

Phil 110 - Critical Thinking
Dr. Michael Sudduth
Course Syllabus

San Francisco State University, Fall 2015
Philosophy 110-53 (13333)
MWF 9:10am-10:00am, Thornton Hall 325
[iLearn Resources Link](#)

Office: HUM 547
Hours: 3:10pm–5:40pm (MW)
website: michaelsudduth.com
msudduthsfu@gmail.com

Course Description

Critical thinking may be described very generally as a reflective habit of the mind directed towards understanding, examining, and assimilating information. As such, it involves a variety of mental operations: asking questions, uncovering assumptions, making conceptual distinctions, and drawing inferences. Most importantly, the activity of critical thinking helps produce well-grounded opinions, that is, opinions supported by evidence or reasons. This process of supporting opinions with evidence or reasons is called *argument*. So critical thinking involves the making and evaluation of arguments.

A course in critical thinking is designed to articulate criteria for evaluating arguments and to help students cultivate skills of good reasoning. In this course, we will focus primarily on the structure of arguments and criteria for evaluating arguments. What is an argument? How is it distinguished from other uses of language? When is a reason for believing something a good reason? When not? Students will apply course concepts through a series of practical exercises designed to help develop the habit of good reasoning.

Value of a Critical Thinking Course: (i) improves reading comprehension, (ii) brings clarity to writing, (iii) increases effectiveness in communication, and (iv) helps people make informed decisions in everyday life.

Course Objectives: (i) understand the structure of arguments, (ii) understand criteria for evaluating the quality of the premises of arguments, (iii) understand criteria for the evaluation of the relationship between the premises and conclusion in deductive and inductive arguments, and (iv) successfully apply the criteria in (ii) and (iii) to the evaluation of actual arguments.

Required course text: Trudy Govier, *A Practical Study of Argument*, 7th edition (Wadsworth, 2010). [ISBN-13: 978-0-495-60340-5] Note: You must have the 7th edition of the text. You may use the 2014 “enhanced” edition.

An eBook version of the course text is also available at <http://www.wadsworth.com/> Enter book information in search box. Click on “companion site” information. You will then have the option to purchase an eBook version of the Govier book. You may also purchase eChapters.

Assignments and Grading

Participation (20%): Be actively involved in the class. Be prepared to respond to questions about homework exercises. Ask questions related to course readings and textbook exercises.

Homework Exercises (20%): Logic exercises and some brief (one to two-page) writing assignments.

Exams (60%): There will be three exams, including the final exam. Exams are worth 20% each and consist of true/false and multiple-choice questions. Some exams will require work outside class. The

tentative dates for the exams are: September 25, October 23, and December 16 (8:00am start time – per final exam week schedule)

All assignments have a point value, and there are 500 points possible in the class.

Exams = 100 points each (300 points total)
Participation = 100 points
Homework = 100 points

I use the following grade scale for individual assignments and for calculating final grades.

Grade Scale	Final Grade Point Scale
93–100% = A	465–500 = A
90–92% = A-	450–464 = A-
87–89% = B+	435–449 = B+
83–86% = B	415–434 = B
80–82% = B-	400–414 = B-
77–79% = C+	385–399 = C+
73–76% = C	365–384 = C
70–72% = C-	350–364 = C-
67–69% = D+	335–349 = D+
63–66% = D	315–334 = D
60–62% = D-	300–314 = D-
0–59% = F	0–299 = F

Guidelines for Success in the Class

- (1) Attend class regularly! While I do not grade on attendance, habitual absences and/or tardiness will adversely affect your participation grade and performance on course work. Students are responsible for knowing what assignments have been given or collected. Contact me by email if you have questions about this. If you miss an exam, you are not entitled to take the exam at a different time. If you are late for an exam, you may be penalized. If you are excessively late for an exam, you may forfeit taking the exam.
- (2) Respect the classroom as a learning environment. Do not speak or otherwise distract when the professor or students are speaking. This includes the disruptive use of cell phones, iPods, and other electronic devices.
- (3) Students with documented disabilities should discuss with me as soon as possible any university approved academic accommodations.

I wish to make this course as accessible as possible to students with disabilities or medical conditions that may affect any aspect of course assignments or participation. You are invited to communicate with me at the outset of the course or at your discretion about any accommodations that will improve your experience of or access to the course. You can also contact the Disability Resource Center at 338-2472 (Voice/TDD).

- (4) Academic dishonesty on any assignment or exam will result in a zero for the assignment and may have further academic consequences.

