INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THINKING
PHILOSOPHY 49, Section: 70872, Location: Room 450
Spring 2011
MW 2:30 pm – 3:50 pm

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Office Hours: MW 2:00 pm – 2:30 pm, W 3:50 pm – 6:00 pm, TTH 9:00 am – 9:30 am

Core Competencies
This class focuses on three of Cabrillo’s four core competencies:
I. Communication
II. Critical Thinking & Information Competency
III. (Not Applicable)
IV. Personal Responsibility and Professional Development

Student Learning Outcomes
Critically analyze arguments from a variety of sources utilizing the critical thinking techniques presented in this course.

Course Objectives
1. Recognize the premise(s) and conclusion of an argument and whether or not the premise(s) provide grounds for the conclusion.
2. Distinguish between deductive and inductive arguments.
3. Distinguish between validity and invalidity. Recognize when a deductive argument is valid and when invalid.
4. Recognize the problem with a fallacious argument (whether formal or informal) and cite the particular fallacy committed in those cases in which the fallacy committed is one we have covered in class.
5. Present critical analyses of major philosophical problems via written work. This consists of the explication of concepts and issues we have covered in the texts and lectures and the application of these concepts and issues to philosophical problems as dramatized in the particular films we will view.

Reading, Homework and Responsibilities
The readings will be available online. I will provide the links for you on Blackboard.
If you miss class it will be your responsibility to find out what we covered in lecture. Any PowerPoint lectures I do in class, I will post on Blackboard. Understand that by looking at these lectures, it still may not be altogether clear to you what we did in class. Therefore it will be your responsibility to discuss with another student what it is we covered and ask that student for her or his lecture notes. Then if you have questions with regard to these notes, you should come to my office hours. The point of this discussion here is that if you miss class, it is your responsibility to do some work here. You should always read the material we will discuss that day before having come to class and be prepared to discuss it.
Class Requirements
Midterm worth 20%
Final worth 20%
Pop quizzes worth 20%
Roundtable Essays/Presentations worth 20%
Timed Writing Assignments worth 20%
(Short Argumentative Essays)

Midterm & Final
Each exam will consist of multiple-choice questions. The questions will concern the material we cover in lecture. (This will include the text, the films and the listening assignments as well). I will give you a list of the material you should study and know before the exam. On the day of the exam, you will need to bring an aperson (the light blue scantron) and a #2 pencil. NO NOTES, NO BOOK.

ANY STUDENT MORE THAN 15 MINUTES LATE FOR AN EXAM WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO TAKE THE EXAM.

Pop Quizzes (two lowest will be dropped)
These will consist of five questions at the most. The questions will concern the material we’ve been covering in lecture. The answers will be brief (at most one sentence), e.g. What is the problem that results from Descartes’ account of the mind? Answer: the mind/body problem. No book, no notes. You will have no advance warning as to when these quizzes will occur. And I am not indicating to you how many there will be. If you are absent or late and miss the quiz, you will receive a zero for that one. NO MAKE-UPS.

Four Roundtable Essays/Presentations
These will involve you coming up with your own examples, which help to clarify a philosophical issue or problem we have been covering in class. I will specify a deadline for you to inform me of your example. This is to your advantage. I want to be certain that your example works. You may inform me of your example in class or via email. Once you have the approval from me, you can begin working on your essay. You will submit the essay via blackboard before we have the roundtable discussion in class. You must submit it by the deadline as set out by me on blackboard and in class. NO LATE SUBMISSIONS ACCEPTED, NOT FOR ANY REASON. You must be present for the roundtable discussion in order to receive full credit. If you are not present, you will receive a zero for the assignment. In other words, it won’t matter that you wrote the essay, it will be as though you never did. Attendance at the discussions is MANDATORY. Every student will be required to present at least once during the term. Each essay must be a minimum of 500 words, maximum 600.

Roundtable Essays: 500 words minimum, 600 words maximum. You must be present of the discussion and prepared to discuss your example when called upon otherwise your score will be 0, even if you’ve turned in an essay. At the end of the term, you should have completed a minimum of 2,000 words for this component. See the particulars below as to the word count.

20: 2,000 – 2,400 words total for all four (with no essay less than 500 words) and receiving the asterisk on all four essays
18: 2,000 – 2,400 words total for all four (with no essay less than 500 words) and receiving the asterisk on three essays
16: 1800 – 1999 words total for all four (with no essay less than 450 words, otherwise drop one level)
14: 1600 – 1799 words total for all four (with no essay less than 400 words, otherwise drop one level)
12: 1400 – 1599 words total for all four (with no essay less than 350 words, otherwise drop one level)
10: any total less than 1400 words for all four

If a student does not satisfy the requirements for the 18 or 20 category, but receives an asterisk on two or more arguments, the asterisks will be taken into account when final grading is done at the end of term and could warrant bumping the student’s final grade up. An asterisk indicates exceptional reasoning and writing. See a description below for what counts as exceptional reasoning and writing.

