

# Critical Thinking/Write Phil 5 Syllabus

August 2017

**Critical Thinking/Writing; Philosophy 5, Section 1485; Room, Baker 1801; Tuesday & Thursday 9:00-10:30**

**Dr. Crowell; Office, Emeritus 1513 Office hours, Tuesday & Thursday 7:00-9:00**

**Other times by appointment, Phone 527-4607. Voice Mail: 527-4999, VM 5121.**

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This course is a study of arguments. An argument, for this class, includes giving reasons, establishing support for things we think are true and justifying beliefs or actions based on beliefs. It is a combination of the principles of critical thinking with the fundamentals of writing essays with an emphasis on argumentative essays.

We will, during the course, do the following:

- ✓ Establish the standards for writing properly
- ✓ Distinguish correct from incorrect arguments.
- ✓ Avoid the pitfalls of fallacious arguments
- ✓ Think through some complex issue.

This does not mean that on many complex questions there is a single right answer, but it does mean that there is a correct method. The puzzle is how can single correct method of argument lead to contradictory answers? Part of this course is to examine this puzzle.

**Texts:** Elements of Style, Strunk and White; Fourth Edition, The Clouds, Aristophanes; Handouts and area newspapers, magazines and other print media.

Course material will be uploaded to the Canvass Course Module.

Goal: To understand the nature of arguments. To teach practical, usable skills for analyzing, evaluating and writing extended arguments in such areas as politics, economics, public concerns, business policy, value determination and perhaps personal matters; to enable the student to read, evaluate, and write quality arguments. A second purpose is to touch on and explain philosophical issues and methods as they occur in the semester's work.

Assumptions: Language is the basic subject for study, because it is the substance of arguments. The use of language in arguments is governed by informal rules (identified as "language games" in recent philosophical discussions). In some areas, philosophers have established principles that, when followed, form the conditions for correctness in arguments. Then, of course, there are the rules of grammar. We will also see some statements by philosopher are questionable principles of grammar.

These conditions are observable, public, and teachable and serve as the foundation for proper communication.

We also assume that there are principles that determine effective methods for writing arguments. Some of these principles are found in the guidelines for writing correct English essays. (See Elements of Style) Other principles are those that govern the correct structure of an argument.

**Course Assignments:** Read handouts and daily material from newspapers, magazines, etc.

- Daily in-class quizzes
- Four Written Papers
- Written exercises in class

**Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Resources (527-4278), Analy Village - C, as soon as possible to better ensure such accommodations are provided.**

**Grading:** The quizzes and in-class written exercises will comprise 15% of the grade. Each paper will be weighted 20% and the final 5%. Letter grades usually reflect the normal distribution; A's in the 90% and above, B's between 80% and 90%, C's between 70% and 80%, D's between 60% and 70%, not passing below 60%.

**Reading requirement:** Students will be expected to have read the material in the handout that is to be covered on a specific class session (see outline that follows). In addition, students will be expected to have read or be familiar important news events from the immediate period. This knowledge can be gained from reading the important news reports for that day, or hearing in depth reports from the various media outlets. The focus should be on the arguments that appear in each of these cases. Sources include: Press Democrat, San Francisco Chronicle, Sacramento Bee; Broadcast media, National Public Radio on KQED 88.5 and 88.3, fm KRCB 91.1 fm; The News Hour on KQED, and KRCB TV; all news station KCBS on 740 am.

There will be four take home essays during the semester. The final will be an in-class written assignment. Written work will develop the following skills:

- Summarize: Briefly stating the main points.
- Explain: Making clear, interpreting some point or concept and putting that point in your own words
- Define: Giving the meaning of a term or concept.
- Discuss: Considering something from various points of view. Presenting opposing views.
- Criticize: Stating and supporting your opinion on the correctness of something.
- Justify: Giving good evidence, showing reasons.
- Evaluate: Determining and justifying the worth of some view.

