

PHIL 1000-14
Workshop in Clear Thinking
Spring 2019

Tues/Thurs, 9:30 – 10:45 PM, Art and Education Room 0142

Instructor: Dr. Tristan J. Rogers

Email: tristan.rogers@csueastbay.edu

Office: SF-462 (Student and Faculty Support)

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 12:15 – 1:15 PM (and by appointment)

Course website: <http://www.bb.csueastbay.edu>

Course description: This is an introductory course in the skill of clear (or critical) thinking. Aristotle famously defined a human being as a rational animal, but thinking rationally does not come naturally to us. The purpose of this course is to come to grips with this reality, while developing skills of clear thinking to become a more responsible and reflective citizen. The course is divided into three parts:

I. *Psychological Obstacles:* We begin by looking at some fascinating results in psychology that reveal some of the challenges we face as prospective critical thinkers. These challenges suggest that we reason with two distinct systems of thinking: an intuitive system, which is hardwired and fast-acting, and a reflective system, which is teachable, but slow-moving (from Kahneman's *Thinking, Fast and Slow*). The reflective system cannot function without the intuitive system, but it also plays an essential role in compensating and correcting for the intuitive system's inevitable errors.

II. *Philosophical Tools:* One of the most reliable tools the reflective system has is the deductive and inductive systems of argument. An argument in this sense is not a dispute you have with your roommate, but a set of premises that logically support a conclusion. Such an argument is *valid*; it is impossible for its conclusion to be false if the premises are true. Arguments are difficult to identify, so we will spend some time on this skill. We'll also examine common logical fallacies and the central concepts of *deductive validity/inductive strength* and *soundness/cogency*.

III. *Critical Thinking in the Public Sphere:* While good arguments are reliable guides to the truth, because we are motivated and fallible reasoners, the most important tool we have for critical thinking is each other. Thus, in this final part of the course, we will first examine the intuitive nature of moral thinking and why we disagree deeply about morality. Second, we will look at John Stuart Mill's classic arguments for freedom of speech and consider whether they support the enterprise of critical thinking in our society.

Required Texts (available in the Bookstore):

Christopher Chabris & Daniel Simons, *The Invisible Gorilla* (Broadway, 2009)

ISBN: 978-0-307-45966-4

Lewis Vaughn, *The Power of Critical Thinking*, 5th edition (Oxford, 2016)

ISBN: 978-0-19-938542-3

Recommended Texts (provided through Blackboard):

Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind* (Vintage, 2012)

Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (FSG Books, 2011)

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (many editions, but we will use [this recently edited online version](#))

Critical Thinking and General Education Requirement (A3):

Upon completion of your A3 requirement, you will have developed the following skills:

- Understand logic and its relation to language, elementary inductive and deductive reasoning, and formal and informal fallacies.
- Demonstrate the ability to distinguish among the different sorts of claims, such as statements of opinion, reasoned judgements, proofs, and articles of faith.
- Develop the ability to identify, analyze, evaluate, and present arguments; reason inductively and deductively; and construct arguments both to support and to refute claims.

Assessment:

5% – Course Engagement

You cannot learn if you do not participate and take ownership of your own learning. Because of this, I expect students to miss class rarely and only for good reason. Similarly, I expect you to engage in class discussion, either voluntarily or when called on. I will do what I can to make this not stressful, and you shouldn't have any trouble earning 5%.

40% – Homework Assignments

Critical thinking is a skill, and skills require practice. Therefore, the largest portion of the grade is homework assignments. I will grade homework on a 'check' system, where a 'check' (10 points) indicates you mostly understood the material and made a serious effort to do the assignment well. A 'check-minus' (5 points) indicates that you handed something in, but didn't understand the material well and did not make much of an effort to do the assignment. A 'check-plus' will be awarded a bonus score (12 points). Late (or absentee) homework assignments will not be accepted. However, three missing assignments will be excused without penalty (and for whatever reason).

25% – Midterm

The midterm will be at the end of Part Two and consist of definitions of key terms, multiple choice, short answer, and exercises similar to your homework assignments. Most of the emphasis will be on the material of Part Two, but will also include some of the central concepts from Part One. We will keep a list of these concepts from the beginning of the semester.

30% – Final Exam

Same as above, but including material from Part Three.

Grading Schema:

A = 95-100%, A- = 90-94%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 84-86%, B- = 80-83%, C+ = 77-79%, C = 74-76%, C- = 70-73%, D+ = 67-69%, D = 60-66 %, F = 0-59%

I will, as a matter of policy, round up grades to the next letter grade if you are within 1% (e.g. 79.1 to 80%, but *not* 78.9 to 80%)

Late work policy: Late work will not be accepted (see above). You may make a written petition for an exception if you feel you have a compelling reason for turning work in late (and have used up your exemptions). But these requests must be made in advance and certainly not near the end of the semester in conjunction with a grade appeal.

