



Critical Thinking/Writing; Philosophy 5, Fall 2019  
Section 1485 Emeritus 1520  
Tuesday and Thursday 9:00-10:30

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Web Site: [www.santarosa.edu/~tcrowell](http://www.santarosa.edu/~tcrowell)

Office Hours, Emeritus 1513 Tuesday & Thursday 7:00-7:30, 10:30-12:00

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 and evidence. It is a combination of the principles of critical thinking with the fundamentals of writing essays with an emphasis on argumentative essays. On the above web site, I have posted two links to problem words and expressions that have caused some mistakes in the history of writing

We will, during the course, attempt to establish the standards for writing properly and, by implication, ways to distinguish between correct and incorrect arguments. We will be interested in finding mistakes in this process, avoiding the pitfalls of fallacious arguments, and being able to 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; Handouts and area newspapers, magazines and other print media

Much of the course material will be distributed as handouts and are required reading. These handouts are available on the Canvas section page; they are in the Modules. I strongly recommend you secure a hard copy of this material

**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 formal rules that, when followed, form the necessary conditions for correctness and quality in arguments. 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

**Papers:** The written work will be uploaded to the Turnitin site (Turnitin.com). To log in you will need the class ID. It is 21777938; the password is “style.” There will be a drop box for each assignment; the due dates are listed for each assignment. The deadline will also be on the assignment drop box. Meeting the deadline is important as I cannot accept any late papers. Writing assignments in the work world usually also have a hard deadline, and in our case, I will return the papers with a grade on the next class meeting.

**Grading:** The quizzes will comprise 20% of the grade. Each paper will be weighted 20%. The role of the final will be described later. However, the final will be a vocabulary test of words and concepts that have been identified during the course. It is advisable to keep a notebook of such words as they are identified during the semester. 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%.

**Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Resources (527-4278)**

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 with 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. Identifying thesis

- 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

One way to earn extra quiz credit is to sign up to have a letter to the editor published in one the available newspapers.

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 argued for. 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. There is no make up for a missed quiz. 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.

**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 20.** Introduction to the Class. 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.**

August 25: Last day to add without my signature

SECOND WEEK; August 27. 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.

September 1; last day to drop for full refund

THIRD WEEK; September 3. Continuation of argument recognition, classification and analysis.  
**First Paper Due: September 6. Summary and Analysis of an assigned argument.**

FOURTH WEEK; September 10. Assignment: Read editorial pages for structure of extended arguments. Start the study of Practical arguments. The concept of a Warrant. Hidden Assumptions.

September 8; Last day to drop without a "W".

FIFTH WEEK; September 17. 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 24; 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 1. 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: October 4. Summary and Review of an assigned argument**

EIGHTH WEEK; October 8. Study of defective arguments continues. Fallacies in arguments.

NINTH WEEK; October 15. 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 22. 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 29. The topic of Rhetoric. Aristotle's concepts of Rhetoric as a productive science. **Third Paper Due: November 1. Writing the critical review of an argument.**

TWELFTH WEEK; November 5. The topic of Rhetoric continued.

THIRTEENTH WEEK; November 12; (Professional Development Day, No class on November 12) Building your arguments. Writing the outline: The complete argument. Selecting the issue

FOURTEENTH WEEK; November 19. Writing the finished argument.

FIFTEENTH WEEK; November 26. Argument reviews.

Thanksgiving Holiday; November 29- December 1

SIXTEENTH WEEK; December 3. Putting it all together; writing the complete argument. **Fourth Paper Due: December 6.**

SEVENTEENTH WEEK; December 10. Return and discussion of final paper. Preparing for the final. Word list exercises. Course review.

Final Exams; December 19 7:00-9:45

What follows is from the official course of record

## **COURSE CONTENT**

Outcomes and Objectives:

1. The students will read extended arguments (diversity of perspective and culture will be reflected in the selection of these arguments) and write clear, coherent and well-organized critical essays analyzing and evaluating those arguments. In those critical essays, successful students will:
  - A. Identify and describe the main conclusion or thesis of the argument being critiqued, and demonstrate an understanding of its significance.
  - B. Identify and paraphrase the main supporting premises for the conclusion and the arguments in support of those premises.
  - C. Identify vagueness, ambiguity, emotive language and other rhetorical elements of the argument, as appropriate.
  - D. Make explicit any unstated premises and/or conclusions in the argument, as appropriate.
  - E. Employ the correct techniques for evaluating the deductive and/or inductive structures of the component arguments within the larger argument.
  - F. Determine and discuss the relevance of premises to conclusions, as appropriate.

- G. Detect and describe logical fallacies that may occur in the argument.
  - H. Evaluate the acceptability of any unsupported statements of fact or opinion in the argument, as appropriate.
  - I. Perform a summary evaluation of the overall argument.
2. Students will also construct several essays in which they formulate and defend their own positions on topics of controversy. In these essays, successful students will:
- A. Select an appropriate topic.
  - B. Formulate a clear and defensible conclusion.
  - C. Conduct library research on the topic, as appropriate.
  - D. Develop strong arguments which are based upon sound inferences from clear and acceptable premises. Arguments should be free from invalidity, inductive errors, irrelevance and logical fallacies.
  - E. Anticipate and critique the strongest counter-arguments.
  - F. Express their ideas clearly, precisely and unambiguously.
  - G. Organize their essays, paragraphs and sentences logically and coherently.
  - H. Provide the appropriate documentation, as necessary.