

PHL 201 A0: Critical Thinking

CRM# 22398

HSDA240 MTh 10:00-11:20

Instructor: Dr. Thomas Land

Office: CLE B 331

Office Hours Wed 3:00-4:00 and by appt.

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Course Description

When we think critically, we don't accept things simply on faith. Instead, we care about whether we have good reasons for what we think and do. Having good reasons increases the probability that our beliefs are true and our actions successful. This gives us greater control over our lives and improves the chances of accomplishing our goals. This course aims to develop critical thinking skills by introducing students to a set of principles for assessing when we do have good reasons and when we don't. In studying these principles, we will use the media (including social media) as a case study running throughout the entire course. But the principles themselves apply much more widely – for instance, to academic reading and writing, business, politics, social interactions. Therefore, the course is not focused on a particular academic discipline. Instead, it develops key analytic skills that will serve students well in a wide variety of both academic and non-academic contexts. Topics to be covered include argument, deductive and inductive reasoning, common mistakes in reasoning, experts and scientific reasoning. All of these topics will be treated informally and non-technically, with a focus on ordinary language and familiar situations. In particular, we will not use any mathematical or formal logical techniques.

Learning Outcomes

By successfully completing this course you can expect to improve your skills in

- x assessing the credibility of claims and deciding which sources of information to trust
- x constructing arguments to support your own claims
- x communicating effectively
- x reading academic texts and writing academic papers

To achieve these outcomes you will learn

- x define and apply concepts such as 'argument', 'validity', and 'genetic fallacy'
- x decide when to trust the opinion of others, including experts and media sources
- x assess the validity of arguments
- x identify mistakes in reasoning
- x identify cognitive biases and develop strategies for guarding against them
- x appreciate how scientific reasoning works

Course Website

This course has an associated website via D2L Brightspace tool. This will be used for assignments, communication, and to make available additional materials. To access your customized D2L Brightspace page, sign in to UVic and click on Online Tools. You should see D2L Brightspace as an option.

Textbook

The required textbook is Lewis Vaughn, *Applying Critical Thinking to Modern Media*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2021, available at the UVic Bookstore

You are strongly encouraged to make use of the online Student Resources book, which can be found [here](#). They include media activities, self-quizzes, and flashcards.

Additional readings will be made available on the course website.

Course Format

This course is designed to be taught as a person lecture course with regular class activities, both individual and group-based. Attendance is required. Lectures will not be streamed or recorded. If you miss class, ask your Study Group (see below) if you can borrow their lecture notes.

However, the pandemic situation may require us to move to online teaching. This will be the case for the first two weeks of the semester. It is expected that we will then go back to in-person learning for the rest of the term, but we cannot be sure that this will work as planned. When we are in remote learning mode, the course will be a synchronous online course. You are required to attend Zoom lectures and should not expect recordings to be made available.

Zoom Link

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Requirements

Assignment	Due Date	% of final grade
6 Homework Quizzes	Sundays at 11:00pm	3% each
2 Tests (online)	Feb 10 and Mar 17	16% each
2 Group Projects	Mar 6 and Apr 3 at 11:00pm	10% each
Final Exam	TBD	30%

In this assignment you will apply the skills you have acquired in this course to actual news media content The final exam will thus

Lectures and Lecture Notes

Lectures will present and explain the course material. Students are expected to attend lectures after doing the assigned readings. Most lectures use slides that will be made available after the lecture. It is crucial to your success in this course that you take notes on the lectures. Do not rely on the lecture slides alone. Research shows that taking good notes helps your learning. By taking your own notes (and this does not mean copying the lecture word for word) you process the material more thoroughly than you otherwise would and make later reviewing easier for yourself. A good way (but by no means the only good way) of taking notes is to annotate the lecture slides.

Intellectual property of materials on *D2L Brightspace*

Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website (including lecture recordings if applicable) are the intellectual property of myself and the

course website. You are encouraged to use this feature to discuss questions about course mechanics as well as course content.

Online Student Conduct

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting critical academic discourse while providing a respectful and supportive learning environment. All members of the university community have the right to this experience and the responsibility to help create such an environment. The university will not tolerate racism, sexualized violence, or any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment.

Please be advised that by logging into Uvic's learning systems and interacting with online resources you are engaging in a university activity. All interactions within this environment are subject to university expectations and policies. Any concerns about student conduct may be reviewed and responded to in accordance with the appropriate university policy.

To report concerns about online student conduct, email onlineconduct@uvic.ca

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is intellectual honesty and responsibility for academic work that you submit individually or as a member of a group. It involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust and responsibility. It is expected that students will respect these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Therefore, plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity are serious academic offences.

The responsibility of the institution: Instructors and academic units have the responsibility to ensure that standards of academic honesty are met. By doing so, the institution recognizes students for their hard work and assures them that other students do not have an unfair advantage through cheating on essays, exams or projects.

The responsibility of the student: Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding regarding the rules of academic integrity, but it is the responsibility of the student to know them. If you are unsure about the standards for citations or for referencing your sources, ask your instructor. Depending on the severity of the case, penalties include, but are not limited to, a failing grade, a record on the student's transcript, or a suspension. It is your responsibility to understand the university's policy on academic integrity, which can be found in the undergraduate calendar.

Please see [UVic's \(revised\) academic integrity policy](#) for further details.

Significant Dates (<https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/dates/>)

- x Sun, Jan 23: last day for 100% reduction of fees
- x Wed, Jan 26: last day to for adding first term courses
- x Sun, Feb 13: last day for 50% reduction of tuition fees. 100% of tuition fees will be assessed for courses dropped after this date.
- x Mon, Feb 28: last day for withdrawing from second term courses without penalty of failure

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you need an academic accommodation, you will need to register with the Centre for Accessible Learning

<https://www.uvic.ca/services/qa> Please do so as early as possible. Please feel free to go directly to the Centre for Accessible Learning or to approach

Grading Scheme

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definition
90-100	A+	9	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of