

**Philosophy 129: Critical Thinking**  
Winter 2004, Section L11

Time: T Th 11:30 AM – 12:50 PM  
Location: 118 St. John's College  
Instructor: Ben Caplan  
Office: 468 University College  
Office hours: M 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM  
F 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM  
Or by appointment  
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Webpage: [http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~caplanbd/015\\_129](http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~caplanbd/015_129)

## 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

To pass the course, you will need to take three in-class quizzes (worth 20% each), do two take-home assignments (worth 20% each), and write a draft of the second assignment (worth 0%). (Yes, the draft is worth 0% of your final grade, but you still have to do it to pass the course.)

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

You must take the quizzes when they are given. You can, however, hand in the assignments and the draft 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 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.

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

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

and

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