

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2024–2025

Course Number: PHILOSOP 1230B 650
Reasoning and Critical Thinking



Instructor information

Information including instructor contact details can be found on the course Owl BrightSpace:
<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

Prerequisites and anti-requisites

This course has no prerequisites. Philosop 1200 is an anti-requisite, meaning that you cannot take both courses for credit.

Course description

This course teaches a basic set of skills that will improve your ability to think clearly and rationally. It will help you avoid fallacies and inconsistencies, uncover implicit assumptions, and become aware of your own biases. These skills will help you identify and assess claims and arguments, such as those encountered in your coursework, in conversation, and on social media.

The course has a strong focus on hands-on practice with immediate feedback, which is facilitated with weekly short exercises that are graded quickly or instantaneously.

Course components:

- Weekly video presentations and handouts
- Weekly readings
- Weekly practice exercises (graded for completion, not accuracy)
- Closed-book midterm examination (online using Proctortrack)
- Closed-book final examination (in person, scheduled during final examination period by the OOR)

The **midterm exam** is online and asynchronous, meaning that you can complete it at any time during a specified time window. The **final exam** is in person and synchronous, meaning that everyone must complete it at the scheduled time and location. It is scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (OOR) during the final exam period.

All course components other than the final exam are entirely online. By enrolling in this course, you are agreeing to use Proctortrack for the midterm exam and to taking the final exam in person during the final exam period.

There are no tutorials or synchronous lectures. There may be optional synchronous review sessions on Zoom.

Texts

Digital versions of all required readings are available for free. You may also choose to purchase a hard copy of the course textbook.

- Joe Lau. *An Introduction to Critical Thinking and Creativity: Think More, Think Better*. Wiley, 2011.
 - E-book available through Western Libraries at <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/lib/west/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=706494>
 - Hard copy available for purchase at Western's bookstore
- Selected modules from Joe Lau's Critical Thinking Web: <https://philosophy.hku.hk/think/> (free)
- Additional online readings (free)

Objectives

This course aims to help you

- identify, understand, and evaluate claims and arguments,
- understand the difference between different types of claims and arguments,
- depict the structure of statements and arguments using symbolic and graphical tools,

- recognize rational and non-rational influences on belief formation, including biases,
- understand the importance and relevance of critical thinking skills, and
- know when and how to apply critical thinking skills in both everyday and academic contexts.

Method of evaluation

Practice exercises (graded for completion, online)	10%
Midterm examination (online)	40%
Final examination (online)	50%

Online proctoring

The midterm examination in this course is conducted using Proctortrack, a remote proctoring service. By taking this course, you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide personal information (including some biometric data) and that the session will be recorded. Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service, including technical requirements, is available on Western's Remote Proctoring website at: <https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>.

Audit

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor at philosophy1230@gmail.com prior to or during the first week of classes.

Department of Philosophy Policies

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>.

It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Academic consideration

Academic Consideration: Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a

substantial but temporary impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

[Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

Students seeking academic consideration on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration.pdf

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

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

Accessible education

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic Accommodation disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf).

Religious accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays and should give

reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Evaluation of academic performance

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade.

Course assignment

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

Department of Philosophy policies

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html> . It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Electronic devices

The midterm exam will require the use of a computer (not tablet or phone) to answer exam questions. No other uses and no other electronic devices may be used. No electronic devices may be used during the final exam.

Statement on the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI)

Generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) may not be used on exams. Generative AI may be used in completing practice exercises but is unlikely to be useful. Students should exercise caution in using Generative AI.

Scholastic 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 Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Support services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>
Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>
Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>
Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.

Academic advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

Mental health support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends (24/7 availability).

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.