

PHILOSOPHY 110: Critical Thinking and Composition

Section 6 (22561) – TTH 9:30-10:45 a.m. – EBA – 254

COURSE SYLLABUS (Fall 2014)

Instructor: Brian Thomas

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***Office Hours:** MW-11:00-12:00, T/TH-11:00-12:00, or by appointment

THESE TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

***Since I am involved with Philosophy Club, President of Phi Sigma Tau, and involved with other classes, I am often on campus at times and days other than what is posted above. Please note, I will accept appointments for Fridays on a limited basis as I have other duties to fulfill.**

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Phil 110: Critical Thinking and Composition is an introduction to critical thinking and writing with emphasis on: evaluation and development of correct reasoning and effective style and organization in argumentative writing; correct deductive and inductive reasoning; fallacies; critical appraisal of evidence; construction of rebuttal and counter-arguments. This course satisfies subsection three (3) of **Intermediate Composition and Critical thinking** under the **Communication and Critical Thinking** requirements for general education. More information regarding general education requirements can be found in the SDSU general catalog.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Since this course is aimed at helping students to develop two areas of competence (**critical thinking and composition**), the following essential capacities are to be addressed:

- **Students must come to understand how arguments** [whether in the specific works of various philosophers, journal articles, or newspaper/magazine articles] **are constructed and evaluated** (SD General Catalog).
- **Students must become familiar with the various ways scholars whether** [philosophers, thinkers, or authors] **theorize; and be able to apply different theoretical models** [or frameworks] **to real-world conditions** (SD General Catalog).
- **Students must recognize the value of engaging diverse and opposing principles, perspectives, and people to achieve political, intellectual, artistic, and social ends** (SD General Catalog).
- As students become familiar with various concepts involved in critical thinking, they must be able to **apply** [the said concepts] to **multiple phenomena and** [be able to] **identify the relevance of such concepts across traditional boundaries** (SD General Catalog).

- To further enhance the critical thinking skills of the students, they must **understand the general function of writing, speaking and thinking within the context of the university at large rather than within specific disciplines** (SD General Catalog).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: At the end of the semester, students will be able:

- To recognize the logical structure of statements and arguments [**i.e., construct, analyze and communicate arguments**] SD General Catalog).
- To differentiate between valid and invalid deductive arguments; sound and unsound deductive arguments; and **craft well-reasoned arguments for specific audience** (SD General Catalog).
- To understand and apply criteria for distinguishing strong inductive argument from weak inductive argument; cogent from uncogent inductive argument
- To recognize common logical and rhetorical fallacies when they occur, and avoid them in the construction of arguments
- To construct arguments in which principles of sound reasoning are properly applied
- To read and **analyze a variety of texts commonly encountered in academic setting** (SD General Catalog, 2010).
- **To assess the relative strength of arguments and supporting evidence** (SD General Catalog) as contained in the various assigned readings
- To write papers about these readings that not only evaluates arguments and fallacies, but also shows college level writing skills.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE: Use of a laptops, tablets, iPads etc. in class is allowed for the purpose of taking notes. Students should also refrain from any activity/behavior that may be disturbing to other students who are making the effort to be attentive. If you foresee yourself being on Facebook, Facetiming, Snapchatting, playing Call of Duty etc., or anything that would be extremely distracting to other students, I ask you please sit in the back of the class so the flashing screen does not distract those who are engaged. Let us show **RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER by coming to class on time, not sleeping during class, not letting your cell phone ring during class (unless it is an emergency, you're expecting a call and only if you have cleared it with me first), by being actively engaged in whatever is going on in class and finally being respectful to both the instructor and your fellow classmates during class discussions/debates. I will play Hades advocates (Pain and Panic) constantly; it is important to remember that whatever I say or stance I take is not necessarily my personal belief(s). I want to challenge your dogma(s) in an academically appropriate way.**

LEARNING DISABILITIES: If you have special needs due to a learning disability, please avail yourself of the resources in the Student Disability Services in Calpulli Center, Suite 3101 (third floor) Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 am - 4:30. 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 are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at [\(619\) 594-6473](tel:6195946473). To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES & ATHLETIC OBLIGATIONS: The University Policy File includes the following statement on Absence for Religious Observances and Athletic Obligations: 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 or athletic obligations.**

TEXT: Morrow R. David, Weston Anthony. A Workbook for Arguments. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. , 2011.

