

**Critical Thinking and Composition
Philosophy 110 / George Tibbitts**

**San Diego State University
Spring Semester 2014**

CLASSROOM:	PSFA - 413	MWF 10:00-10:50 AM
INSTRUCTOR	George Tibbitts	
OFFICE HOURS	TUESDAYS 2:30-4:00 pm and by appointment	
OFFICE	Arts and Letters 430	
EMAIL	gtibbitts428@gmail.com (please do not email via Blackboard)	

BLACKBOARD

The best way to contact the instructor is by his email address **gtibbitts428@gmail.com**. The instructor does not receive correspondence via Blackboard. Assignments, announcements, and grades will regularly be posted in Blackboard. Some other course material may also be made available through Blackboard such as this syllabus, updated schedules, study guides, handouts and exercise answers.

COURSE OUTCOMES

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:

- Distinguish the difference between argument and other kinds of discourse
- Identify the differences between reasoned and unreasoned opinions
- Assess the relative strengths of classical arguments from western philosophers
- Apply the basic criteria used to evaluate claims and arguments (soundness, cogency)
- Recognize assumptions and identify common informal fallacies in human reasoning
- Determine the techniques used by advertising and the media to persuade audiences without offering reasons
- Situate the roots of fallacious thinking in psychological, emotional, cultural, and all other non-argumentative forces. Distinguish the most common fallacies by recognizing it in arguments and other means of identification.
- Analyze and critique both inductive and deductive arguments using formal methods
- Recognize and evaluate arguments involved in deductive and inductive reasoning
- Analyze the structure of deductive arguments via categorical and propositional logic
- Critique/analyze classical philosophical arguments, including proofs for God, Problem of Evil, Free will/Determinism
- Understand multiple perspectives held by different groups about morally controversial issues
- Write a term paper which takes a stance on a controversial moral/political issue that has personal and global relevance
- Improve the clarity, precision and organization in writing and rational persuasion
- Defend one's position against strong opposing evidence and counterarguments

REQUIRED TEXT

Morrow, David R. A Workbook for Arguments: A Complete Course in Critical Thinking.

Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2011. Print.

Handouts and Lecture Notes (available in class or Blackboard)

COURSE WORK

Four Assignment Packs
Five Written Responses
Four Exams
Midterm Paper
Final Paper

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Total 20%, 5% each, lowest dropped
Total 10% 2% each, lowest dropped
Total 20%, 5% each
20%
30% (due on final exam day)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date

Topics

Week 1, Jan 22-24

Inductive Arguments

Week 2, Jan 27-31

Fundamentals of Discourse

Week 3, Feb 3-7

Paley's Argument for God's Existence

Week 4, Feb 10-14

Assignment 1 Exercises due and Test 1 (2/14)

Week 5, Feb 17-21

Deductive Arguments

Week 6, Feb 24-28

Anselm's Argument

Week 7, March 3-7

Assignment 2 Exercises and Test 2 (3/7)

Week 8, March 10-14

Categorical Reasoning

Week 9, March 17-21

Venn Diagrams

NO class Friday, Midterm Papers due Wednesday, March 21

Week 10, March 24-28 10

Assignment 3 Exercises Due and Test 3

Week 11, March 31- April 4

Spring break - No Class

Week 12, April 7- 11

Fallacies

Week 13, April 14- 18

Informal Fallacies

Week 14, April 21-25

Good Writing vs. Rhetoric Devices

Week 15, April 28- May 2

Assignment 4 Exercises Due and Test 4

Week 16, May 5-8

Personal Office Hours Appointments (NO class)

Finals Week

FINAL PAPER DUE on Final Exam Date

No In-class Final Exam

Paper due **in Class** Friday 5/9 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

GRADES

The final grade is computed by combining four assignments (60%), the midterm papers (20%) and the final paper (20%) according to their various values. Once a numerical score is determined, the instructor considers factors such as attendance, participation, effort, etc. in deciding whether to raise a student's final grade above the numerical score.

The grading scale:	89.9%-87%	B+	79.9%-77%	C+	69.9%-67%	D+	
100%-94%	A	86.9%-84%	B	76.9%-74%	C	66.9%-64%	D
93.9%-90%	A-	83.9%-80%	B-	73.9%-70%	C-	63.9%-60%	D-

WRITING REQUIREMENT

This course fulfills a **general writing requirement** and will assign written work consisting of rough drafts, short papers, exam essays, and a research paper. Writing will be assessed for style, clarity, grammar, organization and strength of argumentation. Some writing will be completed in class in answer to specific exam essay questions. Other writing in the form of take-home exams, midterm papers and the final paper will be done at home. The writing exercises and papers are intended to help students to develop their skills of doing philosophical analysis and to master college level writing skills.

Students who write their papers with a computer are expected to make **back up copies** of their papers on a disk. A student may turn in a paper before the due date, but this does not mean that the paper will be graded any sooner.

The midterm paper will approximately required to be three pages in length. This short paper will critically evaluate arguments and fallacies which students find regarding a controversial moral/political topic TBA. The midterm paper will be assigned mid February and will be due mid March (exact due date will be announced later). A longer **6-8 page research paper** will be collected at the beginning of final exam day. This research paper will ask students to analyze morally controversial cases and will require secondary sources to be cited in the bibliography. Students should turn in their research papers on the final exam date; no in-class final exam will be given on that day.

