

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION
PH 1250 Practical Logic (and Critical Thinking) (3)
UT (UA, UC, UL, KUC, CU, CUC, AU)
Course Outline Fall 2010

Instructor: Tom Enders, PhD

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Office hours: Mondays 3 – 4:30; Fridays 1:30 – 3 p.m.

Room:

Time:

Prerequisite: None

Required Readings:

- Lewis Vaughn and Chris MacDonald, The Power of Critical Thinking, 2nd Canadian edition. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Selected internet readings and handouts.

Recommended:

- Cederblom, Jerry and David W. Paulsen, Critical Reasoning: Understanding and Criticizing Arguments and Theories, 6th edition. Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 2006.
- Theodore Schick and Lewis Vaughn, How to Think About Weird Things: Critical Thinking for a New Age, 6th edition. Toronto? McGraw-Hill, 2011.

Calendar Course Description

Elementary methods and principles for analysing arguments will be covered. Topics may include informal fallacies, introduction of scientific method, elementary statistical reasoning, elementary propositional logic, rational decision procedures.

Content Description 2010

People in many roles put forward arguments to try to persuade their audiences. Advertisers, authors, lawyers, politicians, political analysts, researchers, scientists, participants in debates over moral issues, and many others strive to make their cases by presenting evidence in support of their conclusions. This course is an introduction to the careful, systematic evaluation of arguments and the language in which they are advanced. In addition to assessing the role of rhetoric and appeals to emotion, attention will be given to identifying components of arguments and discussing correct and flawed forms of arguments. Requirements for good deductive and inductive arguments, and appropriate use of statistics will be examined. A variety of fallacies in arguments will be explored.

Contact Hours:

PH1250 is a three credit course with three hours of instructional time in most weeks.

Delivery Mode:

Classroom time will be used for lectures and discussions.

Course Objectives:

- Upon completion of the course you should have the ability to:
- identify the strengths and weakness of arguments as forms of reasoning
- construct arguments of your own that provide strong support for the conclusions advanced, without committing errors of reasoning
- discuss some basic ideas in Philosophy.

Note on Transferability:

Students should check with other institutions concerning transfer of credits as all arrangements are subject to change. Note that a grade of D or D+ may not be accepted at other post-secondary institutions.

Course Requirements:

First assignment	10%
Argumentative essay.....	20%
Two midterm exams	(20 + 25 %) 45%
Final examination.....	25%

* You are expected to reference sources fully and properly for assignments. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with College calendar information pertaining to cheating and plagiarism, for which there are a range of penalties, all significant.

* Students who miss an excessive number of classes may be denied the opportunity to write the final exam, as stated in the Calendar.

** You are strongly advised to keep a copy of your own of any written work submitted for grading.

** You are expected to write the final exam on the date it is scheduled. Take this into account when making any December travel plans.

Conversion table for grading:

A+ 90 - 100	B+ 76 - 79	C+ 67 - 69	D+ 55 - 59
A 85 - 89	B 73 - 75	C 64 - 66	D 50 - 54
A- 80 - 84	B- 70 - 72	C- 60 - 63	F 0 - 49

Provisional Course Topic List (subject to time limitations):

- I. Introduction. The field of Philosophy. Arguments, logic and critical thinking.
- II. The environment of critical thinking. Obstacles to making and recognizing good arguments. Skepticism, cynicism, egoism. Realism and relativism.
- III. The use of language in arguments. Definitions. Vagueness. Ambiguity. Rhetoric.
- IV. More obstacles to good reasoning. Reliance on experts. Evaluating internet and other sources. Cognitive biases.
- V. Assessing claims in the news and advertising.
- VI. Informal fallacies. Common mistakes in arguments.
- VII. An introduction to logic
- VIII. Deductive arguments: validity and soundness
- IX. Inductive arguments. Analogies. Polls. Causal arguments...
- X. The use and misuse of numbers and statistics.
- XI. Abduction or Inference to the Best Explanation.
- XII. Science
- XIII. (Time permitting, one or more) Other Applications: conspiracy theories and historical evidence. Religion. Moral Arguments and theories. Controversial issues possibly including global warming and science; nuclear power safety; alternative medicine and individual choice.