There will also be handouts/guidelines for the first paper that is to be submitted as part of the requirements for this course. These handouts are available on blackboard in the course documents and course assignments folders.

***OPTIONAL TEXTS:** Feinberg, Joel. Doing Philosophy . Fourth. Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008.

Harvey, Gordon. *Writing with Sources*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998.

*These texts are **NOT** required, although they may be helpful and powerful learning aids to assist you in your academic and philosophical writing.

BLACKBOARD: I previously mentioned blackboard: this is where you will find important documents such as: the syllabus, paper guidelines, study guides, links to the readings, the cases we will discuss, etc. If you are not familiar with this system I encourage you to come and speak with me or pay a visit to the library for further resources on how to use this system. I will use blackboard to post announcements and I

will use e-mail as the primary means of communication for information regarding the class or campus events, so please make sure your e-mail is up to date. You will be using blackboard to submit your assignments to turnitin.com; I will explain this later in the semester.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. **Participation (10%)** – I expect you to attend each class on time (yes even Fridays). I cannot penalize you due to your absence in class, but I can if you do not or refuse to participate. If you are not present in class, you cannot participate. If you cannot participate, your participation grade will suffer. Therefore, if you are not present in class, your participation grade will suffer. Furthermore, unnecessary absences and tardiness have drastic negative effect in your understanding of the materials covered in class and in your performance in the exams. Moreover, participation is much more valuable in this class than merely being part of your grade. Imagine this not so fictional scenario, you have been present and have been participating extensively in class all semester and you missed a popper. Finding this bit of information out via your other students you decide to approach me and ask if you may turn in your late assignment. After brief reflection on your work ethic and attendance in class, I decide to accept your late assignment with no penalty. This short thought experiment could be a very real reality, thus I stress the importance of participation and its value to you.
 - a. **“Poppers”** – I will not take “traditional” attendance except for the first few weeks of the semester. In lieu of traditional attendance, I will assign “random” assignments throughout the semester to be completed in or outside of class depending on the nature of the assignment. These “poppers” are random in the sense that you do not know when they will be assigned but I do. Therefore, it is within your best interest to attend all class meetings. These “poppers” are meant to measure your understanding of the material as well as your participation, so please put some genuine effort and turn in something worthwhile. These poppers may be assigned every week, every two weeks, or every class meeting. *

Note: There is no make-up for a missed popper and late poppers will not be accepted unless you have a valid excuse.

Valid excuses include but are not limited to:

I died.

***I was arrested**

***I was hospitalized**

I stumbled upon a delightful little woodland cottage. I broke in, entered, and was met by a plethora of little woodland creatures. Together we sang, cleaned up the little cottage, and baked pies until a scary old hag came to the window and offered me a magic wishing apple. Upon my better judgment of taking food from strangers, I ate the shiny red apple. I then was overtaken by the sleeping death. (in short, death by poisoned apple).

2. **Exams (Each 15%)** – There are **3** scheduled exams based on material in the course. These exams are application exams (i.e., these are intended to show your ability to apply the key concepts and principles discussed in lecture). The format of these exams may be multiple choice, matching, fill-in-the-blank, or free response. Whatever the format, you should be prepared. No blue book or scantron is required.
3. **2 Papers (45% total)** – Since this course fulfills a **general writing requirement**, students will be required to write two argumentative pieces.
 - a. The first writing assignment (20%) is to be 3-4 pages in length. For this assignment you will take a position for or against some act or idea based on **one** of the cases we will discuss in class. For instance, “Killer robots” ought to be utilized in warfare, Animals should not be tested on, there are definitive gender roles in society, etc. As with the first writing assignment you will need to provide background information, and you might have to do some light outside research.
 - b. The second writing assignment (25%) will be an argumentative piece on a topic of your choice; further details will be disclosed soon. If you are having trouble deciding on an *appropriate* topic for your final paper, I advise you come talk to me.

