

Fall 2012

Philosophy 110 Syllabus
Critical Thinking and Composition

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Office Hours: MWF- 7:30-8, 9-9:45. T-Th 8:45-9:15, 12:30-1

Required Text:

Howard Kahane and Nancy Cavender, *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric*

Student Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Gain an appreciation for some classic and contemporary philosophical texts.
- 2) Gain a better understanding of one's own philosophical or pre-philosophical views.
- 3) See clearly the connection between philosophical thought and life's questions.
- 4) Analyze some controversial contemporary issues in the debate between religion and science, and discuss the prospects for settling those issues.
- 5) Develop the ability to reflect critically, independently, and effectively on the basic questions of human life.
- 6) Learn how to evaluate arguments and theories in a variety of philosophical and historical contexts.
- 7) Learn to critically discuss arguments and theories effectively.
- 8) Learn to construct arguments for a variety of philosophical positions.
- 9) Gain practice thinking and writing in a clear, logically rigorous fashion.

Course Objectives:

This philosophy course will help students to develop the critical thinking and writing skills that will allow them to identify, assess and construct well-reasoned arguments. This course will teach students how to better synthesize data, identify evidence, draw conclusions and evaluate inferences. Critical reasoning will be applied to a variety of situations such as making sound decisions, evaluating claims and assertions, avoiding fallacious reasoning, etc.

Specific course goals include:

- 1) Distinguish the difference between argument and other kinds of discourse.
- 2) Identify the differences between reasoned and unreasoned opinions.
- 3) Assess the relative strengths of classical arguments from western philosophers.
- 4) Apply the basic criteria used to evaluate claims and arguments (soundness, cogency).
- 5) Recognize assumptions and identify common informal fallacies in human reasoning.
- 6) Realize how advertising and the media persuade audiences without offering reasons.
- 7) Situate the roots of fallacious thinking in psychological, emotional, and cultural forces.
- 8) Improve the clarity, precision and organization in writing and rational persuasion.
- 9) Recognize and evaluate arguments involved in analogical and causal reasoning.
- 10) Understand multiple perspectives held by different groups about morally controversial issues.
- 11) Defend one's position against strong opposing evidence and counterarguments.
- 12) Interpret how causal relationships and value theories impact moral decision making.

Sequence of topics and assignments:

1) Cogent Reasoning and Worldviews

Reading Assignment: Chapters 1 & 6; Chapter 9 pages 203-205 & 209-213

2) Deduction & Induction

Reading Assignment: Chapter 2

Writing Assignment: Fully explain the Creation/Evolution controversy. Are you a Creationist or an Evolutionist? Why?

This assignment counts 35% of your grade. It may be re-written innumerable times, with the next-to-last draft due by Weds. Nov. 21. The Final Draft is due at the Final Exam period. I will average in only

your highest grade.

3) **The impact of Advertising on Worldviews**

Reading Assignment: Chapter 10

In class essay on Chapter 10, worth 15%. May be rewritten one time. I will average the grade on the exam and the rewrite. Rewrite is due at Final Exam.

4) **The impact of News on Worldviews**

Reading Assignment: Chapter 11

In class essay on Chapter 11, worth 15%. May be rewritten one time. I will average the grade on the exam and the rewrite. Rewrite is due at Final Exam.

5) **The impact of School Textbooks on Worldviews**

Reading Assignment: Chapter 12

In class essay on Chapter 12, worth 15%. May be rewritten one time. I will average the grade on the exam and the rewrite. Rewrite is due at Final Exam.

6) **Informal Fallacies**

Reading Assignment: Chapters 3-5

In class test on Fallacies, worth 20%.

Learning Disabilities:

If you have special needs due to a learning disability, please avail yourself of the resources in the Student Disability Services (the new name) in now in Calpulli Center, room 3101 (594-6473). The CSU Office of the Chancellor defines a learning disability as “a generic term that refers to the heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. These disorders occur in persons of average to very superior intelligence and are presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may exist concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairments) or environmental influences (e.g., cultural/language difficulties), it is not the direct result of these conditions or influences.” If you think something might prevent you from doing well in this course, you should discuss this with me so that proper arrangements may be made to accommodate your needs.

Religious Observances:

The University Policy File includes the following statement on Absence for Religious Observances: By the end of the second week of classes, students should notify the instructors of affected courses of planned absences for religious observances. Instructors shall reasonably accommodate students who notify them in advance of planned absences for religious observances. California Education Code 89320 states: The Trustees of the California State University shall require that each state university, in administering any test or examination, to permit any student who is eligible to undergo the test or examination to do so, without penalty, at a time when that activity would not violate the student's religious creed. Please notify me by the end of the second week of classes if you plan to be absent for religious observance.

Academic Misconduct:

All students are expected to follow the administrative rules and standards of conduct detailed in the San Diego State University catalog. Students are expected to submit only their own work on papers and examinations. While you may discuss the assignments with others in the class, collaboration on the preparation of a paper is not permitted. Unless the assignment specifically directs otherwise, papers should be based entirely on your own study of the assigned material and not on secondary sources of any kind.

Turning in someone else's work, whether from printed sources or material available electronically, as if it were your own constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is an act of intellectual dishonesty. The academic consequences of plagiarism range from failure for the tainted assignment to failure for the course, depending on the seriousness of the offense. All such offenses are reported to the college dean, who will impose additional administrative consequences, which can include suspension or expulsion from the university.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to the following: turning in another student's paper as if it were your own; collaboration with another student in writing the paper; quoting, paraphrasing, or borrowing ideas from published or unpublished material written by someone other than yourself, without specific acknowledgment of the source.

It is your responsibility to know and observe all the SDSU rules concerning academic integrity and plagiarism. You should familiarize yourself with SDSU Academic Senate Policy on Plagiarism (http://its.sdsu.edu/turnitin/pdf/Plagiarism_AcadSen.pdf). If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, how to credit the work and ideas of others properly, how to evaluate sources for quality and reliability, or any other related issues, please feel free to see me to discuss the matter.

**NO COLLABORATION- NO SHARING NOTES OR PAPERS
NO TAPE RECORDERS
NO LAP TOPS
ALWAYS KEEP A COPY OF YOUR PAPER**

**THIS CLASS RELIES HEAVILY ON LECTURES, THEREFORE ATTENDANCE
IS IMPORTANT!**