

PHIL 2303-02: Critical Thinking

Sam Houston State University

Fall 2025 | CRN: 81488

M/W 3:30–4:45 PM | CHSS 220

Instructor: Dr. Thomas Brommage

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Course Description: Designed to improve students' ability to think critically. The course covers the fundamentals of deductive reasoning, the identification of common fallacies, and an introduction to inductive reasoning, as well as sensitizing the students to some of the ways information is distorted, e.g., by advertising and news management.

Prerequisites: N/A

Required Textbook: Bailin and Battersby, *Reason in the Balance: An Inquiry Approach to Critical Thinking*, 2nd ed. (Hackett, 2016). ISBN: 978-1-62466-477-9. \$50.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify common informal fallacies
2. Recognize distorted and/or fairly presented information across a variety of examples
3. Assess the validity of logical inferences

Course Schedule: Please note that dates of assignments are approximate, and subject to change based on the pace of the course.

Week #1 (Aug 19–21): *The Nature of Inquiry* Ch. 1 (pp. 3-20); Ex. #1, 2, 7, 10
Week #2 (Aug 24–28): *The Spirit of Inquiry* Ch. 2 (pp. 25-47); Ex. #3
Week #3 (Aug 31–Sept 4): *Induction and Deduction* Ch. 3 (pp 55-70); Ex. #1, 3, 5
Week #4 (Sept 7–11): *Probative Fallacies* Ch. 4 (pp. 75-100); **Exam #1**
Week #5 (Sept 14–18): *Probative Fallacies* Ex #1, 4
Week #6 (Sept 21–25): *Inductive Argument Types* Ch. 5 (pp. 105-107) Ex. #1
Week #7 (Sept 28–Oct 2): *Analogical Arguments* Ch. 5 (pp. 107-115); Ex. #2
Week #8 (Oct 5–9): *Causal Explanations* Ch. 5 (pp. 115-126); Ex. #3; **Exam #2**
Week #9 (Oct 12–16): *Expertise and Authority* Ch. 6 (pp. 133-154); Ex. #1, 2
Week #10 (Oct 19–23): *Statistical Arguments* TBA
Week #11 (Oct 26–30): *Conditional Probability* Probability Handout
Week #12 (Nov 2–6): *Scientific Method(s)* Ch. 12 (pp. 293-327); Ex. #2, 4; **Exam #3**
Week #13 (Nov 9–13): *Rhetorical Fallacies* Ch. 7 (pp. 161-179); Ex. #3, 7
Week #14 (Nov 16–20): *Aesthetic & Interpretive Judgments* Ch. 14 (pp. 371-403)
Week #15 (Nov 23–27): *Thanksgiving Break*
Week #16 (Nov 30 – Dec 3): *Ethical Judgments* Ch. 15 (pp. 409–427); Ex. #1, 2; **Exam #4**
Final Exam (12/7 @ 12:45–2:45 PM): **Exam #5 (Final Exam)**

Important Dates:

First Day of Classes	Wednesday, August 19th
Labor Day (holiday)	Monday, September 7th
Add/Drop Deadline	Friday September 11th
Fall Holiday	Monday Oct 12th – Tuesday Oct 13th
Q-Drop Deadline	Friday November 13th
Thanksgiving Break	Wednesday, Nov 25th – Friday, Nov 27th
Reading Day	Friday December 4th
Final Exam	Tuesday December 7th (12:45–2:45 PM)

Writing Enhanced: This is a “W” course, which means that at least 50 percent of your course grade will derive from writing activities designed to help you master course objectives. Writing in this course is one of the tools your instructor will use to help you learn course material. Some writing activities will require you to draft and revise your work, with or without instructor feedback. Others may not receive a grade but are designed to assist you in critical reflection of the course material. You should approach writing in this course as a tool to use as part of your learning as well as a tool your instructor will use to assess your level of learning. The exams will involve significant free-response sections requiring written responses, totaling approximately 50% of the course grade.

Exams: There will be five in-class exams given throughout the course, which includes the cumulative final exam. Each exam (except for the cumulative final) will cover around 3 to 4 weeks of content. The best three of four exams will be counted into calculating your final grade. If a student were to be absent on a day when an exam is given, it is his or her responsibility to contact the professor to schedule an alternate time to complete it. Any missed exam *must be completed before the start of the next scheduled class meeting*, otherwise no credit will be given for that assignment. The lowest single exam will be dropped from your final score.

