

**Philosophy 129: Critical Thinking**  
Winter 2003, Section L08

Time: MWF 10:30 AM – 11:20 AM  
Location: 322 St. Paul's College  
Instructor: Ben Caplan  
Office: 468 University College  
Office hours: M 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM (priority for 15.129 students)  
W 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM (priority for 15.452 students)  
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## I. Description

A fuller, more accurate title for this course would be *Critical Reasoning, Reading, and Writing*. The first part of the course is on *reasoning*: we will study the theory of arguments. The second part of the course is on *reading*: we will learn how to get arguments out of texts and evaluate them. The third part of the course is on *writing*: we will learn how to write more clearly and correctly.

## II. Readings

### *Required*

1. Anne Thomson, *Critical Reasoning: A Practical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001).
2. Joseph M. Williams, *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*, Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

### *Optional*

3. Robert M. Martin, *There Are Two Errors in the the Title of this Book: A Sourcebook of Philosophical Puzzles, Problems, and Paradoxes*, revised and expanded ed. (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2002).

Other required readings, including handouts, will be posted on the course webpage. (They won't be distributed in class, so you'll have to get them from the webpage.) Many of these will be posted as PDF files. To open PDF files, you will need a PDF reader. (Many PDF readers are available for free. For example, Adobe Acrobat Reader can be downloaded from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.) You may find it easier to open PDF files using a network connection rather than a dial-up one; as a result, you may want to work in a computer lab on campus.

No single text covers the topics that I want to cover in the way that I want to cover them. So we will use multiple texts. You should buy the books as soon as possible (otherwise, you

may find that the bookstore does not have them when you need them), but we won't be using them until later in the semester. We will use handouts for the first part of the course (on reasoning), the Thomson text for the second part of the course (on reading), and the Williams text for the third part of the course (on writing).

### III. Requirements

<i>Work</i>	<i>Due date</i>	<i>Value</i>
Midterm	3 February*	25%
Group project	10 March*	25%
Draft	17 March*	0%
Quiz	9 April	15%
Final assignment	14 April	25%
Weekly questions	Every Monday**	10%

\* These dates are tentative and hence subject to change. If the dates change, you will be given at least one week's notice.

\*\* Excluding 6 January, of course.

**Midterm:** The midterm, which will be given in class, will cover the material from the first part of the course, on the theory of arguments.

**Group project:** You will work in groups of 2, 3, or 4. (You won't be assigned to groups; rather, you will be responsible for forming your own groups.) You will be asked to schematize the argument from an editorial and evaluate it. (If you don't know what schematizing an argument is, don't worry; we'll cover that.)

**Quiz:** The quiz, which will be given in class, will cover the material from the third part of the course, on how to write clearly and correctly.

**Draft and final assignment:** Your final assignment is to write a letter to the editor. I am not expecting you to write a lot, but I am expecting you to write *well*. (I will say more about what I expect. In the meantime, the following comment will give you an idea of how serious I am: I expect you to work on the letter to the editor for more than a month.) The final assignment is worth 25% of your final grade. In addition, you will be required to write a draft of your letter to the editor. The draft is worth 0% of your final grade. (No, that is not a typo.) But you will need to hand it in to pass the course.

**Weekly questions:** Each Friday (starting 10 January), I will post questions on the website. Answers will be due at the beginning of class on the following Monday. I will post 12 sets of questions; answer no more than 10 of them. I won't accept any late answers (in part since I will post the answers on Mondays). There are 12 sets of questions, and you can't hand in more than 10 sets of answers; so, if you miss a week, simply do another one later.

**To pass the course, you must take the midterm, do the group project, take the quiz, and do the draft and the final assignment.** You don't need to do the weekly questions to

pass the course. If you don't want to do them, that's your business. But you do need to do the other things. In particular, **you must do the draft to pass the course** (even though the draft is worth 0%). Let me make it plain: if you don't do the draft, you'll get an F for the course. It's as simple as that.

In this course, percentages will be converted into letter grades (and vice versa) according to the following scheme.

A+	95-100
A	85-94
B+	80-84
B	70-79
C+	65-69
C	55-64
D	45-54
F	0-44

### Late policy

Basically, you can't hand in anything late. So I don't really need a policy. You must take the midterm and the quiz when they are given; and you can't hand in answers to the weekly questions late. You can, however, hand in the other things (that is, the group project, the draft, and the final assignment) up to 48 hours late (or before the beginning of the next class, if there is one). **But you can't hand them in any later than that.** After that, I just won't accept them; and you need to hand them in to pass the course. Late group projects and final assignments will be penalized  $\frac{1}{2}$  a letter grade per day; and every day your draft is late will cost you 5% of your final grade.

For example, if you hand in the group project or the final assignment late but less than 24 hours late and it would have gotten a B, it will get a C+. If you hand it in between 24 and 48 hours late and it would have gotten a B, it will get a C. **If you hand in the group project or the final assignment more than 48 hours late, you won't pass the course.** If you hand in the draft late but less than 24 hours late and you would have gotten 72% for the course (i.e. a B), you will get 67% (i.e. a C). If you hand it in between 24 and 48 hours late and you would have gotten 72% for the course (i.e. a B), you will get 62% (i.e. a C). **If you hand in the draft more than 48 hours late, you won't pass the course.** (I apologize for the bold warnings, but in the past I was surprised by the number of people who said, "Oh, yeah, I didn't do the draft"—and still expected to pass the course.)

Exceptions can be made in the case of documented medical, psychological, or other exceptionally dire emergencies.

### IV. A Warning about Academic Dishonesty

It is difficult to overstate the importance of academic honesty. Penalties for academic dishonesty range from getting an F on the assignment to getting an F for the course, being suspended, or being expelled. If you are unsure about what counts as academic dishonesty

(e.g. plagiarism), ask. You are responsible for knowing the University of Manitoba regulations. Start by consulting the General Academic Regulations and Requirements, particularly Section 7 (Academic Integrity). See Section 7.1 (Plagiarism and Cheating):

<http://webapps.cc.umanitoba.ca/calendar03/regulations/plagiarism.asp>

and Section 4.2.8. (Examinations: Personations):

[http://webapps.cc.umanitoba.ca/calendar03/regulations/exams/exams\\_personations.asp](http://webapps.cc.umanitoba.ca/calendar03/regulations/exams/exams_personations.asp).