

The following syllabus is for a general education course on critical thinking that I taught online in Spring 2018.

Critical Thinking (general education course) (taught Spring 2018)

UCLA Extension: Philosophy XL 9, Spring 2018

Instructor: Jonathan Gingerich

Course Dates: Spring 2018

Number of Units: 4 credits

Course Title: Principles of Critical Thinking

Course Catalog #: PHILOS XL 9

Meeting Times, Type, and Location

This course will be taught online from Monday, March 26 through Friday, June 1. A video lecture will be posted on the course website each Monday. Students will participate on the discussion board on the course website every week.

Contact Information

Email: jgingerich@humnet.ucla.edu (You can also contact me using Canvas Conversations, which is the preferred means of communicating with me about this course.)

Office Location: UCLA Philosophy Department, Dodd Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1451

Office Hours: I will hold two hours of video office hours on the course website each week. You don't need to make an appointment to come to office hours; just drop in! I'll conduct a poll when class begins to figure out a time for my office hours that is convenient for as many students as possible.

Contacting Me: On weekdays I'll typically respond to Canvas Conversation messages, emails, and questions posted on the discussion boards within 24 hours unless I'm traveling or there are other extenuating circumstances, in which case I'll answer within 48 hours at most. On weekends, I may take longer to respond. I'm also available for videoconferencing through Canvas by appointment, and I'm available by appointment to meet face to face with students who are in Los Angeles.

UCLA Extension Department Contact for this Course: Jenny Polutan, 310-825-7093, JPolutan@uclaextension.edu

Course Description

This course will introduce the theory and practice of thinking critically. What makes for a logical argument? And what makes for a good argument? What does it mean for a conversation to go well? Are there procedures that our thinking should follow if we want to understand the world, each other, and ourselves? This course will investigate these questions by reading and discussing a variety of historical and contemporary philosophical texts as well as scholarship on negotiation and effective communication and a few pieces of literature that will help us to think through applications of some of the more theoretical material that we study.

Learning Objectives

During the course, students will:

- Summarize and explain complex arguments, orally and in writing
- Describe the difference between a good argument and a logically sound argument
- Produce clear and effective prose that identifies and argues for a proposed solution to a practical dilemma
- Practice effective communication and negotiation skills
- Revise and improve their own philosophical writing
- Apply principles of critical thinking to problems that arise in interpersonal relationships, business, and law
- Debate controversial philosophical topics with people who have different views

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, an effective learner should be able to:

- Describe and identify common logical fallacies
- Articulate their own view about what makes an argument and a conversation successful
- Evaluate arguments and identify the specific features of an argument that make it more or less successful
- Evaluate conversations with a variety of aims and propose techniques to allow conversations to better achieve these aims
- Explicitly identify the aims of negotiations and formulate strategies designed to achieve these goals

Materials

Course Reader (available from the UCLA Store in either print or digital format)
“Casino” Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School Case Study (distribution method TBA)

Please do the reading at least once before the lecture at which it will be discussed. Many of the readings are complex, and you will find it helpful to read the material at least twice. If you’re having trouble with the reading, please let me know and I’ll be happy to talk about strategies for approaching the material.

Evaluation

Course requirements include doing the assigned reading and watching the recorded lecture each week, submitting homework assignments and participating on the course website every week, submitting three “Timely Extras,” a rough draft of a final essay, and a final draft of the final essay. Each of these assignments are discussed in greater detail below.

You will receive a letter grade in each of the following categories, from which your course grade will be calculated using the weightings below:

- 40%: Weekly homework assignments due every Thursday by 11:59 PM
- 15%: Weekly class participation due every Sunday by 11:59 PM (Week 10 participation due Friday, June 1)
- 5%: Timely Extras (1st TE due by April 6; 2nd TE due by April 27; 3rd TE due by May 11)
- 10%: Rough draft of final essay (1500-1800 words) due Friday, May 18 by 5:00 PM
- 30%: Final draft of final essay (1500-1800 words) due Friday, June 1 by 5:00 PM

Your grades will be available on the course website as assignments are completed.

Weekly Homework Assignments

A homework assignment will be due on the discussion board or course website **each Thursday night by 11:59 PM.**

The format of homework assignments will vary from week to week; some weeks will call for you to address a question about the reading, others will call for you to construct or evaluate an argument, and several may call for you to complete a short problem set. Many assignments will ask you to work with one or more of your classmates. The homework assignment for week 4 will call or you to write a short (500-600 word) essay in which you will critically evaluate an argument, and the homework assignment for week 9 will call for you to read and comments on a classmate’s rough draft of the final essay.

Several weeks will call for you to create and upload a short recording of yourself speaking about a critical thinking problem that we discuss in class. If, for any reason, you cannot prepare a recording of an oral presentation, please contact me to make alternative arrangements for these weeks.

