

Philosophy 151: Introduction to Logic and Legal Reasoning

Sample Syllabus

Instructor: (Instructor information omitted from sample syllabus.)

Course description: An informal introduction to elementary deductive and inductive logic, concentrating chiefly on applications to reasoning in legal contexts (e.g., courtroom argumentation and jury deliberations).

Goals and objectives: This course aims to equip the student with the basic tools of critical thinking, especially as they apply to the assessment of legal reasoning by ordinary citizens. Through examination of various courtroom scenarios and actual court cases, students will be taught to reason carefully about what laws are involved and how those laws apply to the particulars of the case at hand, to evaluate testimony and weigh both its accuracy and its relevance, to give a fair hearing to both sides, and to distinguish sound from erroneous arguments so as ultimately to reach a just and reasonable conclusion. While the courtroom provides the overall framework of discussion, students will also be taught to apply these critical thinking skills to various arguments and issues that arise in our daily lives as consumers, students, investors, planners, and citizens — examples being drawn from advertisements, social debates, political campaigns, and editorials.

Prerequisites: none

Exclusions: may not be taken for credit by students who have taken Philosophy 150.

GEC Category Goals and Objectives: 1. B. 2. Quantitative and Logical Skills: Mathematical and Logical Analysis. Students comprehend mathematical concepts and methods adequate to construct valid arguments, and understand inductive and deductive reasoning, scientific inference, and general problem solving.

Required text: Bruce N. Waller, *Critical Thinking: Consider the Verdict* (5th ed.; Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2004). This book can also be purchased (at half price) as an eTextbook from the publisher's CourseSmart Library at <http://www.coursesmart.com>.

Course packet: supplementary handouts and material from Ruggero J. Aldisert's *Logic for Lawyers* (3rd ed.; NITA, 1997) will be made available on Carmen.

Course calendar

Week 1

- Topic for 1st meeting: What is logic?
Reading for 1st meeting: Text, Ch. 1
- Topic for 2nd meeting: Arguments and form.
Reading for 2nd meeting: Text, Ch. 2

Week 2

- Topic for 1st meeting: More on arguments and form; relevant and irrelevant reasons.
Reading for 1st meeting: Text, Chs. 3-4
- Topic for 2nd meeting: analyzing arguments.
Reading for 2nd meeting: Text, Ch. 6

Week 3

- Topic for 1st meeting: Sentential Logic I: syntax and semantics.
Reading for 1st meeting: Text, Ch. 8. [**Quiz #1**]
- Topic for 2nd meeting: Sentential Logic II: symbolization
Reading for 2nd meeting: handout on Sentential Logic

Week 4

- Topic for 1st meeting: Arguments about classes I
Reading for 1st meeting: Text, Ch. 9
- Topic for 2nd meeting: Arguments about classes II
Reading for 2nd meeting: handout on Categorical Syllogisms

Week 5

- Topic for 1st meeting: burden of proof in general; burden of proof in the courtroom.
Reading for 1st meeting: Text, Ch. 5
- Topic for 2nd meeting: necessary and sufficient conditions.
Reading for 2nd meeting: Text, Ch. 7

Week 6

- 1st meeting: **Midterm examination (2 hrs)**
- Topic for 2nd meeting: Fallacies I—ad hominem arguments and appeals to authority.
Reading for 2nd meeting: Text, Chs. 10-11

Week 7

- Topic for 1st meeting: Truth and testimony.
Reading for 1st meeting: Text, Ch. 12
- Topic for 2nd meeting: Fallacies II—straw man, slippery slope, false dilemma, and golden mean arguments.
Reading for 2nd meeting: Text, Ch. 13

Week 8

- Topic for 1st meeting: Fallacies III—begging the question
Reading for 1st meeting: Text, Ch. 14 [**Quiz #2**]
- Topic for 2nd meeting: Analogical reasoning
Reading for 2nd meeting: Text, Ch. 15

Week 9

- Topic for 1st meeting: Scientific reasoning and causal fallacies.
Reading for 1st meeting: Text, Ch. 16.
- Topic for 2nd meeting: how do statistics lie?
Reading for 2nd meeting: Text, Ch. 17.

Week 10

- Topic for 1st meeting: Apply what you have learned to Case One: Commonwealth v. Moyer.
Reading for 1st meeting: (Text, pp. 430-38)
- Topic for 2nd meeting: Apply what you have learned to Case Two: State v. Ransom.
Reading for 2nd meeting: (Text, pp. 439-54)

Week 11

- **Final Examination** (time to be scheduled)
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Grading criteria:

Participation (10%); Quizzes #1 and #2 (15% each); Midterm Exam (30%); Final Exam (30%). The grade for attendance is determined by the number of sessions attended (with adjustments for excused absences): A (18-20); B (16-17); C (14-15); D (11-13); E (0-10).

Statement on Academic Misconduct:

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).

Statement on Disability Services

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.