- Prove: Establishing the truth of something.

**The Quizzes:** Sometime during each class meeting, there can be one or sometimes two very brief questions based on the reading assignment in the handout for that meeting or on a front-page issue that has led to public arguments. They will be worth 10 points each, no partial credit and if missed, cannot be made up. They can be answered from the reading assignment or from your reading of the daily local papers. Quizzes will be closed book, but you may consult any reading notes that you have taken covering the reading assignment for that class meeting. Other quizzes will consist of in-class writing assignments and other writing exercises. Frequently, the quizzes will require you to summarize or define. I do understand that sometimes missing a class is unavoidable. Students who e-mail ahead of class for their absence will receive a reply from me with the quiz content for that day. A correct return reply prior to the next class will be given quiz credit.

**The Papers:** Grading of written work will be based on the following; completeness, accuracy, clarity, language skills, and relevance to the questions. When asked to justify, evaluate or criticize, the response has the structure of an argument. Conclusions are supported by reasons; the reasons are relevant to the conclusion. The language used to argue is clear and unambiguous. Explanations are clear, concise and render unclear parts understandable. Discussions present the opposing views in a reasonable and fair manner.

Because of the grading requirements and the quick return of your work, no late papers will be accepted. However we will be using the “Turnitin” web site for paper submission. This will allow you to turn in an electronic version of your paper at the end of the day it is due. If an entire class essay is not completed for an unavoidable reason, e.g., flood, earthquake, meteor, etc. there may be the possibility of a make up after arrangements are made with the instructor.

Another note on the papers: We will follow the accepted style adopted by professional organizations, e.g. Modern Language format, with one important exception—**No name on the paper, only the four digit id number assigned by the college.** This way I will not know who the author is and read each paper with a “fresh mind”.

**Absences and Attendance:** Attendance is not specifically graded, but will be reflected in the quizzes. However, I will drop students who miss the first week of class or who have not participated in any of the graded assignments (quizzes and papers). It is the student’s responsibility to initiate a drop procedure in any other circumstance.

**FIRST WEEK;** August 21. Introduction to the Class. Review the Syllabus. What is Critical Thinking? Relationships to other disciplines. Different kinds of arguments; deductive arguments and practical arguments. Arguments defined: practical and deductive. The identification of arguments from non-arguments. Examples of arguments from the local media. Arguments distinguished from Assertions and Assertive essays. The concept of structure in an argument. Reasons, premises, conclusions and theses.

**Assignment:** Recognizing arguments and non-arguments. Writing summary analysis of another's argument.

SECOND WEEK August 28. Development of the elements of an argument. Issue and issue recognition. Levels of Language, Descriptive, Normative and Prescriptive language. Read editorial pages for structure of extended arguments. Review of *Elements of Style*

THIRD WEEK; September 4. Continuation of argument recognition, classification and analysis.  
**First Paper Due: September 8; Summary and Analysis of an assigned argument.**

FOURTH WEEK; September 11. Assignment: Read editorial pages for structure of extended arguments. Start the study of Practical arguments. The concept of a Warrant. Hidden Assumptions.

FIFTH WEEK; September 18. Continue with Practical arguments--the study of arguments in the media. The analysis of extended arguments--evaluation and the structure of extended arguments. Assignment for next week: Analysis of arguments in handouts.

SIXTH WEEK; September 25. Continue with analysis of extended arguments. Assignment for next week: Continuation of handout analysis. Review of extended arguments. Definitions of assurance, warrant, secondary thesis, counter argument, etc.

SEVENTH WEEK; October 2. Study of defective arguments. Fallacies in arguments. Criteria for sound arguments. The quizzes for this week consist of selecting and handing in an argument that you regard as defective. You should briefly describe the nature of the problem on the example you hand in. **Second Paper Due: Summary and Review of an assigned argument**

EIGHTH WEEK; October 9. Study of defective arguments continues. Fallacies in arguments.