Plagiarism occurs when a student misrepresents the work of another as his or her own. Plagiarism may consist of using the ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or the whole text of another without appropriate acknowledgement, but it also includes employing or allowing another person to write or substantially alter work that a student then submits as his or her own. Any assignment found to be plagiarized will be given an "F" grade. All instances of plagiarism in the College of Humanities will be reported to the Dean of the College, and may be reported to the University Judicial Affairs Officer for further action. (Quotation taken from "College of Humanities Plagiarism Resources," www.sfsu.edu/~collhum/plagiarism.html)

- (5) Keep up with homework assignments. Although we go over assignments in class, it is absolutely necessary that you prepare for this by working exercises yourself. It's best to work on exercises each day or every other day, rather than try to complete all exercises in one or two sittings. Homework must be typed. Exception: ch. 8. Corrections may be in pen or pencil. Homework may be collected in any given class. Make sure your homework is current and ready to be submitted.
- (6) Lecture notes, study questions, and other materials will be posted on my professional site michaelsudduth.com. The password is logicgod. Please check for updates on a weekly basis.
- (7) Use msudduthsfsu@gmail.com for all correspondence. Subject line of emails should read: Critical Thinking FA 15. Always include your full name in correspondence.

Proposed Course Calendar

This is a *proposed* schedule of readings. The schedule of readings is subject to change and may be adjusted as the semester moves forward. For adjustments to this calendar, course materials, and complete listing of daily assignments, see the course page at michaelsudduth.com. Readings (or any other assignment) listed for a particular day must have been completed for and hence prior to the day in question.

Week 1: Orientation and the Nature of Argument

August 24 (M): Orientation I
August 26 (W): Govier, Chapter 1
August 28 (F): Chapter 1 continued

Week 2: Argument Structure

August 31 (M): Govier, Chapter 1 concluded, Chapter 2 beginning
September 2 (W): Govier, Chapter 2
September 4 (F): TBA

Week 3: Argument Structure

September 7 (M): Labor Day – No CLASS
September 9 (W): Govier, Chapter 2
September 11 (F): Govier, Chapter 2

Week 4: Argument Structure

September 14 (M): Govier, Chapter 2
September 16 (W): Govier, Chapter 2
September 18 (F): In class argument structure exercise

Week 5: Argument Exercises and Exam 1

September 21 (M): Discussion of results of 9/18 in-class exercise and review for exam #1
September 23 (W): TBA
September 25 (F): Exam #1 – The Anatomy of Arguments (Scantron 882 form and #2 pencil needed)

Week 6: Acceptability of Premises

September 28 (M): Govier, Chapter 5
September 30 (W): Govier, Chapter 5
October 2 (F): Govier, Chapter 5

Week 7: Acceptability of Premises

October 5 (M): Govier, Chapter 5
October 7 (W): Govier, Chapter 5
October 9 (F): Govier, Chapter 6

Week 8: Relevance of Premises

October 12 (M): Govier, Chapter 6
October 14 (W): Govier, Chapter 6
October 16 (F): Govier, Chapter 6

Week 9: Relevance of Premises

October 19 (M): Review for Exam 2
October 21(W): TBA
October 23 (F): Exam #2 – Acceptability and Relevance of Premises (Scantron 882 form and #2 pencil needed)

Week 10: Sufficiency of Grounds – Inductive Logic

October 26 (M): Govier, Chapter 9
October 28 (W): Govier, Chapter 9
October 30 (F): Govier, Chapter 9

Week 11: Sufficiency of Grounds – Inductive Logic

November 2 (M): Govier Chapter 9
November 4 (W): Govier, Chapter 10
November 6 (F): Govier, Chapter 10

Week 12: Sufficiency of Grounds – Inductive Logic

November 9 (M): Govier, Chapter 10
November 11 (W): Veteran's Day - NO CLASS
November 13 (F): Govier, Chapter 10

Week 13: Sufficiency of Grounds – Deductive Logic

November 16 (M): Govier, Chapter 8
November 18 (W): Govier, Chapter 8
November 20 (F): Govier, Chapter 8

Week 14: Thanksgiving Break

November 23 (M): NO CLASS
November 25 (W): NO CLASS
November 27 (F): NO CLASS

Week 15: Sufficiency of Grounds – Deductive Logic

November 30 (M): Govier, Chapter 8
December 2 (W): Govier, Chapter 8
December 4 (F): Govier Chapter 8

Week 16: Sufficiency of Grounds – Deductive Logic

December 7 (M): Govier, Chapter 8
December 9 (W): Govier, Chapter 8
December 11 (F): Review for Final

Week 17: Finals Week

FINAL EXAM DATE:

Final Exam, Wednesday, December 16 at 8:00am-10:30am

9:10 MWF / MW

Wednesday December 16

8:00-10:30