Each week, I will grade your homework assignment using the “Rubric for Weekly Homework Assignments ” provided at the end of this syllabus.

Late Homework Assignments: Extensions for weekly homework assignments will only be granted in exceptional circumstances because these assignments provide the basis for class discussion on the discussion board each week.

Skipping Homework Assignments: Completing homework assignments is necessary to achieve the objectives of this course. However, I understand that you also have many obligations outside of this course. **You may skip up to two homework assignments without penalty, provided that you notify me in advance that you plan to skip the assignment.** Because many of the homework assignments for this course will involve partnered or small group work **you must notify me by 5:00 pm on Monday if you plan to skip the week’s homework assignment.** (Last minute emergencies, of course, are a separate

matter—if you can't complete a homework assignment because of an unexpected emergency, please let me know and we'll work something out.) **Please note that because the Week 4 short essay and Week 9 peer-editing homework assignments are important preparation for the final essay, these assignments may not be skipped.**

I encourage you to complete all of the homework assignments, and if you elect not to skip any homework assignments, I will drop your two lowest weekly homework grades in calculating your final homework grade (and if you skip only one, I will drop your lowest homework grade).

Class Participation

Philosophy is a conversational activity; achieving a philosophical conversation in an online setting is challenging. In order to promote conversational engagement with the materials that we study in this course, a significant percentage of the grade for this course is for participation. **I ask that you substantively engage with with other class participants at least three times per week.** Each of the following counts as “substantive participation.”

- **Posting a substantial reply to another student's posting on the discussion board:** A substantial reply is one that offers an opinion about what another student has said or written and provides reasons in support of the opinion. (It's not enough to just say “I agree with that,” or “Interesting comment.”) I expect respectful disagreement about the complicated philosophical issues that we will discuss. However, critical posts should always address the content of other posts, rather than targeting other participants in the course, and should interpret other posts as charitably as possible. Up to **three** of your three substantial interactions each week may take the form of replying to another student on the discussion board.
- **Participating in office hours:** Participation in office hours requires attending my video office hours and discussing the material for the week with me and other students. Participating in office hours will typically count for **one** substantial interaction, but particularly strong or engaged participation in office hours may count as **two** substantial interactions.
- **Participating in other group activities:** Some weeks will feature homework assignments that involve completing an assignment as a group or with a partner. Completing such a homework assignment will typically count for **one** substantial interaction, but completing assignments that involve particularly sustained group work, such as the assignments for Weeks 8 and 9, will count as **two** substantial interactions.

You should complete three substantial interactions with other course members by **each Sunday night by 11:59 PM**. Each week, I will grade your participation using the “Rubric for Weekly Participation” provided at the end of this syllabus.

Late Participation: Because this position of the course grade is designed to ensure that the classroom is active all week and to promote philosophical conversations, extensions for weekly participation will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Skipping Participation: Participating is necessary to achieve the objectives of this course. However, I understand that you also have many obligations outside of this course. **You may**

skip up to two participation assignments without penalty. If you elect not to skip any participation assignments, I will drop your two lowest weekly participation grades in calculating your final participation grade (and if you skip only one, I will drop your lowest weekly participation grade).

Timely Extras

There are three “Timely Extras” assignments. The first is due by 5:00 pm on April 6, the second by 5:00 pm on April 27, and the third by 5:00 pm on May 11. You are encouraged to submit them whenever they occur to you. A Timely Extra might be a news story, a scene from a novel, or even a conversation you had with someone outside the course—anything relevant to material we are studying. To submit it, go to the weekly discussion board and start a new discussion topic. Write a description of your “Extra” and explain how it relates to what we have studied in the course (only Timely Extras with complete descriptions and compelling explanations will receive credit). Provide links, where possible.

Timely Extras are graded on a pass/fail basis: if you submit all three Timely Extras on time, you will receive an “A” for your TE final grade; if you submit two, you will receive a “B,” if you submit one, you will receive a “C,” and if you submit zero, you will receive an “F.”

Essay

This course requires a final essay of 1500-1800 words (which is about 5-6 double-spaced pages). A rough draft of the final essay is due on **Friday, May 18 by 5 PM**. You will revise your final essay in light of the comments that I and one of your classmates give you on your rough draft; the final draft of the essay is due on **Friday, June 1 by 5 PM**.

Essay topics will be posted on the course website at least a week before the rough draft of the essay is due, and essay will be assessed using the “Grading Rubric for Essays” provided at the end of the syllabus.

It is important to meet the deadlines for both drafts of the final essay. If you think that the deadlines for these assignments will pose any problem for you, you should contact me *at least 48 hours in advance* so we can discuss an alternative.