NINTH WEEK; October 16. Review of defective arguments continued. Discussion of the four criteria for strong arguments. Examples of arguments that fail one or more of the criteria.

TENTH WEEK; October 23; Review of defective arguments continued. Discussion of the four criteria for strong arguments. Examples of arguments that fail one or more of the criteria. Discussion of numerical fallacies and causal arguments.

ELEVENTH WEEK; October 30; The topic of Rhetoric. Aristotle's concepts of Rhetoric as a productive science. **Third Paper Due: Writing the critical review of an argument.**

TWELFTH WEEK; November 6; The topic of Rhetoric continued.

THIRTEENTH WEEK; November 13. Building your arguments. Writing the outline  
The complete argument. Selecting the issue. The Rhetoric of an Argument. Reading assignment, *The Clouds*.

FOURTEENTH WEEK; November 20. Writing the finished argument. The Rhetoric of an Argument. Reading assignment, *The Clouds* continued.

Thanksgiving Break; November 24-27

FIFTEENTH WEEK; December 4 Argument reviews. The Rhetoric of an Argument. Reading assignment, *The Clouds*.

SIXTEENTH WEEK; December 11. **Fourth Paper Due: Putting it all together; writing a complete argument.**

Final Exams; Thursday,

In-class written exercises taken from *The Elements of Style*.

Week of:

- First week; pp 39-41
- Second week pp 42-43
- Third week; pp 44-45
- Fourth week; pp 46-47
- Fifth week; pp 48-49
- Sixth week; pp 50-51
- Seventh week; pp 52-53
- Eighth week; pp 54-55
- Ninth week; pp 56-57
- Tenth week; pp 58-59
- Twelfth; pp 60-61
- Thirteenth 16; pp 62-63
- Fourteenth; pp 64-65
- Sixteenth; pp 66-73
- Seventeenth; pp 74-80
- Eighteenth; pp 81-85

Part of the final will be to review our course against the following official course objectives:

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

1. Identify and describe the main conclusion or thesis of an argument and demonstrate an understanding of its significance.
2. Identify and paraphrase the main supporting premises for a conclusion and the arguments in support of those premises.
3. Identify vagueness, ambiguity, emotive language and other rhetorical elements of an argument.
4. Make explicit any unstated premises and/or conclusions in an argument.
5. Employ the correct techniques for evaluating the deductive and/or inductive structures of a component argument within the larger argument.
6. Determine and discuss the relevance of premises to conclusions.
7. Detect and describe logical fallacies that may occur in an argument.
8. Evaluate the acceptability of any unsupported statements of fact or opinion in an argument.
9. Perform a summary evaluation of an overall argument.

10. Select an appropriate topic for an argumentative essay and formulate a clear and defensible conclusion.
11. Conduct library research to support an argument and provide the appropriate documentation.
12. Develop strong arguments that are based upon sound inferences from clear and acceptable premises.
13. Anticipate and critique the strongest counter-arguments.
14. Express ideas clearly, precisely and unambiguously.
15. Organize essays, paragraphs and sentences logically and coherently.

For additional information I have borrowed part of the course outline from English 5

#### B. Composition Objectives

1. Write essays of varying lengths, from 1000 to 3500 words, as appropriate to assignment or writer's purpose.
2. Employ writing strategies including analysis, synthesis, and summary.
3. Employ writing strategies including causal analysis, advocacy of ideas, persuasion, evaluation, refutation, interpretation, and definition.
4. Demonstrate continued development in writing correct, sophisticated college-level prose.
5. Examine classical divisions of rhetorical appeal including ethos, logos, and pathos.
6. Employ effective writing techniques including organization for logic and coherence; revision for focus, clarity, precision, and diction; use of correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
7. Compile and evaluate library research for application in research papers.

They have also added: “Distinguish fact from opinion.” We will investigate, in some detail, this topic