

CHAMINADE UNIVERSITY
Philosophy 10390
Critical Thinking
Winter Accelerated Undergraduate Session
January 10 - March 22, 2000

SYLLABUS

Robert Mitchell
Instructor

Catalog Description: Designed to be more than a study of non-formal reasoning methods, the course includes but is not limited to the study of informal fallacies. Assembling approaches from analytic philosophy, literary theory and cultural studies, the course models the rhetorical dimension of language and discourse. The course is useful for those who want to think, write and talk in a clear and straightforward manner.

Course Description: An applied study of the concepts and skills requisite to perform critical analysis and evaluation of ordinary argumentation. Students learn to read critically utilizing essays of contemporary interest, and develop writing skills necessary to express views and opinions effectively.

Course Objectives: Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze and summarize written arguments accurately
- Identify and analyze the assumptions, inferences, and evidence contained in an argument.
- Evaluate the validity and soundness of arguments based upon scrutiny of the assumptions, assertions, and conclusions presented.
- Recognize and identify informal fallacies.
- Plan and compose a written argument that includes a thesis statement, supporting argumentation, responses to critics and conclusion(s).

Course Web Page: Course materials and accounts to the Web Board are available at the Philosophy 10390 Web Page at: <http://members.aol.com/PH10390/Index.html>. Students are required to read and assume responsibility for all course requirements, as described in the Syllabus, Course Schedule, Study Guide, Course Paper and Thesis Statements, and instructional materials, information, and resources

published on the Web Page. Contact the instructor immediately if there are any aspects of the Syllabus or other course documents that require explanation or further clarification.

Class Format and Activities: This course is offered online utilizing e-mail and other internet technologies. Consequently, students are required to have access to a computer which is connected to the internet prior to registration. Students are also expected to be familiar with basic internet technology including sending and receiving e-mail and attachments, bulletin board postings, navigating the World Wide Web, performing searches, and downloading files. Regular weekly e-mail communication with the instructor and the submission of all required assignments is important to the successful completion of the course, and collaborative electronic communication between classmates concerning course content is encouraged.

There are two required in-person meetings; an orientation meeting held at the beginning of the term and a final meeting in which a final examination will be administered at the conclusion of the term. Orientation and final meetings are held on the Chaminade University of Honolulu campus.

Specific weekly course assignments are transmitted to each class member at the beginning of each academic week (Sunday) as noted in the course schedule. Weekly course assignments will typically include: (1) reading assignments and study exercises to be completed and submitted to the instructor by midnight on the following Saturday, and (2) discussion group questions posted on Sunday which require a response by each student between midnight on Sunday and midnight on Friday of that week. Students are expected to respond to all assignments and transmit their responses to the instructor, and other members of the class when requested to do so by the instructor, via e-mail. Students are encouraged to contact the instructor directly with any questions, or for clarification of assigned tasks, prior to the weekly assignment response submission date.

In addition to weekly assignments and discussion group postings, each student is required to plan and compose one written paper demonstrating the elements of sound philosophic argumentation and a master of critical thinking skills. All papers must represent original thought and research, and be written in a first person singular voice. Course papers written in the third person voice will automatically lose one full letter grade. Papers are due on the date indicated in the course schedule, should be in double space format, in correct form, and five to eight pages in length. Topics for papers require the prior approval of the instructor.

One comprehensive final examination will be administered at the conclusion of the course. At minimum, the final examination will consist of: (1) definitions of key terms and concepts in critical thinking, (2) identification of informal fallacies, and (3) the critical analysis of a short essay.

Text: Barnet, Sylvan and Bedau, Hugo. *Current Issues and Enduring Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking and Argument, with Readings*. Fifth Edition. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Grading: Satisfactory performance entails the successful completion of the following: (1) Written responses to weekly assignments and weekly discussion questions (pass/fail); (2) the submission of one written course paper of five to eight pages in length; and (3) one comprehensive final examination. **Please note that weekly assignments and discussion questions are evaluated on a pass/fail basis. The course paper and comprehensive final examination provide an opportunity to demonstrate**

mastery of critical thinking concepts and skills directly. And therefore represent thirty percent (30%) and forty percent (40%) of the course grade The weight of each of the various elements comprising the overall course grade is summarized as follows:

Weekly Assignments	15% (pass/fail)
Discussion Group Postings	15% (pass/fail)
One Course Paper	30%
<u>Final Examination</u>	<u>40%</u>
Total	100%

Expectations: With the possible exception of documented emergencies, there will be no extensions given on assignment due dates or the final examination without the prior approval of the instructor. Students who fail to submit assignments or comply with other requirements are advised to withdraw from the course in order to avoid a final course grade of "F". Grades of "Incomplete" will only be given in cases of documented extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control and in accordance with Chaminade University of Honolulu policies. Attendance in this class is represented by the instructor's receipt of weekly e-mail responses to assignments and regular web board postings as assigned. Students are expected to observe the regulations concerning academic honesty published by Chaminade University of Honolulu (see Chaminade University General Catalog).

As subjects examined during this course may touch upon topics, beliefs, and/or issues considered sensitive by some students, it is imperative that all students demonstrate courtesy and respect concerning the views, opinions, and beliefs of others.

© Robert G. Mitchell, 1998. All Rights Reserved

This page was last updated on 01/11/00

[Return to Home Page](#)