Institutional Policies

- **Student Conduct:** Students are subject to disciplinary action for several types of misconduct or attempted misconduct, including but not limited to dishonesty, such as cheating, multiple submission, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University; or theft or misuse of the intellectual property of others or violation of others' copyrights. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with policy provisions which proscribe these and other forms of misconduct at: <https://www.uclaextension.edu/Pages/str/StudentConduct.aspx>
- **Services for Students with Disabilities:** In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, UCLA Extension provides appropriate accommodations and support services to qualified applicants and students with disabilities. These include, but are not limited to, auxiliary aids/services such as sign language interpreters,

assistive-listening devices for hearing-impaired individuals, extended time for and proctoring of exams, and registration assistance. Accommodations and types of support services vary and are specifically designed to meet the disability-related needs of each student based on current, verifiable medical documentation. Arrangements for auxiliary aids/services are available only through UCLA Extension's Services for Students with Disabilities at (310) 825-7851 or by email at access@uclaextension.edu. For complete information see: <https://www.uclaextension.edu/Pages/str/StudentswithDisabilities.aspx>

Schedule

NOTE: Readings and assignments are subject to change in response to student interest and comprehension.

Date	Lecture Topic	Readings	Assignments
Week 1, 3/26/18	Introduction: What is critical thinking? How do we do it?	Sarah Orne Jewett, "A White Heron" (course reader or http://www.public.coe.edu/~theller/soj/awh/heron.htm#White%20Heron)	Wednesday: Post brief bio on course website. Thursday: Homework (written reading response) due on course website. Sunday: Weekly course participation due
Week 2, 4/2/18	Thinking philosophically about argument and conversation	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> (course reader)	Thursday: Homework (paired argument evaluation) due on course website. Friday: First Timely Extra due by 5:00 pm Sunday: Weekly course participation due
Week 3, 4/9/18	What makes for a good argument? A formal approach	Terrence Parsons, <i>An Introduction to Symbolic Logic</i> , Introduction (course reader)	Thursday: Homework (problem set) due on course website. Sunday: Weekly course participation due
Week 4, 4/16/18	What makes for a good argument? A conversational approach	H.P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation" (course reader)	Thursday: Homework (short essay evaluating an argument) due on course website *This week's homework may not be skipped* Sunday: Weekly course participation due

Week 5, 4/23/18	What makes for a good argument? A practical approach	Gilbert Harman, "Practical Aspects of Theoretical Reasoning" (course reader)	Thursday: Homework (oral reading response) due on course website. Friday: Second Timely Extra due by 5:00 pm Sunday: Weekly course participation due
Week 6, 4/30/18	What makes for a good argument? An ethical approach	Judith Jarvis Thompson, "The Trolley Problem" (course reader)	Thursday: Homework (group argument evaluation) due on course website. Sunday: Weekly course participation due
Week 7, 5/7/18	What makes for a good argument? A probabilistic approach	John F. Magee, "Decision Trees for Decision Making" (course reader)	Thursday: Homework (problem set) due on course website. Friday: Third Timely Extra due by 5:00 pm Friday: Final essay topics announced Sunday: Weekly course participation due
Week 8, 5/14/18	What is the purpose of argument and communication? Negotiation theory	Roger Fisher & William S. Ury, <i>Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In</i> , ch. 1-3 (course reader); READING FOR HW ASSIGNMENT: Sheila Heen and Scott Peppet, "Casino" case study	Thursday: Homework (paired oral decision-making role-play) due on course website. Friday: Rough draft of final essay due by 5:00 pm Sunday: Weekly course participation due
Week 9, 5/21/18	What is the purpose of argument and communication? Nonviolent communication	Marshall B. Rosenberg, <i>Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life</i> , ch. 1-2 (course reader); READING FOR HW ASSIGNMENT: Anton Chekhov, "A Country Cottage" (course reader or https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/chekhov/anton/love/chapter18.html)	My comments on rough drafts returned by 5:00 pm on Wednesday Thursday: Homework (comments on classmate's essay) due through course website. *This week's homework may not be skipped* Sunday: Weekly course participation due
Week 10, 5/28/18	Critical thinking in law and business	Carol Rose, "Game Stories" (course reader) Marcia J. Kurzynski, "The Virtue of Forgiveness as a Human Resource Management Strategy" (course reader)	Thursday: Homework (group conversation) due on course website. Friday: Weekly course participation due Friday: Final essay due by 5:00 pm

It is estimated students will spend approximately 7 hours outside class (i.e., in addition to time spent viewing the recorded lecture) each week completing class assignments.