Attendance and Participation: An attendance sheet will be distributed most class days. It is your responsibility to sign-in on the official roll sheet, otherwise you will be considered absent. Your attendance will be judged as a percentage of the number of days that you attend class. Everyone will have two (2) absences that will not count against his or her grade (should you not use these two “freebies,” your grade will be adjusted up accordingly). For example, if I take attendance 22 times in the semester, and you have attended 18 of those meetings, your attendance grade would be a 91% (18/20). Aside from the two automatically excused absences, *no additional absences will be considered excused* except when required by law or university policy.

Your participation grade will be a qualitative measure based on your effective in-class participation. For this measure, “effective” participation is a function of the quality—not the quantity—of your participation. In most cases, your participation grade will be no higher than your attendance grade—since, of course: if you’re not there, then you can’t participate.

The following weighting will be used to calculate your course grade:

Exams (best 4 of 5; x 20% ea. =)	80%
Attendance	10%
Participation	10%

Your rounded average of these assignments will determine your grade, based on the following scale:

A	100 - 89.5
B	89.4 - 79.5
C	79.4 - 69.5
D	69.4 - 59.5
F	59.4 - 0

Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Please be aware that plagiarized work and any form of academic dishonesty will result in an “F” on the assignment and possible university disciplinary action.

[SHSU Academic Policy Statement 810213](#) outlines academic honesty and related disciplinary procedures. You should also familiarize yourself with [Academic Policy Statement 900823](#), which outlines procedures for students to file an academic grievance should you wish to appeal your grade for reasons other than academic dishonesty.

Classroom Conduct: Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Cell phones must be turned off before class begins. Students are prohibited from eating in class, using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping, talking at inappropriate times, wearing inappropriate clothing, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in a directive to leave class. Students who are especially disruptive also may be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy.

Course Evaluations: In accordance with University policy every student will have an opportunity at a specified date and time near the end of the semester to complete a course evaluation form from the IDEA course evaluation system.

Pregnant and Parenting Students: Pregnant and parenting students fall under Title IX equal educational opportunities that “prohibits educational institutions from discriminating against students based on pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery from any of these conditions.” Resources are available on the [SHSU Pregnancy & Parenting](#) page.

Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom: Students submitting work entirely or substantially generated through AI is unethical and a mix of plagiarism, collusion, and abuse of academic resources. Doing so will result in a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.

Student-Provided Technological Devices: Students are responsible for ensuring that their personal technological devices (e.g., laptops, tablets, mobile devices) meet the necessary hardware and software requirements for participation in this course. Failure to maintain a functional device will not be accepted as a valid excuse for incomplete coursework, missed deadlines, or inability to participate in course activities. SHSU Online and the university’s IT department provide limited technical support for personal devices.

For University policies on Student Absences on Religious Holy Days, Students with Disabilities, and Visitors in the Classroom you may view to the official statements on the SHSU Website, <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

Expectations, Suggestions and Mandates for an Efficient Class:

1. Especially true in philosophy more than most other subjects, diligence is important. Some of the reading will be difficult since we are looking at some of the most profound ideas in the history of the world. The difficulty of the subject is indirectly proportional to the amount of work put into the course.
2. Try to complete the week's work early. Waiting until the due date to begin the week's assignment is not advisable. Some of the assignments may take an hour or longer to complete.
3. Expect to spend up to five hours a week of reading and thinking about the material outside of class in order to get an "A" for the course. Additionally, for these reasons, attendance is of vital importance. *If you do not attend class or keep up with the reading or exercises, do not expect to pass this class!*
4. Please arrive to class on time and expect to stay the entire duration of the class. If this is an impossibility, please make every attempt to notify me in advance of tardiness or absence.
5. Please come to class prepared (i.e., any reading assigned read, any questions concerning exercises or lectures prepared, etc.)
6. Please be respectful of each other in the class. There will be times when students disagree about a topic discussed in class. This is a didactic process, not a combative one.
7. Due to the great excess of material and limited time in which we must over ground, please do not create a disruption for those people who are attempting to learn. Disruptions include blurting out answers, name calling, chiding each other, snoring, etc. (Laughing at the Instructor's jokes is obviously exempted from this policy.) In addition, personal audio devices (except those in use to record lectures) and loud crunching snack foods are prohibited from the classroom.
8. Please feel free to make mistakes. We all will from time to time—including your omniscient instructor.
9. Please feel free to make an appointment to discuss the material you do not understand. Waiting until the last moment in the semester to catch up is not advisable. I am excellent at fixing small problems, but horrendous at fixing large ones. The only difference between small and large problems is time.
10. Have fun! The material is only as dry as you make it out to be. Sharpening one's mind can be an exhilarating process.