

Ryerson University

PHL 214: Critical Thinking (Winter 2014)

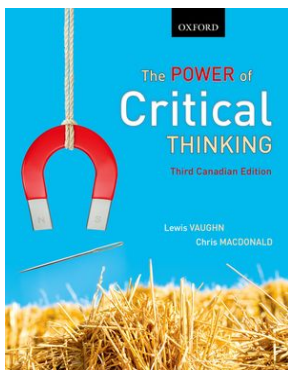
Section 1 Lectures: Thursdays 10:00-12:00 VIC510, Fridays 11:00-12:00 KHE221

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Office Hours:	Tuesdays 10:10 – 12:00 or by appointment

Course Description:

Rational argument, discussion, or debate is essential to human decision making. In politics, families, social groups, clubs, and academic fields, rational argument is how we decide what to do, who is right, and what is true. In this course, we will learn to find the structure in arguments, and we will learn how to tell whether an argument is persuasive based on that structure. We will also learn to watch out for arguments that seem persuasive but contain flawed reasoning, and arguments that are only persuasive under certain conditions. A writing assignment will put these skills into practice, with students constructing arguments of their own. Most examples will be taken from everyday life, popular culture, and current news stories, but we will also see how the principles of rational argument apply in various professional and academic fields, including philosophy. Students are encouraged to share examples of arguments they encounter in their own lives, in the media, or in their studies.

Textbook:



The required textbook is Lewis Vaughn and Chris MacDonald, *The Power of Critical Thinking*, Third Canadian Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. It is available at the Ryerson Bookstore.

Students are strongly encouraged to make use of the on-line *Student Study Guide* for this book. This may be found [here](http://www.oupcanada.com/higher_education/companion/philosophy/9780195447538.html): www.oupcanada.com/higher_education/companion/philosophy/9780195447538.html

Grading Scheme:

Task	Value	Dates
Test #1	20 %	Jan. 31
Test #2	15 %	Feb. 28
Test #3	15 %	Mar. 21
Argument Example	5 %	Mar. 18 or earlier
Writing Exercise	10 %	Mar. 28 & Apr. 4
Final Exam	35 %	TBD

- For a table showing the correspondence between letter-grades, percentage scale, and grade point average (GPA), see www.ryerson.ca/calendar/2011-2012/pg18.html

- **Argument Examples** will be described in Week 2. You will find an example of an argument, and email it to the instructor with a brief description of the argument structure. Examples will then be shared with the class. **Last date to submit examples: March 18.**
- The **Writing Exercise** will be described in detail later. You will choose a passage from a newspaper editorial or academic paper to argue *against*. During two Friday classes, you will write a rough draft, then a final draft of your counterargument. Arguments will be graded for coherence and persuasiveness, based largely on their structure.

Meeting Times:

- The class periods on **Thursdays 10:00-12:00 VIC510**, and **Fridays 11:00-12:00 KHE221** will be used for lectures and discussion. Classes will often begin with a short **practice quiz** (not graded).
- **Office Hours** are provided for small-group or one-on-one consultation with the instructor. I encourage all of you to drop by my office hours during the semester if you have questions, comments, concerns, or suggestions about any aspect of the class.

Course Policies:

Missed Classes and/or Evaluations

Students are required to inform their instructors of any situation which arises during the semester which may have an adverse effect upon their academic performance, and must request any considerations and accommodations according to the relevant policies and well in advance. Failure to do so will jeopardize any academic appeals.

- *Medical certificates* – If a student misses the deadline for submitting an assignment, or the date of an exam or other evaluation component because of illness, they must submit a Ryerson Student Medical Certificate AND an Academic Consideration form within 3 working days of the missed date. Both documents are available at www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/medical.pdf. **If you are a full-time or part-time degree student, then you submit your forms to your own program department or school. If you are a certificate or non-certificate student, then you submit your forms to the staff at the front desk of the Chang School.**
- *Religious observance* – If a student needs accommodation because of religious observance, they must submit a Request for Accommodation of Student Religious, Aboriginal and Spiritual Observance AND an Academic Consideration form within the first 2 weeks of the class or, for a final examination, within 2 weeks of the posting of the examination schedule. If the required absence occurs within the first 2 weeks of classes, or the dates are not known well in advance as they are linked to other conditions, these forms should be submitted with as much lead time as possible in advance of the required absence. Both documents are available at www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/relobservforminstr.pdf. **If you are a full-time or part-time degree student, then you submit the forms to your own program department or school. If you are a certificate or non-certificate student, then you submit the forms to the staff at the front desk of the Chang School.**
- *Students with disabilities* – In order to facilitate the academic success and access of students with disabilities, they should register with the Access Centre www.ryerson.ca/studentervices/accesscentre/index.html. Before the first graded work is due, students should also inform their instructor through an “Accommodation Form for Professors” that they are registered with the Access Centre and what accommodations are required.

