

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

**San Diego State University
Spring Semester 2015**

Classroom: PSFA-413 MWF 10:00-10:50 AM

INSTRUCTOR George Tibbitts

OFFICE HOURS Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00-3:00 PM and by appointment

OFFICE Arts and Letters 430

EMAIL gltibbitts428@gmail.com (please do not email via Blackboard)

BLACKBOARD

The best way to contact the instructor is by his email address **gltibbitts428@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 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:

- Distinguish the difference between arguments 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 fallacies in human reasoning
- Situate the roots of fallacious thinking in psychological, emotional, and cultural forces
- Analyze and critique both inductive and deductive arguments using formal methods
- Improve the clarity, precision and organization in writing and rational persuasion
- Recognize and evaluate arguments involved in analogical and causal reasoning
- Analyze the structure of deductive arguments via categorical and propositional logic
- Understand multiple perspectives held by different groups about morally controversial issues
- Write a term paper which takes a stance on a moral issue that has personal and global relevance
- Defend one's position against strong opposing evidence and counterarguments
- Interpret how causal relationships and value theories impact moral decision making

REQUIRED TEXT

A Workbook for Arguments: A Complete Course in Critical Thinking by David Morrow and Anthony Weston

Handouts and Lecture Notes (available in class or Blackboard)

COURSE WORK

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Four Homework Packets | 20% total, 5% each |
| Four Exams | 20% total, 5% each |
| Midterm Paper | 25% |
| Final Paper | 25% |
| Final Exam | 10% |

COURSE SCHEDULE

Assignments will consist of exercises posted on Blackboard and taken from the book. They will be assigned every week but will not be collected until the date of the corresponding quiz. The full schedule will be continuously updated on Blackboard, so students will be responsible for checking it for updates. The instructor will make announcements both in Blackboard and in class regarding changes to the schedule.

Date

Due Dates and Holidays

Week 1, Jan 21- 23

Inductive Arguments

Week 2, Jan 26-30

Week 3, Feb 2-6

Week 4, Feb 9-13

Assignment Packet 1 and Exam 1*

Week 5, Feb 16-20

Deductive Arguments

Week 6, Feb 23- 27

Week 7, Mar 2-6

Assignment Packet 2 and Exam 2*

Week 8, Mar 9-16

Fallacies

Week 9, Mar 23-27

Midterm Papers due this week

Week 10, Mar 30- Apr 3

Spring Break

Week 11, Apr 6-Apr 10

Assignment Packet 3 and Exam 3*

Week 12, Apr 13- Apr 17

Theories of Ethics

Week 13, Apr 20- 24

Week 14, Apr 27- May 1

Week 15, May 4-6

Last Day of class, Assignment Packet 4 and Exam 4*

Finals Week

FINAL EXAM ; FINAL PAPER DUE

* Indicates that a exam or assignment is scheduled or due this week ***on Friday*** unless otherwise noted. There will be no makeup assignments offered.

GRADES

The final grade is computed by combining four assignments (20%), scheduled exams (20%) the midterm papers (25%), the final paper (25%), and the final exam (10%) 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.

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|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----|
| 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- |

ASSIGNMENT PACKETS

The instructor will assign exercises that students must turn in by the dates posted on the course schedule. A completed assignment will consist of all the exercises announced in class and on Blackboard for the given time period. There will be a total of four dates when the assignments will be collected. Each individual Assignment Packet is worth 5% of your total grade. **NO MAKEUP ASSIGNMENTS. HOWEVER,** they can be turned in **before the deadline** if the instructor is informed in advance.

EXAMS

There will be a total of four exams in the course of the semester, and they will take place on the same dates the Assignment Packets are collected, unless otherwise noted. Each exam is worth 5% of your total grade (total of 20%). Many of the questions on the 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 the assigned critical thinking exercises, and to take careful notes of lecture material.

FINAL EXAM

Every section of Phil 110 is required to administer a uniform final exam. The exam will consist of an in-class writing essay. Final Exams will *not* be assessed by the instructor, but will be evaluated by a colleague. This requirement is new so more information will be added as it becomes available.

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.

PAPERS

The midterm paper will be approximately three pages in length and will critically evaluate two opposing arguments regarding a common controversial topic of your choosing. A longer **4-5 page research paper** will be collected at the beginning of final exam day. This research paper will ask students to analyze a philosophical paper 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.

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 **gltibbitts428@gmail.com**. 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 with few developed ideas will not receive as many writing tips and suggestions as a three page well thought draft. Students must submit drafts **one week before** the actual due date. This gives the instructor sufficient time 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 or come in during office hours to speak with the instructor about their papers

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 expected to attend all classes, to bring their workbook 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.

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 on silent and stored away.

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

Any students with special needs due to a documented medical condition should avail themselves of the resources of the Disabled Students Services Office. Students who have such concerns that might prevent them from otherwise doing well in this course should discuss this with the instructor so that proper arrangements may be made to accommodate their conditions. Students should inform the instructor about any concerns that might prevent them from doing well in this course so that special arrangements can be made to accommodate their conditions.

Student Athletes who have conflicts with class must discuss scheduling concerns within the first two weeks of course to make arrangements for making up missing work.