

The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
Department of Philosophy  
**UGED 1810**  
**Critical Thinking**

**Lecture:** W 10:30-12:15 PM  
**Room:** NAH 12  
**Office Hours:** Wednesday 1-3PM

**Course overview**

This course is an introduction to elementary logic. The main objective of this course is to develop students' ability to analyse and critically evaluate arguments from a logical point of view. Students will learn the logical principles of deductive and inductive inferences and the techniques of applying them for determining the validity of arguments.

Logic is the science of thinking. To be more precise, Logic is the study of how we ought to think. We cannot begin to investigate how we ought to think unless we think that our own thinking is in need of revision. In order to learn how we ought to think, we need to develop the proper attitude towards our own thinking. In general, we must abandon our own pretension that our thinking needs no revision, and take up the attitude of wonder. To learn to wonder at our own thinking may be especially difficult, since we have been thinking all our lives, and this gives us the impression that we are already experts in thinking. Wonder will provide us the space to investigate what a thought is. For if we do not know what a thought is, we shall not know how we ought to use it. Indeed, we shall be apt to use it poorly.

In order to cultivate and mature our wonder, the theme of the course will be the relationship between Logic and paradoxes. Learning to think well requires that we learn to grapple with problems. By thinking through traditional paradoxes in thinking, we will not only practice grappling with problems, but we will also have the opportunity to deepen our capacity to wonder.

Logic is a discipline which essentially belongs to philosophy. Most disciplines begin with a certain way of thinking by which they approach their subject matter. In assuming a way of thinking, they do not investigate thinking on its own merits. Philosophy investigates what the other sciences assume, in this case thinking, but may not make explicit within their own corpus. Since logic is a part of philosophy, a canon, we shall investigate logic in the context of the philosophical life, and not separate from it. As shall become apparent in the development of the course, logic is not only an object of philosophical discussion, but logic is a study in philosophical method. An Introduction to Logic, therefore, is an introduction into philosophical method. The best way to learn philosophy is by practice. The objective of this course is to provide an environment in which you can develop your capacity to engage in different kinds of philosophical dialogue and argumentation through practice. Learning how to think properly concerns learning how to argue well. Although I am here to facilitate your learning, I cannot apply those principles for you. For this reason, you will not succeed in Introduction to Logic without practice in applying the principles. Through practicing these skills, you will not only become a better logician, but a better philosopher as well.

In general, I suggest multiple readings. As you read, the most important thing that you can do to improve your understanding of the text is to seek out the arguments the author is making for the position that he/she takes, and developing objections to the arguments presented. Thereafter you should return to the text and ask yourself how the author might respond to your objections. Learning to read actively will be the key to writing successful papers and exams.

In sum, this course concerns learning how to read critically, just as much as it concerns learning how to think well. I can neither force you to think rationally, nor can I force you to consider alternative ways of thinking that may change your life. Only you can do that. Learning is thereby an independent

activity, which I am here to facilitate. Let the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant provide us with the motto of the course from his essay on Enlightenment: 'Have the courage to use your own understanding!'. This process is not easy, but can be very rewarding. As a consequence, you might even find that the knowledge you acquire in this course could even transform you.

### **Learning outcomes**

1. Acquire analytic skills and a critical disposition.
2. Grasp the central concepts in classical logic.
3. Recognize common valid argument forms.
4. Identify, classify, and assess arguments in various contexts.
5. Identify and analyze informal fallacies.
6. Grasp historical shifts in the conception of logic
7. Develop the capacity to reconstruct arguments from philosophical texts, critique arguments, and develop one's own philosophical arguments.

### **Topics**

1. Logic and Method of Philosophy
2. Basic Concepts
3. Informal Fallacies
4. Categorical Syllogisms
5. Paradoxes
6. History of Logic

### **Learning activities and workload**

In-class:

1. Attend lectures and participate in class discussions. Each lecture is approximately 2 hours.

Out-of-class:

1. Reading: 2 hours each week on lecture material. Read each reading assignment before lecture.
2. Writing: Regarding writing, begin your argument critiques at least two weeks before they are due in order to give yourself time to edit, re-write, and integrate feedback from the TA and the Professor.
3. The Mid Term exam will be conducted on Blackboard.
4. Group projects will require you to meet with other students outside of scheduled class times.

## Assessment scheme

<b>Task Nature</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Argument Critique	25% (100 pts)
Two exams: Mid-term and Final	50% (25% each) (100 pts each)
Class participation	5% (20 pts)
Socratic Encounter	20% (80 Points)

### **Grade Scale:**

A: 87-100

A-: 80-86

B+: 77-79

B: 71-77

B-: 68-70

C+: 65-67%

C: 59-64%

C-: 56-58%

D+: 53-55%

D: 50-52%

F: < 5

### **Grade Criterion for Argument Critique:**

A:

The student knows the authors positions, and proves this knowledge by knowing the argument(s) supporting the theses in the text. Student evidences self-initiated thinking and understanding of the arguments through his/her ability to present her own counter-arguments and possible replies to counter-arguments. The student exhibits thorough understanding of the relations of the themes presented in the various texts.