Syllabus subject to revision by instructor - Last updated March 29, 2018

Grading Rubric for Essays

A, A-	Excellent essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is straightforward and easy to read. • Essay is clearly organized so that paragraphs clearly flow from one another and the reader is never lost. • Essay topic clearly sets out a significant philosophical problem or question and makes the reader care about it. • Exposition shows mastery of the philosophical materials used and conveys complete comprehension to the reader. Exposition provides a new point of access to the material discussed. • Essay advances an insightful, creative, or very thoughtful philosophical argument that is well supported. Demonstrates awareness of significant objections to the position it advances and responds effectively to them.
B+, B, B-	Good essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is readable, although some sentences may be difficult. • Essay is coherently organized, but the reader is sometimes lost. • Essay topic sets out a significant philosophical problem or question, although the essay may fail to show the reader why they should care about the topic. • Exposition of philosophical materials contains no major mistakes and effectively conveys the central arguments and themes to the reader. • Essay advances a philosophical argument and provides support for it although the argument might contain minor errors or need more development in places. Demonstrates independent thought about the topic and awareness of significant objections to the position it advances.
C+, C, C-	Adequate essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Many sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical. • Essay is poorly organized and the reader is often lost. • Essay topic provides an opportunity to exposit and argue about course materials but is not otherwise philosophically significant. • Exposition shows a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical texts discussed but does not effectively convey it to the reader. • Essay advances a philosophical argument. There may be serious problems with the argument, but the argument has promise of amounting to more than mere counter-assertion. Essay rehashes reading or lecture material rather than demonstrating independent thought about the topic.
D+ or lower	Inadequate essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Most sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical and it is very difficult for the reader to understand the author's meaning. • Essay is unorganized and it is unclear to the reader why one paragraph follows another. • Essay topic poses a coherent question but is unrelated to the philosophical or literary themes of the course. • Exposition fails to show a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical texts discussed. • Essay makes large argumentative errors or amounts to mere counter-assertion and fails to demonstrate original thought about the material.
F	Failing essay	Essay does not make a good faith effort to meet the requirements of the assignment.

Grading Rubric for Homework Assignments

<u>Rubric for Weekly Homework Assignments</u>	Unsatisfactory (D+ or lower)	Basic (C+, C, C-)	Proficient (B+, B, B-)	Distinguished (A, A-)
Mechanics of the posting (or recording)	Uses incomplete sentences, is unstructured in its organization, and includes frequent or consistent errors in mechanics (grammar, spelling, usage) in each paragraph. The posting is unreadable and there is a distinct lack of tone.	Uses complete sentences and the posting is comprehensible. The organization could be improved to present a more coherent argument. Includes 2-3 mechanical errors (grammar, spelling, usage) per paragraph. The tone is respectful	Uses complete sentences, organization is evident, and the posting includes no more than one mechanical error (grammar, spelling, usage) per paragraph. The tone is clear and respectful.	Uses complete sentences, organization is clear and thoughtful, the posting is grammatically correct, and free of spelling errors. The tone is clear and respectful.
Content of the posting (or recording)	Writes a general or superficial posting that is unrelated to the discussion at hand and/or posts no comments.	Demonstrates a restricted understanding of the concepts, topics, and ideas as evidenced by posting information that could be derived from prior posts and/or including highly general comments.	Demonstrates an adequate understanding of the concepts, topics, and ideas as evidenced by posting superficial, or general statements in the forum. Includes a few details in the posting.	Demonstrates a solid understanding of the concepts, topics, and ideas as evidenced by thoughtful responses and questions that clearly connect to the course material. The posting shows depth, and includes many supporting details
Critical thinking evidenced by the posting (or recording)	Provides no evidence of agreement or disagreement with an existing discussion.	Indicates agreement or disagreement with an existing discussion but provides no justification or explanation for comments.	Indicates agreement or disagreement with an existing discussion including a limited explanation or justification. Provides comments, discussion, and questions without a clear connection to the course material.	Demonstrates a critical analysis of an existing posted idea or introduces a different interpretation to an existing concept or idea. Includes comments, discussion, and questions that clearly connect to the course material.

Grading Rubric for Weekly Participation

<u>Rubric for Weekly Participation</u>	Unsatisfactory (D+ or lower)	Basic (C+, C, C-)	Proficient (B+, B, B-)	Distinguished (A, A-)
Class participation	Provides minimal comments and information to other participants on the discussion board, in office hours, or in other activities.	Provides comments, discussion, questions, or new information that sometimes advances a philosophical conversation. Listens or reads in a manner that is responsive to other participants' contributions. Interacts with one participant on the discussion board, in office hours, or in other activities.	Provides substantial comments, discussion, questions, or new information that often advance a philosophical conversation. Listens or reads in a manner that respects other participants in the discussion. Interacts with two participants on the discussion board, in office hours, or in other activities.	Provides substantial comments, discussion, questions, or new ideas that advance a philosophical conversation. Listens or reads in a manner that respects other participants in the discussion. Interacts with three or more participants on the discussion board, in office hours, or in other activities.