4 Timed Argumentative Essays Exams
You will not come to class when these are scheduled. You will be at a computer of your choosing (either on campus or off campus) and log on to blackboard where you will find the assignment, which I will post by the beginning of class time. This will be a timed writing assignment and you must turn it in during the allotted time as specified on blackboard and me in class. You will have all of class time and an additional 10 minutes after to complete and submit your argument, (i.e. 1 hour and 30 minutes). If you do not turn it in by then via blackboard, you will have failed the assignment. NO LATE SUBMISSIONS ACCEPTED, NOT FOR ANY REASON. I will provide you with 2 – 4 possible essay assignments ahead of time, from which I will choose the actual one you will be given. I will do this the lecture prior to the exam (e.g. if the exam is scheduled on March 3rd, you will get the possibilities during class on March 1st). I will only provide these during that class. They will not be posted on blackboard. So if you miss class, it will be your responsibility to get them from another student. YOU WILL NOT GET THEM FROM ME IF YOU HAVE NOT ATTENDED THAT CLASS. DO NOT EMAIL ME to ask me what they are, you will not hear back from me. During the class in which I provide them, we will spend time discussing them. You should begin at that point thinking and figuring out the ways in which you would complete each. We will go through how you will submit your answer via blackboard in class.

Arguments: 300 words min., 500 words max. See the particulars as to scoring below.
20: 2,000 words total for all four (with no writing assignment less than 300 words) and receiving the asterisk on all four arguments
18: 2,000 words total for all four (with no writing assignment less than 300 words) and receiving the asterisk on three arguments
16: 1800 – 1999 words total for all four (with no writing assignment less than 300 words)
14: 1600 – 1799 words total for all four (with no writing assignment less than 300 words)
12: 1400 – 1599 words total for all four (with no writing assignment less than 300 words)
10: any total less than 1400 words

If any assignment is less than 300 words, you will drop down one level, e.g. if you have 2,000 words total but your first writing assignment is 250 words, your score will drop to 16.

If a student does not satisfy the requirements for the 18 or 20 category, but receives an asterisk on two or more arguments, the asterisks will be taken into account when final grading is done at the end of term and could warrant bumping the student’s final grade up. An asterisk indicates exceptional reasoning and writing. See a description below for what counts as exceptional reasoning and writing.

Excellent Reasoning and Writing (the asterisk)
Those submissions that meet this standard will receive an asterisk. Any submission with an asterisk will be weighted more when calculating the final grades. So it is possible that such submissions will raise your final grade. Whether or not that happens will depend on where you fall on the grading scale and the rest of your performance in the course. If you receive an asterisk on all four submissions you have a guarantee that whatever your final grade calculates to at the end of the term once all the work for the course is in, it will be bumped up one letter grade (e.g. if you have a C, once all the work for the course has been calculated, that C will be raised to a B)

Excellent essays will consist of the following:
They will tackle the assignment given and not stray from that assignment.
They will meet the word minimum and not go over the maximum.
The argument presented will be clear and coherent. You should be clear on what your conclusion is and the premises, which should provide support for your conclusion. The entire essay should be relevant to the argument you are presenting.
The essay will exhibit logical structure and flow. The writer will make logical connections between his or her sentences and develop his or her reasoning (an essay ought never to read like a grocery list).
The essay will have been adequately proofed, making no (or minimal) errors in grammar and punctuation.
The essay will exhibit a sophisticated understanding of the material (philosophical concepts and problems) we’ve covered in class as well employ a sophisticated use of vocabulary.

Make-ups
Makeup exams for the midterm will only be offered in extraordinary circumstances (and I MEAN, EXTRAORDINARY). There will be no makeup final exam, no makeup quizzes, no makeup roundtable essays, and no makeup timed argumentative essays.

Listening Assignments
I might have you listen to specific programs on Philosophy Talk, which I assign to you. We may listen to them in class. If we don’t and I’ve assigned one, you must listen to these outside of class. I will post specifics about the assignments on blackboard as well as discuss them in class. When and if I assign one, you should come to class prepared to discuss it. The exams and the writing assignments may include questions concerning these assignments.

Discussion: You are not graded on participation in the class. But participation has proved to be a good indicator of success in the course as it helps in comprehension as well as the student’s acquiring the skills necessary to good critical reasoning. I take participation into consideration at the end of the term. It can make a difference for a student whose performance places them on the border between two grades.

Extra Credit: There is none. Just do the work assigned to you.

