

# Practical Reasoning

## Philosophy 105 - Fall 2020 Syllabus

### Basic course information

*Instructor:* Justin Mooney  
*Email:* jmooney@umass.edu  
*Office:* South College E410  
*Office hours:* By appointment

*Course dates:* Aug 24 – Dec 14, Fall 2020  
*Days:* Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays  
*Time:* 12:20pm - 1:10pm  
*Room:* fully remote course

### Course description and objectives

This class will be focused on developing the skills of identifying, constructing and evaluating arguments, especially informal arguments of the sort that are typical in everyday conversations, on social media platforms, and in the news media. Among other things, we will learn about different types of arguments, what it takes for an argument of each type to be successful, and what common errors in reasoning should be avoided. In short, this class will give you the tools you need to reason well. This course counts toward the R2 general education requirement (analytical reasoning).

### Assignments & Exams

The assignments in this class will include assigned reading, ten sets of homework exercises, a take-home midterm exam, and a take-home final exam.

*Readings* will be assigned weekly. Readings for each week should be completed before that week's first lecture is posted to Moodle on Monday.

*Homework exercises* will be usually be assigned at the end of class each Wednesday, and will be due by the beginning of class on Friday. I will go over the exercises in class on the day they are due. Your grade for each set of exercises will be based on whether it appears that you made a thoughtful and genuine attempt to complete each question or problem, and not necessarily on whether your answers are correct.

*The midterm exam* will be a take-home exam consisting of questions and exercises similar to those assigned as homework each week. I will provide more details as the exam approaches.

*The final exam* will be a cumulative take-home exam consisting of questions and exercises similar to those assigned as homework each week. I will provide more details as the exam approaches.

## Required text

Turetzky, Philip (2019). *The Elements of Arguments: An Introduction to Critical Thinking and Logic*. Peterborough, Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press.

Most readings will be from this book, which is required for this course. Other readings, if any, will be available through the course Moodle site.

## Grades

Your final grade in this class breaks down as follows. Each set of homework exercises will be worth 5% of your final grade; the midterm exam will be worth 25% of the final grade; and the final exam will be worth 25% of the final grade.

This class will use a standard grading scale:

A	93-100%	C	73-76%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	65-66%
B-	80-82	F	0-65%
C+	77-79%		

## Policies

*Attendance:* This course will be run both remotely and asynchronously. All lectures will be pre-recorded and posted to our class Moodle page. Students will be expected to watch all of the lectures in a timely manner, but students will *not* be required to be online at particular times for synchronous Zoom meetings.

*Extensions:* Suitable documentation (like a doctor's note) is required to get an extension on an assignment or (in extreme cases) to be excused from an assignment. Otherwise, assignments will be deducted by 1/3 letter grade for each day they are late (e.g. a B+ drops to a B if it is one day late; it drops to a B- if it is two days late; etc.).

*Academic Honesty:* As always, academic honesty is expected. The University policies regarding academic honesty will be followed in this class. For more information, see: <https://www.umass.edu/honesty/>

*Accessibility:* I intend this class to be accessible to all students. Students who need or would benefit from relevant accommodations should talk to me and also register with disability services. For more information, see: <https://www.umass.edu/disability/>

## **Class Schedule**

\*This schedule is subject to change.

### *Week 1*

**Reading:** Turetzky, pp. 19-27

Aug 24 – Intro

Aug 26 – Irrationality

Aug 28 – Arguments, premises, conclusions

### *Week 2*

**Reading:** Turetzky, pp. 27-49

Aug 31 – Validity and soundness

Sept 2 – Validity and soundness (Exercise 1 assigned)

Sept 4 – Validity and soundness (Exercise 1 due)

### *Week 3*

**Reading:** Turetzky, pp. 53-75

Sept 7 – Propositions

Sept 9 – Propositions (Exercise 2 assigned)

Sept 11 – Propositions (Exercise 2 due)

### *Week 4*

**Reading:** Turetzky, pp. 295-312

Sept 14 – Ordinary language arguments

Sept 16 – Ordinary language arguments (Exercise 3 assigned)

Sept 18 – Ordinary language arguments (Exercise 3 due)

*Week 5*

**Reading:** Turetzky, pp. 92-124

Sept 21 – Informal fallacies

Sept 23 – Informal fallacies (Exercise 4 assigned; pp. 125ff)

Sept 25 – Informal fallacies (Exercise 4 due)

*Week 6*

**Reading:** Turetzky, pp. 150-151, 174-6, 224-9, 272-273, 312-317, 330-331

Sept 28 – Informal fallacies

Sept 30 – Informal fallacies (Exercise 5 assigned)

Oct 2 – Informal fallacies (Exercise 5 due)

*Week 7*

**Reading:** none

Oct 5 – review (Q&A)

Oct 7 – midterm exam assigned (no lecture)

Oct 9 – midterm exam due (no lecture)

*Week 8*

**Reading:** Turetzky, pp. 131-142, 145-150, 152-160

Oct 12 – Truth functions

Oct 14 – Truth functions (Exercise 6 assigned)

Oct 16 – Truth functions (Exercise 6 due)

*Week 9*

**Reading:** Turetzky, pp. 242-258

Oct 19 – Testing validity

Oct 21 – Testing validity (Exercise 7 assigned)

Oct 23 – Testing validity (Exercise 7 due)

*Week 10*

**Reading:** none

Oct 26 – Translation & testing validity

Oct 28 – Translation & testing validity (Exercise 8 assigned)

Oct 30 – Translation & testing validity (Exercise 8 due)

*Week 11*

**Reading:** Turetzky, pp. 270-284

Nov 2 – Evaluating soundness

Nov 4 – Evaluating soundness (Exercise 9 assigned)

Nov 6 – Evaluating soundness (Exercise 9 due)

*Week 12*

**Reading:** none

Nov 9 – Bias

Nov 11 – Conspiracy theories (Exercise 10 assigned)

Nov 13 – Conspiracy theories (Exercise 10 due)

*Week 13*

**Reading:** none

Nov 16 – Review

Nov 18 – Review

Nov 20 – Q&A

*Final Exam*

Take-home Exam; due by 5 pm on December 4th