EXAM POLICY

Four Exams will be calculated in the final score. Attendance is expected and thus make up exams will **ONLY** be considered only if I am told well beforehand that you need to take the exam early or if in the case of a dire emergency. There are no dropped exams for this class, however there may be possibility for earning extra credit towards poor scores

Many of the questions on exams are similar to the exercises that we do for homework, class work or group work. The best way to prepare for the exams is to read the assigned material, to work on critical thinking exercises, and to take careful notes of lecture material. Most of the exams will be completed in class but a few may be take-home exams.

PAPERS

TURN IN CLASS OR BY EMAIL - The preferred mode of turning in papers is handing in printed copies in class on the given deadline date. Each page, whether printed or electronic, should have the student's name and should have a page number (except possibly the first page). Please attach all printed pages together by staple or paper clip.

In case students need a few more hours to finish their papers, **papers may be emailed** after class by midnight of the due date (i.e. 12:00 am bordering on the next day). Because the instructor does not have all or the latest computer programs, certain papers may not be successfully emailed. For students who

have programs incompatible to the instructor's, papers may be cut and paste as a simple email document and the instructor will format it to the proper form (double-spaced, indented paragraphs, 12 point font, etc.). Papers may be emailed to aneuner@att.net. Please do not email via blackboard. Emailed papers turned in by midnight of the due date will not be marked off, but they may be graded and recorded after those papers handed in to class.

ROUGH DRAFTS

The instructor will accept preliminary versions and drafts, but these are **not required**. Students will receive written comments back from the instructor that can help students improve their papers. The extent and quality of comments written on drafts will vary depending on how rough or how polished the drafts are themselves. So, a one page draft would few developed ideas will not receive as many writing tips and suggestions as a three page well thought draft. Students must submit drafts **two weeks before** the actual due date. This gives the instructor a week to read drafts and hand them back to students and then students have a week to implement and improve their drafts. Instead of turning in drafts, students may also set up appointments to speak with the instructor about their papers. Usually a **special day of appointments** will be scheduled to allow students to meet with the instructor a week before the midterm papers and final paper are due.

LATE PAPERS

Take-home assignments may be turned in late but will be assessed a late penalty unless excused by the instructor. Late papers will be penalized according to how late the paper is turned in and depending on what reasons a student can provide. Usually the penalty is **half a grade lower for every class period** the paper is late. Late papers, whether excused or not, may be graded and handed back to students a week or two after the rest of the class has received their papers and grades back.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is considered a serious offense in academic institutions. In this class, a paper containing plagiarism will receive an F. Plagiarism occurs when a person refers to somebody else's words or ideas without properly citing the source. Even summarizing or paraphrasing another person's original ideas can count as plagiarism when one fails to acknowledge one's source. You do not have to cite a source when using "common knowledge" or generally accepted facts. When in doubt, a student ought to cite the source. In place of a more formal footnote/endnote system, students in this class may cite sources by using an internal citation and bibliography system:

Internal citation and bibliography - After each quotation or summary in the text include in parentheses the last name of the author, the date of the publication, and the page number of the citation, e.g. (Thomson, 1984, 7). Then at the end of the work include an alphabetized bibliography of works cited. Students may refer to the CMS, MLA or APA systems for proper punctuation of bibliography.

The library has a module available to help writers avoid plagiarism: <http://infotutor.sdsu.edu/plagiarism>. In addition, the library also has a site about citing sources: <http://infodome.sdsu.edu/research/guides/styles/cite/shtml>.

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

Students are required to attend all classes, to bring their reader and handouts, to complete homework & in-class projects, and to participate in discussion and group work. Students who miss class are

responsible for acquiring the material and keeping pace with the course. If a student must miss a class for good reason, then an appointment may be made with the instructor for explanation of missed lecture material and exercise answers.

Although attendance and participation does not officially count as part of a student's final grade, they may still make a **difference in borderline cases**, where students are very close to the next higher grade. Excessive absences, disruptive behavior and misuse of electronic devices (laptops, cell phones, etc.) during class will also be noted and will not be counted favorably toward a student's final grade. No extra credit will be offered.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Use of laptop computers in class is allowed for the purposes of note-taking only; other computer activities can prove distracting. Students will lose laptop privileges if they use their computers for other activities besides taking notes. Students should also refrain from any behavior that may be disturbing to other students who are making the effort to be attentive. Cell phones and other electronic devices should be turned off and stored away. PLEASE **RESPECT OTHER STUDENTS** by not chatting with one another during class.

The classroom format will be mostly lecture followed by writing and critical thinking exercises. Students will also have the opportunity for discussion in class and dialogue in smaller groups. Students should try to be punctual, but are encouraged to show up to class even if they may be a little late due to unforeseen circumstances. The instructor will never keep the class beyond the allotted class period and requests that students wait until class has been dismissed before they begin closing notebooks and packing away their school gear.

If class must be cancelled on a given date, an announcement will be made by the instructor or a note will be posted on the classroom door or via Blackboard. If the instructor is more than 15 minutes late, please assume that the class is cancelled and that advance notice was not possible.

DISABLED STUDENT SERVICES

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. 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.

FINAL MENTION

While policies specifically mentioned are guaranteed by this syllabus, some of the content including class and exam dates are subject to changes. Updates or revisions to this syllabus will be made available with appropriate clarifications.