PHIL 004 Critical Thinking – Spring 2024 10:00

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# Introduction

## Course and Instructor

Our course is Philosophy 004, section 02, class code 35474. I am your instructor, Jeff Dale (he), adjunct professor of philosophy. I invite you to read my [statement on philosophy and pedagogy](http://jdphilosophy.com/Jeff%20Dale%20%28JD%29%20-%20Statement%20on%20Philosophy%20and%20Pedagogy.pdf) on my [website](http://www.jdphilosophy.com/).

## Communications

You can message me anytime via Canvas or at Jeff.Dale@csus.edu. I normally reply to email within one weekday; if you don’t receive a reply within that time, please don’t hesitate to contact me again.

You can visit me without an appointment at the scheduled times given below. To meet me outside of those times, please email to request an appointment.

## Resources

I care about your physical, mental, and financial well-being, which are important to your success as a college student. In case you need medical, counseling, or other wellness services, or you experience challenges with food, housing, or other basic needs, I have included links to resources on our Canvas home page.

## This Syllabus

Any student’s completion of any of the course’s assessments shall constitute an affirmation that the student has read, understood, and accepted this syllabus as our agreement for this course.

# Course Structure and Requirements

## Course Modality

This is an on-campus course. Students are expected to attend regularly scheduled class meetings while following campus safety protocols. In-class exams and other assessments are scheduled during these time slots. Limited exceptions to the schedule may be made if needed, at my sole discretion.

This course requires the use of Canvas, the college’s learning management system. [Support](https://www.csus.edu/information-resources-technology/canvas/canvas-for-students.html) is available.

If a class meeting cannot be held in person, it will be held via teleconference during the same scheduled time (synchronous) or replaced with a recorded lecture (asynchronous). In such a case, students will be expected to attend or view, requiring access to a device with the Zoom app and a reliable Internet connection. Use of camera and microphone during a teleconference is desirable but not required. Except as noted below, the course will be otherwise unchanged in such a case.

If a scheduled drop-in time cannot be held in person, it will be held via Zoom.

## Schedule

The term schedule for the class, including the timing of all reading assignments, in-class activities, and assessments, is in a separate schedule document in Canvas (Syllabus navigation link or Course module).

Regular class meetings are Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, January 22 through May 10 (except March 18, 20, and 22, and April 1), 10:00 to 10:50 am. Our on-campus classroom is Douglass Hall (DH) room 110. Our final exam session is in the same classroom, Tuesday, May 14, 8:00 to 10:00 am.

Drop-in times are each Wednesday class meeting day, 11:00 am to 12:30 pm. Our drop-in room is a shared adjunct faculty office, Mendocino Hall (MND) room 3032, but teleconference via Zoom is also available upon request.

## Textbook and Other Materials

Students are not required to buy or rent any textbook or other materials. All required readings are open educational resources (OER) or otherwise free online. Links are both in the term schedule and in the applicable module folders in Canvas.

# Academic Offering

## Catalog Information

“Study of the basic skills of good reasoning needed for the intelligent and responsible conduct of life. Topics include argument structure and identification, validity and strength of arguments, common fallacies of reasoning, use and abuse of language in reasoning, and principles of fair play in argumentation.” 3.0 units. No prerequisites.

## Level of Course

The performance standards of this course reflect the assumption that students have college-level reading and writing skills, such as would be represented by successful completion of ENGL 005 or the equivalent.

## General Education Requirements

This course meets the university’s [GE requirements for Area A‑3, Critical Thinking](https://www.csus.edu/undergraduate-studies/general-education/_internal/_documents/area-a3_critical-thinking.pdf).

## Learning Objectives

This course is designed to develop the following skills:

1. Recognition of an argument in a passage of ordinary text, including distinction of argument from extraneous information and identification of premises and conclusions.
2. Analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of particular arguments.
3. Identification and explanation of errors of reasoning.
4. Evaluation of believability and credibility and detection of deception.
5. Understanding of the nature of scientific reasoning.
6. Formulation, critique, and effective communication of conceptual analysis and logical argument.

## Course Plan

* The first part of the course is on the formulation and analysis of logical arguments, which is both to support student success in the remainder of the course and to develop broadly applicable reasoning skills.
* The remainder of the course builds on the foregoing and expands into studying common types of arguments, forms of bias, cooperative dialogue, credibility, and scientific reasoning.

# Student Work and Assessments

## Approach to Learning

*This course rewards consistent engagement and study throughout the term.* Students should ensure that they have mastered each unit of material as we complete our coverage of it. Cramming for exams is unlikely to be effective.

## Grading

The department discourages grade inflation and fixed grading curves. To earn a term grade better than a C requires better than adequate performance. The course’s grade distribution is not predetermined, but is intended to reflect actual performance of the students in the class.