In general, the papers will be assessed for the quality of writing (that is, style, clarity, grammar, spelling, organization and strength of argumentation); however, a more specific guideline for each of these papers will be provided in the form of a handout very soon. You may e-mail me your paper, however, it is your responsibility to make sure I am able to access it. If you elect the electronic option, I recommend you submit a hard copy to avoid any technological issues. Neither Wall-E nor Tron will be able to save you from what will befall you, should your electronic submission fail to be accessed. A final note regarding the writing assignments, you must submit two copies of your writing assignment (one to turnitin.com and one in *either* a hard copy or electronic format to me) failure to comply with this policy will result in an automatic five-(5) point deduction on the assignment in question. Please note, I will accept and look at drafts, however, **your draft must be one that you would submit as if it were your final draft**. Submitting a draft is extremely beneficial and could result in a high mark on your paper. If you elect to submit a draft, please submit it early enough so I may have ample time to look it over; do not submit a draft the day before a paper is due and expect me to read it and give you comments. Papers are due at the beginning of class, i.e. when I request your papers are when they are due. Turning in a paper after I have already collected them will be regarded as late and will result in a 0 (zero) for the assignment. If you opt to email me your paper and the timestamp is after

the end of the class, your paper will be regarded as late and will receive a 0 (zero). You must stay within the confines of the required length; if your paper goes beyond the required length, I will only grade to the maximum page length, i.e. if your paper is supposed to be 3-4 pages and you write a partial fifth page, I will only read up to the end of the fourth page and then grade accordingly.

Paper Proposal: For your **Final Paper** you will submit an abstract of your paper. The proposal should include your proposed conclusion i.e., what do you hope to achieve with this conclusion, your methodology, how will you argue for your position, reason(s) for writing on your topic, why did you choose this particular topic as opposed to some other topic? Finally, how does/is your final supposed to relate to: the class, philosophy, or “the big picture” Your abstract should be roughly a ¼ of a page, e.g. a good solid paragraph and no longer than a page single-spaced. Finally, your proposal will be typed, 12-point font, Times New Roman etc. Failure to submit a proposal will result in an automatic 10-point deduction on your final paper, including penalization to participation. The due date for your proposal is in the calendar.

Appropriate final paper topics include but are not limited to:

God’s existence (for or against)

The value of Philosophy in education/society

The moral status of Animals

Personal Identity

What the best form of government should be and why

***Turnitin.com** - Students agree that by taking this course, their 2 papers must be submitted for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com in order to detect plagiarism. All submitted written assignments and papers would be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. Students have the option of requesting, in writing, that their written assignments and papers not be submitted to Turnitin.com. However, if they choose this option they will be required to provide documentation to verify that the written assignments and papers are their original work and do not include any plagiarized material. There will be only one submission necessary per paper; I merely wish to do a textual comparison.

* If you fail to submit your paper to turnitin.com within the appropriate time window for the appropriate assignment, an automatic five (5) point deduction will be applied to your assignment.

4. **FINAL EXAM** – There is no formal final exam for this class. The “Final Exam” is your last paper; **DUE IN CLASS DURING OUR FINAL EXAM SCHEDULED TIME: MAY 9TH 1030-1230 (5-9-14)**

GRADING POLICY: Your final grade will be based on the following distribution of percentages:

- 10% Participation (includes “poppers”)**
- 15% Exam 1**
- 15% Exam 2**
- 15% Exam 3**
- 20% Paper 1**
- 25% Paper 2**
-
- 100%**

Letter grades will be determined based on the following scale:

- 93-100 = A 76-79 = C+**
- 90-92 = A- 73-75 = C**
- 86-89 = B+ 70-72 = C-**
- 83-85 = B 66-69 = D+**
- 80-82 = B- 63-65 = D**
- 60-62 = D-**

NOTE: Anything below 60% is an “F”

***A separate grading rubric for written assignments is available online**

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: Academic dishonestly will not be tolerated. It is the student’s responsibility to know and observe all SDSU rules regarding cheating and plagiarism. Below are the SDSU Academic Senate definitions of cheating and plagiarism:

2.0 Definitions

2.1 Cheating shall be defined as the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work by the use of dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to (a) copying, in part or in whole, from another’s test or other examination; (b) discussing answers or ideas relating to the answers on a test or other examination without the permission of the instructor; (c) obtaining copies of a test, an examination, or other course material without the permission of the instructor; (d) using notes, cheat sheets, or other devices considered inappropriate under the prescribed testing condition; (e) collaborating with another or others in work to be presented without the permission of the instructor; (f) falsifying records, laboratory work, or other course data;

(g) submitting work previously presented in another course, if contrary to the rules of the course; (h) altering or interfering with the grading procedures; (i) plagiarizing, as defined; and (j) knowingly and intentionally assisting another student in any of the above.