Movies
We will watch, discuss and evaluate some movies relevant to the issues we are discussing. The viewing of the movie while perhaps not as rigorous as the reading of the philosophical texts does require focus on your part. The movies will dramatize particular questions, concerns and problems, which we have been reading about in the texts and discussing in lecture. Our aim then will be to identify the philosophical import of the film and to analyze it in light of the texts and lectures. In the event that I assign a particular film and we are unable to watch all or any of it during class time, the student will be required to watch the film outside of class and come to
class prepared to discuss it. If any student feels (for whatever reason) that they cannot watch any of the films, they should drop the course. If a film is assigned, it is your responsibility and obligation as a student of this course to watch it. If you cannot meet this obligation, you should not be in this class. What follows is a list of the films.

Alfred Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest*
Bob Fosse’s *Cabaret*
Harold Ramis’ *Groundhog Day*

**Academic Integrity**
Students are responsible for doing their own work. Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Any work deemed not to be the student’s own will result in the following: (1) a failing grade (F) for the course, (2) dismissal from the course and (3) a frank discussion with me about the matter. There is a fourth possible consequence and that is that I will submit a report at which point disciplinary action will be taken. But I suspect #3 will be the most painful of the consequences of committing plagiarism. If I were you, I wouldn’t risk it. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, consult the Writing Center here at Cabrillo. They have general guidelines as to plagiarism and how to avoid it on their website. ([www.cabrillo.edu/services/writingcenter/Plagiarism.html](http://www.cabrillo.edu/services/writingcenter/Plagiarism.html))
If you have any further questions or concerns come see me.

**Writing Center**
Speaking of the Writing Center, they are a great resource for students. They are located at Room 1060W of the Learning Resources Center on the third level, behind the library. I will refer students who I believe could benefit from the tutoring they provide. Don’t hesitate to come talk to me about this if you feel you might benefit from such help.

**Attendance:** The course is structured in such a way that requires regular attendance. Attendance alone will not assure you of a high grade or even a passing grade but missing frequently will almost assuredly lead to a poor one. Every student is expected to attend regularly.

**Discussion:** You are not graded on participation in the class. But participation has proved to be a good indicator of success in the course as it helps in comprehension as well as the student’s acquiring the skills necessary to good critical reasoning. I take participation into consideration at the end of the term. It can make a difference for a student whose performance places them on the border between two grades. In such a case, when a student has made a decided effort and a real contribution to the class I will bump the student up to the higher grade.

**Grading:**
I calculate the grades using percentages. Once everything has been calculated, the basic scale applies.
- A: 90 – 100
- B: 80 – 89
- C: 70 – 79
- D: 60 – 69
- F: below 60

**Note:** Attendance will be taken the first two weeks of the term. The Professor (that’s me) has the right to drop any student who fails to attend class within these first two weeks. This is a right that the Professor will enforce, if there are students present who are not enrolled and want a spot in the class.
Classroom Decorum Guidelines

We all must agree in advance to a code of behavior in the classroom that will promote an equal opportunity to learn for all students. Remember, we are only in class three hours per week. So let’s use our time wisely and agree to the following.

Cell Phones and Beepers and Pagers: Shut them off before you enter class. I’ll have to shut mine off too (and if I don’t, you have permission to call me on it, just don’t use your cell phone to do it).

Class Participation: During most classes you will have an opportunity to ask questions and respond to questions. I will call on you if you raise your hand. Just respect the time constraints of the class and that you are one of a number of students. Give other students equal opportunity and remember that sometimes dialogue may have to be cut short in order to get through the material.

Arriving Late: If you arrive late, just take your seat in as quiet a manner as possible and no need for excuses (unless they are particularly interesting ones that involve Marat Safin, Wynton Marsalis or Daniel Craig). That being said, you should not make a habit of this. If you are considerably late consistently, I will consider dropping you from the course.

Sleeping: If you didn’t get a good night sleep, bring a double shot of espresso with you. In fact, if you did get a good night sleep, bring a double shot of espresso. In other words, try your best not to (i.e. slumber). Think of it this way, if you’re going to be sleeping wouldn’t you rather be doing so in the comfort of your own bed, with the lights dimmed and listening to some nice comforting music like Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin or the Doors? Rather than in an uncomfortable chair with harsh florescent lighting and my voice interrupting your dreams with talk of red herring? Of course if you absolutely must, be warned. Stay at the back of the room, no sleepwalking, no talking in your sleep unless it’s of philosophic import and by all means, snore quietly.

Food: I’ve got no problem with it so long as what you bring doesn’t pose a disruption to other students. Bringing a little something to eat and/or drink with you to class is fine with me so long as you take your trash with you and dispose of it in the trashcan, don’t make a mess at your desk and above all don’t talk with food in your mouth.

Note: The Professor (that’s me) reserves the right to modify this syllabus as events warrant.