

# Reasoning and Critical Thinking

PHILOSOPHY 1230A | Section 551 | Fall of 2022 (in person)

## Information

**Instructor:** Dr. Jonathan P. Marsh

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**Office Hour:** TBA

Please allow 24 hours for replies

**Class Times and Location(s):** Thursdays, 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM, in HC-W116

## Description

We humans are, in the familiar ancient slogan, “rational animals”. Yet there are systematic problems with the way we reason — rooted 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

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 potential online meetings and/or office hours. Not currently anticipated, but do see the appendix note below entitled “pandemic contingency”)

## **Aims**

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 (KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS, 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**

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Due Dates</b>	<b>Corresponding Aims</b>
• 1. Unit 2.1 test	15%	September 22	2 & 4 (see above)
• 2. Active and Informed Participation	20%	Weekly	1-5
• 3. Rules Assignment	25%	October 23	2, 4 & 5
• 4. Final Exam	40%	December exam period (TBA)	1-4

**Test (15%):** The test, which will take place at the beginning of class on September 22, will only cover material up to 2.1.

**Active & Informed Participation (20%):** 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 taking active measures to advance the discussion. Such measures include:

- (a) being attentive,
- (b) knowing and thoughtfully engaging the assigned readings,
- (c) applying the tools and virtues associated with critical thinking as you learn about them (e.g., careful argumentation, open-mindedness, reflective questioning, virtuous disagreement, and active listening),
- (d) following the College's student conduct requirements and any course-specific policies (see OWL), including our **attendance policy** as well as our strict **no recording policy** (which helps protect student privacy and confidentiality),
- (e) not using one's laptop/cellphone or talking while other students are presenting ideas,
- (f) being reliably present (this includes avoiding a post-midterm attendance nosedive),
- (g) following OWL's weekly checklist religiously (which may, on occasion, ask you to submit typed questions) to help you prepare for our sessions,
- (h) submitting all required participation comments, via OWL's forum, when prompted
  - These typically 1-3 sentence assignments will be briefly worked on in class and cannot be submitted late, from outside the classroom, or by a surrogate submitter (e.g., a group member/classmate). Nor will the questions be circulated ahead of time.

**Rules assignment (25%):** 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 and personalized rules for mitigating bias and/or avoiding common fallacies. Detailed instructions, with a sample assignment, will be provided via OWL prior to the deadline.

**Final Exam (40%):** Anything we cover in class, not covered on your unit 2.1. test, is admissible and hence a proper object of study, unless I explicitly say otherwise in writing (via OWL). Although the final exam will take place during the December examination period, the specific date has not yet been determined. Please look for that info, online, when the official exam schedule is posted by the College. Also, **be sure not to make any irrevocable travel arrangements, or other plans, until you know the exam date.** The exam will likely contain some sort of combination of shorter answers and longer answer(s), though these details should not impact your preparation methods. More details will be provided during our final session.

### ***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
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

As the above scale implies, intellectual skills (e.g., clarity of writing) and goods (e.g., understanding) come in degrees. This scale will help clarify those degrees.

**Late assignments:** Neglecting assignments which may not be submitted late (e.g., in class-assignments and work completed after the last day of class, including your final exam), all late assignments will receive a late penalty of 5% per day, including weekends.

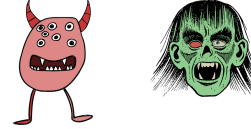
**Missed assignments:** Any accommodations for missed assignments, if approved, will automatically come in the form of a grade transfer to the final assignment (exam). If the College recommends an extension for an assignment, where this is possible, this will not qualify as a missed assignment. Any missed assignments that do not qualify for accommodations will receive a grade of zero (o).

## Course Map

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

**UNIT 1. GROUNDWORK**September 8

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

**UNIT 2. OBSTACLES TO REASONING WELL**September 15

- 2.1. Inconsistencies

September 22 & 29

- 2.2. Biases
- **There will be a unit 2.1. test at the beginning of class on September 22.**

October 6

- 2.3. Vices
- 2.4. Fallacies

**UNIT 3. REASONING & ARGUMENTATION**October 13

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

October 20

- 3.2. Argument Mapping
  - **Rules Assignment due on October 23**

October 27

- 3.3. Constructing & Evaluating Arguments
- Fall reading week. October 31–November 6, 2022.

**UNIT 4. SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF RATIONALITY & IRRATIONALITY**November 10

- 4.1. Testimony & Trust (Novices & Experts)

November 17

- 4.2. Collective Cognition

**UNIT 5. RATIONAL CHOICE**November 24

- 5.1. Decisions Under Ignorance

December 1

- 5.2. Decisions Under Risk

December 8

- Concluding remarks.
- Exam review Q&A



## **Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations Fall/Winter 2022**

### **Pandemic Contingency**

Huron will continue to follow the guidance of public health and government officials. It is anticipated that there will be no further disruptions to in-person instruction. This is subject to change.

### **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: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)

### **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: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#). 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](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, tablets, 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**

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, 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) Medical Grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of final grade: **Go Directly to Academic Advising****

University Senate policy, which can be found at [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#) requires that all student requests for accommodation on medical grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of the final grade be made directly to the academic advising office of the home faculty (for Huron students, the “home faculty” is Huron), with supporting documentation in the form (minimally) of the Senate-approved Student Medical Certificate found at: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

The documentation is submitted in confidence and will not be shown to instructors. 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. The instructor will not normally deny accommodation where appropriate medical documentation is in place and where the duration it describes aligns with the due date(s) of assignment(s). Before denying a request for accommodation on medical grounds, the instructor will consult with the Dean. The instructor’s decision is appealable to the Dean.

**c) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: **Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto: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. 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: [accommodation\\_medical.pdf \(uwo.ca\)](#). Consult [Huron Academic Advising](#) at [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto: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](mailto: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>

### **Wellness and Health Supports 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. All Huron staff and faculty have received training on responding to disclosures of Gender-Based Sexual Violence (GBSV); students should know that the Community Safety Office is a resource for survivors, providing support and, if desired, guidance while referring them to the



further supports that they may require. 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](mailto:huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca)

Community Safety Office: [safety@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:safety@huron.uwo.ca)

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

Western Calendar - Policy Pages -

[Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)