Student Code of Academic Conduct

The [Ryerson Student Code of Academic Conduct](http://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity) defines academic misconduct, the processes the University will follow when academic misconduct is suspected, and the consequences that can be imposed if students are found to be guilty of misconduct. Further information is also available at www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity.

Academic misconduct includes:

- plagiarism (claiming words, ideas, artistry, drawings or data of another person as your own, including submitting your own work in whole or in part in more than one course)
- cheating
- misrepresentation of personal identity or performance
- submission of false information
- contributing to academic misconduct
- damaging, tampering, or interfering with the scholarly environment
- unauthorized copying or use of copyrighted materials
- violations of departmental policies on professional behavior and/or course requirements

Cell Phone and Laptop Policy

Please turn off and put away your phones and other electronics for the entire duration of class (except breaks). Laptop use will only be permitted under special circumstances, such as to fulfill accessibility requirements. If you think you have a good reason for using a laptop, please talk to the instructor to get permission. Likewise if you are expecting an urgent call, such as a medical emergency, please let the instructor know before class. Any other use of phones or electronics during class may result in the device being confiscated until the end of class, and/or the user being asked a very difficult question.

Some Strategies for Success:

- 1) Do not leave studying until the last minute. The material in this course is not that difficult, but much of it will be new to you. Last-minute studying will not be effective! Work continuously on the material.
- 2) Use the lecture slides as a guide for what to focus on in your studying of the text, your notes, and the study guide.
- 3) Review the study guides.
- 4) Review your tests to identify which type of question is most difficult for you. Practice your test writing skills by designing your own questions and answering them in detail. Write an outline for short answers to ensure you cover all relevant content.
- 5) Create a list of key terms that you feel the need to review. Search for their definitions within the lecture slides or the textbook and write them out in full.
- 6) When answering short answer questions, write an outline, re-read the question and finally, review the answer to ensure you have not excluded any relevant information.
- 7) When answering multiple choice questions, re-read the question and make sure that you have selected the best possible option.
- 8) Don't spend too long on any one question. If you're unsure of the answer, skip it and come back.
- 9) There will be ample time to write the tests and exam, so take your time and review all your answers.

Course Schedule:

Week	Dates	Lecture Topic and Required Reading
1	Jan. 10	Introduction; Web Resources Ch. 1: The Power of Critical Thinking
2	Jan. 16, 17	Ch. 1: The Power of Critical Thinking (cont.) Ch. 2: The “Environment” of Critical Thinking
3	Jan. 23 Jan. 24	Ch. 3: Making Sense of Arguments Ch. 4: Reasons for Belief and Doubt
4	Jan. 30 Jan. 31	Ch. 4: Reasons for Belief and Doubt (cont.), <i>Test Review</i> Test #1 (20%)
5	Feb. 6, 7	Ch. 5: Faulty Reasoning
6	Feb. 13, 14	Ch. 6: Categorical Logic
	Feb. 20, 21	READING WEEK – NO LECTURES
7	Feb. 27 Feb. 28	Ch. 7: Propositional Logic, <i>Test Review</i> Test #2 (15%)
8	Mar. 6, 7	Ch. 7: Propositional Logic (cont.)
9	Mar. 13, 14	Ch. 7: Propositional Logic (cont.)
10	Mar. 20 Mar. 21	Ch. 8: Inductive Reasoning, <i>Test Review</i> Test #3 (15%)
11	Mar. 27 Mar. 28	Ch. 8: Inductive Reasoning (cont.) Writing Exercise, Part 1
12	Apr. 3 Apr. 4	Ch. 8: Inductive Reasoning (cont.) Writing Exercise, Part 2
13	Apr. 10	Ch. 8: Inductive Reasoning (cont.), <i>Exam Review</i>

Final Exam (3 hours; 35%)