Course conduct: You are expected to be respectful toward your fellow students and myself. Please refrain from using your phones (e.g. texting, email, YouTube videos, listening to music, etc.), and otherwise acting in an inappropriate or distracting way (e.g. chronic lateness, talking, sleeping, playing games, etc.). Responsible use of laptops/tablets is permitted provided it does not degenerate into any of the above. Failure to abide by the above will result in forfeiting the course engagement portion of the grade and you may be asked to leave class on the day of the offense.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a violation of University policy and seriously undermines your integrity as a student. If you are suspected of plagiarizing or cheating, and proven to have done so, you will receive an F in the course and be required to go through standard University policy, which will be unpleasant for both of us. It is your responsibility to understand the University's plagiarism policy. When in doubt, ask me. See: <https://www.csueastbay.edu/academic/academic-policies/academic-dishonesty.html>

Reasonable Accommodation: Should any student need accommodation because of a disability, please let me know to discuss options. For more information, please visit: <http://www20.csueastbay.edu/af/departments/af/as/index.html>

Subject to change proviso: Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and late work and course conduct policy, may be subject to change with advanced notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Course Schedule

See below for a comprehensive overview of readings, assignments, and due dates for the semester. Please note that readings and homework assignments are to be completed *before* the class for which they are listed, e.g. HW (homework) listed for January 31 is DUE January 31.

PCT = *The Power of Critical Thinking*

IG = *The Invisible Gorilla*

BB = Reading on Blackboard

INTRODUCTION – What is Critical Thinking?

Week One – *Why It Matters and How It Works*

January 22 (Tues): Syllabus Overview and Introduction to the course, PCT, pp. 3-8

January 24 (Thurs): Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Ch. 1, BB

Identifying Claims and Arguments, PCT pp. 8-15

HW: Exercises 1.1, #1, 8, 11, 20, 21; 1.2, #2, 3, 5, 9

PART ONE – Psychological Obstacles

Week Two – *The Self and The Group*

January 29 (Tues): NO CLASS

January 31 (Thurs): The Self and The Group, PCT, pp. 31-43

HW: Exercises 1.3, #3, 9, 12, 14; 1.4, #2, 5, 6, 11

Week Three – *The Illusions of Attention & Memory*

February 5 (Tues): The Illusion of Attention, IG, Ch. 1 (focus on pp. 1-11)

February 7 (Thurs): The Illusion of Memory, IG, Ch. 2 (focus on pp. 43-52)

HW: Exercises 1.5, #1, 8, 12; 1.6, #3, 6

Week Four – *The Illusions of Confidence & Knowledge*

February 12 (Tues): The Illusion of Confidence, Ch. 3 (focus on pp. 80-95)

February 14 (Thurs): The Illusion of Knowledge, IG, Ch. 4 (focus on pp. 116-127)

HW: Exercise 1.7, #1, 3, 4

Week Five – *The Illusion of Causation*

February 19 (Tues): The Illusion of Causation, IG, Ch. 5 (focus on pp. 150-165)

February 21 (Thurs): NO CLASS

HW: TBA (submit electronically)

PART TWO – Philosophical Tools

Week Six – *Basic Concepts*

February 26 (Tues): Validity and Soundness, PCT pp. 59-65

February 28 (Thurs): Inductive Strength and Cogency

HW: Exercise 3.1, #1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12

Week Seven – *Evaluating Arguments*

March 5 (Tues): Deductive Arguments, PCT, pp. 65-70

March 7 (Thurs): Inductive Arguments

HW: Exercise 3.3, #2, 5, 7, 11, 20

Week Eight – *Patterns of Argument*

March 11 (Tues): Valid Forms of Argument, PCT, pp. 79-85

March 14 (Thurs): Invalid Forms of Argument

HW: Exercise 3.5, #2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12

Week Nine – *Fallacies: Irrelevant Premises*

March 19 (Tues): Genetic Fallacy, Appeal to the Person/Popularity, Equivocation, PCT, pp. 155-161

March 21 (Thurs): Appeal to Tradition/Ignorance/Emotion, Red Herring, Strawman, PCT, pp. 162-170

HW: Exercise 5.2, #2, 4, 8, 13, 16, 18, 22

Week Ten – *Fallacies: Unacceptable Premises*

March 26 (Tues): Begging the Question, False Dilemma, Slippery Slope, Faulty Analogy PCT, pp. 170-178

March 28 (Thurs): Midterm Exam

Week Eleven – *Spring Break*

April 2 (Tues): NO CLASS

April 4 (Thurs): NO CLASS

PART THREE – Critical Thinking in the Public Sphere

Week Twelve – *The Elephant and The Rider*

April 9 (Tues): Jonathan Haidt, Excerpt from *The Righteous Mind*, BB

April 11 (Thurs): Discussion

HW: TBA

Week Thirteen – *Moral Taste Receptors*

April 16 (Tues): Jonathan Haidt, Excerpt from *The Righteous Mind*, BB

April 18 (Thurs): Discussion

HW: TBA

Week Fourteen – *Mill's First Argument for Freedom of Speech*

April 23 (Tues): John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. 2 excerpt, BB

April 25 (Thurs): Discussion

HW: TBA

Week Fifteen – *Mill's Second Argument for Freedom of Speech*

April 30 (Tues): John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. 2 excerpt, BB

May 2 (Thurs): Discussion

HW: TBA

Week Sixteen – *Mill's Third Argument for Freedom of Speech*

May 7 (Tues): John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. 2 excerpt, BB

May 9 (Thurs): Final Exam Review

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, May 14th, 8 am – 10 am