B:

The student knows the authors positions, and generally understands the arguments supporting them. Student has difficulty developing her own criticisms and rebuttals to criticism. The student exhibits relatively complete understanding of the relations of the themes presented in the various texts.

C:

The student shows the ability to properly relay information about the text and the positions contained therein, but has difficulty re-constructing the arguments, presenting counter-arguments, and criticism. Student has a difficulty understanding arguments. The student shows an incomplete understanding of the relations of the themes presented in the various texts.

D:

The student cannot explicate the positions or the arguments for such positions in the text. The student exhibits seriously incomplete understanding.

F:

The student exhibits all the failures mentioned under 'D'. The student earns an F by failing to complete the assignment.

**Remarks:**

**Class Participation:**

- Attendance is mandatory and *absence will damage your grades*. Two unexcused absences are permitted. For each unexcused absence beyond two, one-half a letter grade will be deducted from your final grade. In case of emergencies, either notify me of your absence ahead of time, or plan to bring some formal documentation of your absence. Without documentation, I will not accept absences as excused.
- Grading is based on participation in discussion as well as active participation in completion of the Media Project.

**Argument Critiques:**

The Argument Critiques consist of three parts. In respect to the papers, I shall provide you with passages from the texts which we are reading, and I will ask you to choose one passage to work on. You will formulate the argument contained in that passage, and formulate a critique of that passage. The last stage consists in formulating a reply to the criticism that you raise. I encourage you to utilize the texts that we are reading in formulating the criticisms; you are encouraged to employ the philosophers against each other. Argument Critiques should be 3-6 double spaced pages in length.

**Exams:**

The Exams contain three sections. The first section will require you to reconstruct an argument from a philosophical text by putting it into standard form. The second section will require you to evaluate the validity of arguments via Venn diagrams, identify fallacies and other short answer questions. The third section will consist of one long-essay question.

**Socratic Encounters:**

Socratic Encounters require you to engage other persons inside of class in a Socratic conversation. The assignment teaches the student how to ask questions, and to construct arguments by asking questions. These conversations shall be highly regulated, and the rules pertaining to which shall be given in handouts.

**The Media Project:**

The Media Project consists of two parts. First, you will be required to find a sample of a speech, dialogue, article, or the like from the media, e.g. newspapers, online video feeds, websites, news channels and explicate the speaker's argument. Second, you will analyse the speech for logical fallacies, either formal or informal. You will present your results to the class. The media project will be calculated as part of your participation grade.

**Late Work/Make-Ups:**

Late assignments will be penalized one-half a letter grade for each day the paper is tardy. If you would like a grade changed, you must provide me with a detailed written argument for why you think it should be changed, otherwise I will not consider it.

**Required and Recommended Texts**

**Required Texts:**

I. Author: Plato  
Title: *Apology*

[Available Online: <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html>]

II. Author: T. Edward Damer

Title: *Attacking Faulty Reasoning: A Practical Guide to Fallacy Free Arguments* 7th Edition

**Recommended Resources:**

III. Author: R. M. Sainsbury

Title: *Paradoxes*

## Feedback for evaluation

As with all courses in Philosophy Department, students evaluate the course through a survey and written comments at the end of the term as well as via regular feedback between teacher, tutors, and students.

## Course schedule

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
1	Introductory Lecture; Plato, <i>Apology</i>	
2	<i>Attacking Faulty Reasoning</i> Ch. 1-3	
3	<i>Attacking Faulty Reasoning</i> Ch. 4-5	
4	<i>Attacking Faulty Reasoning</i> Ch. 5-6	
5	<i>Attacking Faulty Reasoning</i> Ch. 7	
6	<b>On Definitions; Applications I</b>	<b>Mid Term Exam</b> (Online)
7	<i>Attacking Faulty Reasoning</i> Ch. 8	
8	<i>Attacking Faulty Reasoning</i> Ch. 9	
9	<b>Media Presentations</b>	<b>Argument Critique Due</b>
10	<b>Class Debate; Applications II</b>	
11	Paradoxes I-II	Socratic Encounter Practice
12	Paradoxes III	<b>Socratic Encounter Due</b>
13	Final Exam Review	

## Contact details

<b>Instructor</b>	
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## Details of course website

We will use Blackboard for this course. Lecture notes and information on assignments and examinations will be posted on the website.

## Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed **declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.