happy to assist you during office hours or by appointment. Please also remember that this is a mixed mode course, and as such, you will need to learn some of the material on your own. Again, I am always there to help if you ask.

Lesson Topics

- 1 – Personal Barriers, Enculturation, Ego Defenses, Attribution Errors, other Common Thinking Errors
- 2 – Salience and Attribution
- 3 – Context Dependence: Contrast Effects, Primacy vs. Recency Effects, Halo Effect
- 4 – Selective Perception: Playing Card Experiments, Potent Expectations, The Dartmouth vs. Princeton Game, Hostile Media Effect
- 5 – Language: Structuring of Thought, Linguistic Determinism Debate, Metaphor, Connotation vs. Denotation
- 6 – Informal Fallacies and Sample Deceitful Techniques
- 7 – Basic Logical Concepts
- 8 – Validity and Counterexample
- 9 – Categorical Syllogisms
- 10 – Mood (not what you think), and Figure (also not what you think) in Categorical Syllogisms
- 11 – Venn Diagrams
- 12 – Validity, Invalidity, and Venn Diagrams

Course Schedule and Notes

- All class meetings are on Mondays, 6-7:15 p.m., in PSY 226.
- Listed readings are to be completed before their scheduled class in order to make best use of class time.
- Practice Quizzes and Sample Tests, online, are only for practice, and do not count toward your grade
- All graded semester tests are taken in class, not online. (No quizzes or sample tests taken online count toward your grade.

Week 1, August 22: Review Syllabus, begin preview of Lessons 1 and 2.

* Special Note: Thurs., Aug. 25, 11:59 p.m. is Drop/Swap deadline, and Friday, Aug. 26, 11: 59 p.m., is Add deadline.

Week 2, August 29: Lessons 1 and 2.

Week 3, September 5: Labor Day Holiday - no class meeting, continue to work on Lessons 3 and 4 on your own.

Week 4, September 12: Review Lessons 1 through 4, continue with Lessons 5 and 6 if time permits. Complete Practice Quiz #1 over Lessons 1-4.

Week 5, September 19: **TEST 1, IN CLASS**, over Lessons 1 through 4.

Week 6, September 26: Lessons 5 and 6. Complete Practice Quiz #2 over Lessons 5 and 6.

Week 7, October 3: **TEST 2, IN CLASS** over Lessons 5 and 6.

Week 8, October 10: Lesson 7.

Week 9, October 17: Lesson 8. Complete Practice Quiz #3 over Lessons 7 and 8.

Week 10, October 24: **TEST 3, IN CLASS** over Lessons 7 and 8.

Week 11, October 31: Lesson 9.

* Special Note: Mon., Oct. 31, at 11:59 p.m. is withdrawal deadline.

Week 12, November 7: Lesson 10, Complete Practice Quiz #4 over Lessons 9 and 10.

Week 13, November 14: **TEST 4, IN CLASS** over Lessons 9 and 10.

Week 14, November 21: Lessons 11 and 12. Complete Practice Quiz #5 over Lessons 11 and 12.

Week 15, November 28: **TEST 5, IN CLASS** over Lessons 11 and 12.

FINAL EXAM, IN CLASS. We were not assigned a standard exam time in the University schedule, so I requested an exam time from the Registrar. I will announce it as soon as I receive it.

* * * **The final exam is cumulative, and will not be dropped.** * * *