2.2 Plagiarism shall be defined as the act of incorporating ideas, words, or specific substance of another, whether purchased, borrowed, or otherwise obtained, and submitting same to the University as one’s own work to fulfill academic requirements without giving credit to the appropriate source. Plagiarism shall include

but not be limited to (a) submitting work, either in part or in whole, completed by another; (b) omitting footnotes for ideas, statements, facts, or conclusions that belong to another; (c) omitting quotation marks when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, sentence, or part thereof; (d) close and lengthy paraphrasing of the writings of another; (e) submitting another person's artistic works, such as musical compositions, photographs, paintings, drawings, or sculptures; and (f) submitting as one's own work papers purchased from research companies.

EXTRA-CREDIT, FINAL GRADES, AND A FINAL NOTE: Extra-Credit: Hard-work, dedication, and improvement deserve a reward, so there will be opportunities to earn extra-credit. Depending on when the opportunity is offered the credit will be applied to the next assignment/exam. I highly encourage you to take advantage of all extra-credit opportunities no matter the point value; a few points could mean the difference between a B+ and an A-. Furthermore, if I am feeling generous, or if I notice attendance in class has been lacking, I might randomly assign extra-credit for those students in class that have shown up for that particular lecture. Thus, it is within your best interest to show up for every class, you never know if I will award points.

Concerning final grades: At the end of the semester when I am drinking my GNT and wearing my ugly Christmas sweater, while watching "The Year Without a Santa Clause", and I am calculating your final grades, I will not simply add up the totals and then assign the appropriate grade, I will take certain things into consideration like: what was this person's track-record for attendance? Participation? Did they improve in their work? Did they take advantage of all extra-credit opportunities? etc. Then, depending on these considerations I might add a point or two to participation, or round up if you're teetering between grades. Depending on the aforementioned considerations an 89.6% will be a 90.0%; I will never round down.

One final note, I want you all to do well in this class. That being said, it is not enough to simply take up space in the classroom. I have designed this class to promote thoughtful and respectful philosophical exchanges between all members of the class, so please put some genuine effort into your assignments and your time in the class. I am willing to meet you halfway, but you must also be willing to put in the time and effort. I encourage you to come to office hours, if you have any questions or you are struggling in class. It is not difficult to do well in this class, but that doesn't mean you never show up and expect to be assigned an A. I look forward to working with each of you, and I am excited to share the experience that is philosophy. Happy Semester!

COURSE SCHEDULE: Please be aware this is a tentative schedule, and is subject to change at my discretion.

8-26 (T) – Introduction, Get acquainted, Discuss syllabus, Class Requirements (etc.)

8-28 (TH) – Assumptions/Perceptions and Critical Thinking, Russell – "Value of Philosophy"

9-2 (T) – Varieties of Meaning, Intension, Extension, and Definitions

9-4 (TH) – Theories of Meaning

9-9 (T) – Arguments, Premises, Conclusions, and Recognizing Arguments

9-11 (TH) – Exam # 1

9-16 (T) – Aquinas' *Quinque Viae*

9-18 (TH) – Deductive Arguments

9-23 (T) – Deductive Arguments (cont.), Anselm's Argument for God's Existence

9-25 (TH) – Inductive Arguments

9-30 (T) – Validity, Soundness, Strength, Cogency

10-2 (TH) – Atheological Arguments

10-7 (T) – Exam # 2

10-9 (TH) – Fallacies in general, and Fallacies of Relevance

10-14 (T) – Fallacies of Weak Induction

10-16 (TH) – Fallacies of Presumption, Fallacies of Ambiguity and Grammatical Analogy

