

Reasoning and Critical Thinking

PHILOSOPHY 1230A. Section 550 (in person)

Summer Evening (May 10-June 16, 2022)

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Meetings: HC-W12. Tues 6:30-9:30 p.m. and Thurs 6:30 -9: 30 p.m

Office hours: TBA

Description

We humans are, in the familiar ancient slogan, “rational animals”. Yet there are systematic problems with the way we reason — routed in unconscious biases, fallacies, illusions, inconsistencies, misinformation and a multitude of intellectual vices.

The goal of this course is to help us get better at mitigating these cognitive shortcomings and, in turn, enhance our ability to reason. We pursue this aim with an eye towards forming more accurate beliefs and making better decisions.

Antirequisite(s): PHILOSOPHY 1200

Prerequisite(s): None

Extra Information:

Breadth: CATEGORY B *i*

Course Weight: 0.50

Subject Code: PHILOSOP

Methods

Teaching methods include lectures, dialogues, videos, crowdsourcing, work sessions and tutorials.

Text

There is no textbook for this course. All readings will be made available via OWL.

Technical Requirements



Internet connection

(for accessing assignment instructions and submitting assignments via OWL etc.)



Laptop or desktop




Working microphone



Working webcam

(for podcast recordings)

By the end of term, every committed student will know how to do four things:

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1. categorize, diagram and assess arguments from virtually any discipline,
 2. spot and, to some extent, mitigate common forms of human irrationality (e.g. biases, fallacies and inconsistencies), and the various harms they can cause,
 3. look for good sources of information and distinguish these from bad sources
 4. employ various techniques and principles for rationally updating their beliefs (SKILLS) (KNOWLEDGE, 1-4),

Students will also get opportunities to

5. construct intellectual rules or guidelines that improve their thinking and decision-making (PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT).

Evaluative Requirements

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Values</u>	<u>Due Dates</u>	<u>Corresponding Aims</u>
• 1. Active and Informed Participation	20 %	Weekly	1-5 (above)
• 2. Rationality Podcast (in groups)	20 %	May 25 (recorded on May 24)	2,4 & 5
• 3. Rules Assignment	20%	June 6	2, 4 & 5
• 4. Final Exam	40 %	June 16	1,2 & 3

Participation: A successful participation grade encompasses more, though no less, than reliable class attendance. It also requires joining the conversation. Whether this occurs during ordinary lectures, tutorials or workshops (during which I may distribute exercises, with submission instructions, unannounced) doing this well requires (i) knowing and thoughtfully engaging the assigned readings and (ii) following the College's student conduct requirements.

No recording policy: For reasons having to do with student privacy and confidentiality, recording any portion of our classes is strictly prohibited. If you miss a class and have questions regarding course content, please be sure to attend my weekly office hour.

Podcast. For this assignment, you will work, virtually, in small groups of approx. 3-4, including a moderator, that the instructor will assign. After receiving instructions and a number, each group will record a video (or audio) podcast, over Zoom, and submit it for a grade. The aim of this assignment is to help you see how dialogue with others, when enriched with course concepts, can enhance human rationality — specifically, rational belief change. Advanced planning, prior to recording, is strongly recommended. To encourage this, I will provide group numbers and instructions ahead of time. **Note:** if you are uncomfortable with facial presentation, you may mute your webcam. Also see the red note above.

Rules assignment. This exercise is designed to encourage you to think about how to think better. Rather than following rules that your instructor provides, you'll be constructing your own concrete rules for mitigating bias and/or avoiding common fallacies. Detailed instructions, with a sample assignment, will be provided via OWL prior to the deadline.

Exam: June 16

All written assignments, including your exam, rules and any surprise or planned classroom exercises, where applicable, must be submitted through the assignments tab (on OWL).

Grading Information and Explanation of Grades

Each assignment will be accompanied with clear instructions. Students will be evaluated in accordance with how well they follow them. What follows is a university wide grade explanation:

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
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A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

COURSE MAP

Please note: the schedule below is approximate, and may be revised during the semester.

Unit 1. Groundwork

May 10

- 1.1. “The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters”
- 1.2. Writing One’s Book of Beliefs

Unit 2. Obstacles to Reasoning Well

May 12

- 2.1. Inconsistencies

May 17-19

- 2.2. Biases

May 24-26

- Rationality Podcast due on May 25. Recordings will take place on May 24.
- 2.3. Vices
- 2.4. Fallacies

Unit 3. Reasoning & Argumentation

May 31

- 3.1. The Nature, Purpose & Appropriate Domains of Argumentation

June 2

- 3.2. Argument Mapping
 - Rules Assignment due of June 6

June 7

- 3.3. Constructing & Evaluating Arguments

Unit 4. Social Dimensions of Rationality & Irrationality

June 9

- 4.1. Testimony & Trust (Novices & Experts)

Unit 5. Rational Choice

June 14

- Assessing Risk & Deciding Under Uncertainty
- Exam review Q&A

June 16

- Final exam





Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies and Regulations Summer 2022

Mandatory Use of Masks in Classrooms

Students will be expected to wear triple layer non-medical masks at all times in the classroom as per Huron policy and public health directives. Students are now permitted to drink water in class by lifting and replacing the mask each time a drink is taken. Students will be able to eat and drink outside of the classroom during scheduled breaks.

Students unwilling to wear a mask as stipulated by Huron policy and public health directives will be referred to the Dean's Office, and such actions will be considered a violation of the Huron Student Code of Conduct.

Pandemic Contingency

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, typically using a combination of synchronous instruction (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) and asynchronous material (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online at the discretion of the course instructor. In the unlikely event that changes to the grading scheme are necessary, these changes will be clearly communicated as soon as possible.

Student Code of Conduct

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.

- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/attendance.pdf.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf. The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf.

Turnitin.com

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf are met.

Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds). The Student Medical Certificate is

available online at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>.

Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence

(a) Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade: Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, and if the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported absences, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the **Student Medical Certificate**. The instructor may not collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

(b) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/ Academic Advising, or email huronsss@uwo.ca.

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported. All consideration requests must include a completed **Consideration Request Form**. Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf. Consult **Huron Academic Advising** at huronsss@uwo.ca for any further questions or information.

Support Services

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron's Student Support Services at huronsss@uwo.ca. An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/>.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/> or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm>.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>

Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/>

Student Quick Reference Guide: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1>

Academic Support & Engagement: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>

Huron University College Student Council: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/>

Western USC: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices>

Mental Health & Wellness Support at Huron and Western

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. Please visit <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety> for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services: huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca

Community Safety Office: safety@huron.uwo.ca

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.