

Logical Thought
PHIL 210 – Fall 2007
101 Dwight Hall – M/W/F 10:00-10:50

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Office hours: Mon 11-noon/Wed 2-3pm/by appt.

This course is an introduction to the study of arguments. We encounter arguments everywhere. Some of these arguments are better than others, some are more convincing, and some are more persuasive. Our primary focus will be on how we are to evaluate the arguments we come across. To this end, we will do several things in this course: We will distinguish the *reasoning* of an argument from its rhetorical force and use this to help us evaluate arguments given in natural language. We will next introduce two formal logical systems (propositional logic and categorical logic) as useful tools to help in the evaluation of arguments. Finally, we will spend some time looking at fallacies, paradoxes, and inductive arguments.

Text:

There is one text for this course:

Understanding Arguments: An Introduction to Informal Logic (7th Edition) by
Robert Fogelin & Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (Thomson Wadsworth, 2005)

It will be our main text, so you should purchase a copy. It is available at *The Odyssey*. This text provides a nice overview to informal logic as well as some basic formal logic.

The main text will be supplemented with short readings and exercises from various sources. These will be made available to you on *ella* (Electronic Learning Arena). For interested students, the following books might be useful:

A Rulebook for Arguments by Anthony Weston (Hackett Publishing Co., 2000)
Philosophical Writing by A. P. Martinich (Blackwell, 1996)
Logic and Its Limits by Patrick Shaw (Oxford University Press, 1997)
The Snake & the Fox: An Introduction to Logic by Mary Haight (New York:
Routledge, 1999)

You do not need to purchase these additional books. Required supplementary readings and exercises will be available on *ella*.

Course Website and *ella*:

This course has a website on *ella*. To access *ella*, go to:

<http://ella.mtholyoke.edu>

You will need a MHC id and password to access our course site. The course syllabus, course schedule, reading assignments, homework assignments, and supplementary readings will be posted on our course site. Once logged in, click on the appropriate course link. You should check this site regularly for any announcements or updates.

Assignments:

- Weekly homework assignments (HWs) are an important part of this course, since regular practice is the surest way to enhance your critical thinking skills. Most of these HWs will not be graded, but I strongly urge you to work through them, as they will prepare you for the exams. HWs will be posted on *ella* on Monday and are designed to be completed the following Monday, when I will post the answers.
- Several HWs *will* be turned in and graded for credit. I will let you know which HWs are graded for credit when they are assigned. These graded HWs will constitute the majority of your participation grade for the course
- Participation will account for 20% of your grade. In addition to the HWs, your participation grade will be based on attendance and participation during lectures. You can also earn participation credit by attending department talks.
- There are two in-class exams that will consist of a combination of short-answer questions and paragraph-length questions. Each exam will account for 25% of your grade.
- A cumulative final exam will include short-answer questions, paragraph-length argument analyses, and a short essay. This will account for 30% of your grade.

Logistical Info:

- The reading assignments are fairly short, so you should have adequate time to read them thoroughly. Some of the material is difficult, however, and you may need to read it twice.
- Most reading assignments contain series of exercises. I encourage you to think through these exercises on your own as you read.
- Attendance at every class is important, especially because most of the material we will be covering builds on previous knowledge. If you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for finding out what you missed.
- Classes will start promptly, so please arrive on time to avoid disrupting your classmates.
- If you have a disability that may impact your work for this course, please come talk to me about it as soon as possible so that we can make any necessary accommodations.

Department Talks:

There are two department talks scheduled for the fall semester:

- *October 11*: Anne W Eaton "What Is This Thing For? (On Artifacts and their Function)"
- *November 15*: Louise Antony "The Socialization of Epistemology"

Academic Integrity:

Logic is an interactive subject, and I encourage you to discuss readings and assignments with your classmates. However, there is a fine line between useful collaboration and plagiarism. Feel free to *discuss* the ideas of the material with others all you want, but when it comes time to actually sit down and *write out* your answers to specific homework problems, you must do this on your own. If you have any questions about what kind of collaboration is or is not allowed, please ask. Anyone caught cheating will receive the strictest penalty consistent with university policies.