10-21 (T) – Quick Review Exam # 3

10-23 (TH) – Writing a Philosophical Essay

10-28 (T) – General Moral Theories – Objectivity vs. Subjectivity

10-30 (TH) – Ethical Egoism

11- 4 (T) – Utilitarianism & Deontology

11- 6 (TH) – Natural Law and Divine Command

11-11 (T) – Veteran's Day – No Classes

11-13 (TH) – Case # 1 Killer Robots

11-18 (T) – Case # 2 Babies Behind Bars

11-20 (TH) – Case # 3 Animal Testing

11-25 (T) – **Paper # 1 Due, Free Will**

11-27 (TH) – No Class – Happy Thanksgiving Pilgrims!

12-2 (T) – Environmental Ethics

12-4 (Th) – Disney/Pixar and The Meaning of Life Deontology

12-9 (T) – Nozick – Fiction, “The Big Picture”

11-5 (W) – Natural Law and Divine Command

11-7 (F) – Virtue and Care Ethics

11-10 (M) – Case # 1 Killer Robots

11-12 (W) – Case # 1 Killer Robots

11-14 (F) – Case # 2 Babies Behind Bars

11-17 (M) – Case # 2 Babies Behind Bars

11-19 (W) – Case # 3 Animal Testing

11-21 (F) – Case # 3 Animal Testing

11-24 (M) – Free Will pt. 1, Writing Assignment # 1 Due

11-26 (W) – No Classes ☺

11-27 (Th) Happy Thanksgiving Pilgrims!

11-28 (F) – No Classes ☺

12-1 (M) – Free Will pt. 2

12-3 (W) – “The Meaning of Life” question

12-5 (F) – Environmental Ethics

12-8 (M) – Disney/Pixar and Philosophy

12-10 (W) – Nozick – “Fiction”

12-15 (M) – Final Paper Due (During office Hours)

Grading Criteria for Written Assignments – Fall 2014

Your goal is to address the prompt by taking a position for or against some claim. You want to identify your position and to explain why your position makes sense.

To earn an **F**, you do nothing or your paper does not fulfill enough of the conditions listed below.

To earn a **D or lower**, your paper does not fulfill each of these conditions:

- * Your name or other form of identification is on each page including the bibliography.
- * All Pages are numbered and in order & pages are mechanically attached.
- You do identify your main point (thesis statement), but not so clearly.
- You do offer some reasoning (though not so good or not so clearly) to support this thesis whether it's stated or not.
- * Your paper meets the required length.
- * This rubric is mechanically attached to your assignment.

To earn a **C or higher**, your paper must fulfill all conditions noted above as well as all of these:

- You offer some sort of evidence or reasons to support your thesis.
- A thesis statement or main idea is clearly and identifiably expressed.
- Special and/or new terms are clearly defined.
- You use appropriate terms to identify concepts and ideas in context.
- Your writing is relatively free from spelling and grammatical errors.
- Your paper is in correct MLA format with correctly cited sources.

To earn a **B or higher**, your paper must fulfill all conditions noted above as well as some of these:

- You use original examples to illustrate points, either your own or to develop someone else's.
- You acknowledge some alternative position to your own.
- The position is well supported by valid or strong argumentation.
- Your writing contains very few spelling and grammatical errors.

To earn an **A**, your paper fulfills all B level requirements as well as some of these:

- Your work is interesting to read (e.g., your style is easy to follow or humorous or you use *very* original or *new* examples to support or to illustrate your point).
- Your work either suggests a new idea and/or it applies the concepts in a novel way.
- You support your thesis with solid argumentation.

___ You state an alternative position and explain why your position is stronger.

- If you do not satisfy any one these requirements, I will assign your paper the appropriate score **and** will **not** read the rest of your assignment.

END SYLLABUS

I, _____,
(print name)

hereby acknowledge that I have read the whole syllabus and understood all the policies of the class and what will be expected of me. I also understand that if I fail to uphold any of the criteria of the class, I will be liable for any penalties that may incur. I also understand that the instructor reserves the right to change any of the policies in the syllabus or any of the lectures in the course schedule due to unforeseen circumstances that may have an adverse effect on the flow of the course. **(DUE 9-29-14)**

Sign: _____

Date: _____