

Logic, Reasoning, and Persuasion

Course Description

The aim of this course is to enlighten students about the basic concepts, principles, methods, and standards of good reasoning developed in Western philosophical inquiry over the last 2500 years. It is impossible to live well without the ability to reason well; so reasoning well is one of the most valuable skills that a human being can ever develop (even though so few human beings do). To reason well, one must care about one's reasoning. This means taking responsibility for one's reasoning—not just one's actions or decisions—by questioning and reflectively evaluating what one believes and why. Evaluation involves scrutiny of many different things, such as language (since confusions about the meanings of words may produce confusions about reasoning); the various forms that reasoning may take (such as debates, arguments, and theories); the standard patterns of erroneous reasoning (known as fallacies); and the destructive role of emotions, personal desires, bias, and social customs in the search for truth. We will investigate some of the ways in which good reasoning is constituted by reasoning that is logical, analytical, and critical.

Course Prerequisites

None

Required Text

Nancy Cavender and Howard Kahane, *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric*, 12th edition (Wadsworth, 2013)

Handouts will be posted on the Sakai site for this course

Course Requirements

The midterm and final exams are each worth 40% of the course grade; quizzes comprise the remaining 20%. **Students are expected to attend all classes; there will be a sign-in sheet at every class. If you miss a class, you are required to use the University absence reporting website at <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra> to indicate the date and reason for your absence.** (An e-mail is sent to me automatically, so you do *not* need to notify me.) **If you miss more than three classes during the semester without proper documentation, your course grade will be reduced.** Always bring the text to class. Do not repeatedly come late to class, leave early, or talk to each other during class. Turn all cell phones and beepers off. No text messaging is allowed. No web surfing is allowed. No solid food is allowed.

Office Hours

On Tuesdays and Fridays from 8:30-9 a.m. or by appointment on Tuesdays after 1:55 p.m., in the student center cafeteria on Douglass. You are encouraged to speak with me about this course in particular or any philosophical matter in general. My e-mail address is mcolby@rutgers.edu. Jean Urteil is the philosophy department's undergraduate secretary; her e-mail address is jurteil@philosophy.rutgers.edu and her phone number is 848-932-6800.

Date, Topic, and Reading Assignment

1/21	Overview of the course
1/24	Ch. 1, Arguments and Dialogues, §§1-3
1/28	§§4-6
1/31	§§7-10
2/4	Ch. 2, Concepts Useful for Understanding Arguments, §§1-3
2/7	§§4-6
2/11	§§7-9
2/14	Ch. 3, Argumentation Schemes, §§1-3
2/18	§§4-6
2/21	§§7-10
2/25	Ch. 4, Argument Diagramming, §§1-2
2/28	§§3-4
3/4	§§5-6
3/7	§§7-8
3/11	Midterm exam on chs. 1, 2, and 3
3/14	Ch. 5, Dialogues, §§1-3
3/25	§§4-6
3/28	§§7-8
4/1	Ch. 6, Detecting Bias, §§1-3
4/4	§§4-6
4/8	§§7-8
4/11	Ch. 7, Relevance, §§1-3
4/15	§§4-6
4/18	§§7-9
4/22	Ch. 8, Practical Reasoning in a Dialogical Framework, §§1-3
4/25	§§4-6
4/29	§§7-9
5/2	Final thoughts
5/14	Final exam on chs. 4-8, 8 a.m.-11 a.m.