

HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
Philosophy 1230A: Reasoning and Critical Thinking
2021-2022

Fall Term, 2021

Prerequisites: none

Tuesdays, 10:30-11:20, W116

Thursdays, 9:30-11:20, W116

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Office hours: By appointment only

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Through reasoning, and thinking more generally, we attempt to understand the past, anticipate the future, make rational decisions, and promote moral goods. But our thinking isn't flawless; it is subject to all kinds of *systematic errors*. Even worse, we don't often *recognize* when we're in error, or how we got there. Consequently, our errors often go uncorrected, and our views about such important topics as politics, ethics, economics, health, and happiness are distorted. The good news is that our views are *predictably* distorted, and therefore subject to *correction*. We can learn how to *recognize* and *mitigate* the sources of our mistakes. This is *critical thinking*. In this course, you will learn about some of the biases, illusions, and weaknesses that afflict *all* human minds. These shortcomings affect how we evaluate arguments, reconstruct events, predict the future, make decisions, and moralize. Our principal aim will be to generate strategies for effectively minimizing the impact of these phenomena on our thinking, and the thinking of others, so that we are able to reach more accurate conclusions about the things that matter to us most.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Formulate, explain, and defend strategies for identifying and correcting some of the systematic errors in their thinking.
2. Distinguish the contexts in which they are liable to make cognitive errors from those in which their thinking is more reliable.
3. Manifest the knowledge and ability to use group deliberation to improve their thinking, and the thinking of the groups they're in.

CLASS METHODS

We will meet **in person** on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, at the appointed time and classroom. We will practice **physical distancing** whenever possible, and all students will be required to be **properly masked** at all times. If you are feeling unwell, or experiencing any COVID related symptoms, please do not come to class. If I am feeling unwell or experiencing any COVID related symptoms, class will be cancelled, or taught by another instructor.

The lectures will be highly interactive, and include PowerPoint slides, discussions, questions, and in class assignments. Lecture notes will **not** be made available to students outside of lecture under **any** circumstances. If you miss a class, you should ask a trustworthy peer for their lecture notes.

You are welcome to use a laptop to take notes in lecture, though evidence suggests that students who do so tend to do worse than students who take notes with pen and paper. However, if you use your laptop for social or entertainment purposes, you will be asked to leave the classroom and receive a grade of 0 on any assignment you miss. When you use your laptop for social or entertainment purposes, you distract others, disrespect the class, and do yourself a disservice. It is unacceptable behavior and it will not be tolerated in this classroom.

Please do not take your phone out at any point during class. If you are caught looking at your phone during lecture, you will be asked to leave class and receive a grade of 0 on any assignment you miss. If there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate you checking your phone during class, please inform me **before** the beginning of class.

TEXT

There are no required readings for this course. A list of supplementary readings and videos is posted on OWL, under the 'Further Learning' tab. You are encouraged to engage these resources in an effort to deepen your understanding of the course material, and to get as much as possible out of the assignments.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

20% Participation questions (due in class)

Every lecture will include questions that you will be asked to answer **in class**. The purpose of these questions is to stimulate your interest and involvement in discussion, and to reveal some of the principles that govern the way you think. All questions must be completed in class, so it is important that you bring **a pen and paper** with you to every class. Answers submitted outside of class **will not be accepted**, and missed questions **cannot** be made up or accommodated for **any** reason.

50% Rules of critical thinking (5 submissions, each worth 10%, due one week after the conclusion of the relevant lecture)

You should come away from this course with a set of strategies for avoiding some of the systematic errors people commonly make when reasoning. To facilitate this end, you will be required to submit a set of critical thinking rules that accurately summarizes and expands on the material presented in **any five** of lectures #3-13. Each entry in this list must include: a rule that's meant to help you and others think critically, an explanation of the rule, a rationale for the rule, and an example of how the rule is to be applied. These rules must be submitted **within one week of the conclusion of the relevant lecture**.

LATE PENALTY: the penalty for submitting these rules late is 5% per day, including weekends.

30% Critical thinking handbook (due December 9th)

In assigned groups of 3-4, you will be required to compile a list of 15 critical thinking rules that do the best job of summarizing the most important and beneficial lessons of the entire course. Each group member will also be responsible for submitting a description of how the group decided on

their rules, as well as the role that they themselves played in encouraging critical thinking within the group.

These handbooks **must** be submitted on December 9th. **Late handbooks will not be accepted.**

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Week	Topic
Lecture 1	Introduction
Lecture 2	How We Think
Lecture 3	Argumentation
Lecture 4	Confirmation Bias
Lecture 5	Probabilistic Reasoning
Lecture 6	Heuristics and Biases
Lecture 7	Statistical Reasoning
Lecture 8	Causal Reasoning
Lecture 9	Rationality and Decision Making
Lecture 10	Constraints, Incentives, and Nudges
Lecture 11	Collective Reasoning
Lecture 12	Expertise and Epistemic Authority
Lecture 13	Effective Altruism

***Please note:** this is a **provisional** schedule: one or more lectures may need to be deleted due to time constraints or external circumstances; no new topics will be introduced.



Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations 2021 - 2022

Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Pandemic Contingency

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, typically using a combination of synchronous instruction (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) and asynchronous material (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online at the discretion of the course instructor. In the unlikely event

that changes to the grading scheme are necessary, these changes will be clearly communicated as soon as possible.

Student Code of Conduct

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/attendance.pdf.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf. The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf.

Turnitin.com

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf are met.

Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds). The Student Medical Certificate is available online at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>.

Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence

- (a) **Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade:
Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising**

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, and if the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported absences, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the [Student Medical Certificate](#). The instructor may **not** collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

(b) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email huronsss@uwo.ca.

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported. All consideration requests must include a completed [Consideration Request Form](#). Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf. Consult [Huron Academic Advising](#) at huronsss@uwo.ca for any further questions or information.

Support Services

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron's Student Support Services at huronsss@uwo.ca. An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/>.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/> or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm>.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>
Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/>
Student Quick Reference Guide: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1>
Academic Support & Engagement: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>
Huron University College Student Council: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/>
Western USC: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices>

Mental Health & Wellness Support at Huron and Western

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. Please visit <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety> for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services: huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca
Community Safety Office: safety@huron.uwo.ca
Chaplaincy: gthorne@huron.uwo.ca

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.