Course grading is based on a total of 1,000 points for the term, with the following minimums: 930 A, 900 A-, 870 B+, 830 B, 800 B-, 750 C+, 700 C, 650 C-, 600 D+, 550 D, 500 D-. The point categories are engagement (200) and exams (800).

## Engagement

“Engagement” reflects several activities to build student understanding and contribute to exam performance.

A maximum of 200 points may be pooled from three sources: participation, attendance, and homework quizzes. The total of the available points in each of those three sources is well over 200. Thus, students can earn the same engagement score with different mixes of point sources.

Another 20 points are available for a philosophy presentation write-up. These points are not included in the pool, and thus could increase total engagement points beyond the nominal maximum of 200 (i.e., extra credit).

### Participation and Attendance

Each student earns a “participation day” for each class meeting in which they make one or more relevant contributions to full-class discussion. Thus, students are credited for contributing to multiple class meetings, but not for additional contributions to the same class meeting. Participation days are scored at five points for each of the first nine, and two points for each thereafter.

Each student earns an attendance point for each class meeting in which they are substantially in attendance but do not earn a participation day.

### Homework Quizzes

Each homework quiz is a Canvas quiz offering three attempts, of which the highest score is counted. Point maximums range from eight to fifteen. To maximize learning (and exam performance), students are encouraged to space out their homework attempts, and to use the time between attempts to review the material, bring questions to class, and/or discuss the material with me.

### Philosophy Presentation Write-up

Students may attend or view the recording of any two from an extensive list of pre-approved philosophy presentations and submit a write-up of the presentation material in accordance with instructions (Course module).

## Exams

There are seven exams, one for each module, each scored out of 100. They are given in class, on paper, with no use of materials permitted. If a class meeting with an exam cannot be held in person, a substitute exam will be given in Canvas during the scheduled time, with use of materials permitted.

Our final exam session will be an opportunity for each student to retake any two of the seven exams. For each exam retaken, the higher of the student’s original or retake score will be counted.

A maximum of 800 points may be earned from these seven exam scores (original or retaken). The highest three scores will be doubled, the next two lower scores will be counted singly, and the lowest two scores will drop.

# Policies and Procedures

## Reading and Preparation for Class Meetings

Students are expected to do the assigned reading *before* the first class meeting for which it’s assigned, and to come to class prepared to ask questions and discuss the material. Class discussions are conducted with the assumption that students have met this expectation – class discussions are not intended to be a substitute for the reading. Students should anticipate that *careful and repeat* reading is generally needed for full understanding, and are encouraged to take notes while reading and to bring their notes to class meetings.

## Conduct of Discussion

Doing philosophy requires open and critical discussion of ideas. Even the expression of a mistaken idea may be useful in advancing understanding, and no idea is exempt from questions of justification. Good discussion requires an environment in which all participants feel safe and valued. *People deserve respect; ideas do not*. Harassment, personal attacks, and contemptuous behavior are not tolerated. Any student with concerns about classmates’ behavior should inform me as soon as practical, even if they believe I am (or should be) aware of their concerns.

Doing philosophy also requires concentration and careful thought. Accordingly, students should take care to minimize distractions in class meetings. I intend to keep the rules casual about arrival and departure, use of electronics, and classroom procedure, but I reserve the prerogative to implement stricter rules if needed.

## Staying Informed

Each student is accountable for attending class meetings, obtaining notes from other students for any class meetings missed, regularly checking campus email, referring to this syllabus and Canvas content as needed, and carefully following the term schedule in Canvas (Syllabus navigation link or Course module).

## Use of Technology

Each student is accountable for maintaining regular access to Canvas and to campus email, for understanding and troubleshooting their use, and for verifying successful electronic submission of work. Students experiencing technical difficulties should make alternative arrangements (such as the use of a friend’s computer or an on-campus computer lab) and/or communicate with [campus technical support personnel](https://www.csus.edu/information-resources-technology/campus-tech-resources/student-tech-resources.html) as needed.

## Missed Assessments

Exams and homework quizzes are generally scored at zero if not taken when scheduled or submitted when due. Credit for participation is available only to students substantially attending.

Exceptions to this policy are subject to my sole judgment. Students who, for significant illness or other good reason, need an accommodation should request it as soon as possible.

## No Other Credit Opportunities

Students are accountable for exerting sufficient effort for the assessments described above, which are intended to be a fair reflection of performance. I invite you to read my [reasons against unplanned extra credit opportunities](http://jdphilosophy.com/Jeff%20Dale%20%28JD%29%20-%20Reasons%20Against%20Unplanned%20Extra%20Credit%20Opportunities.pdf).

## Study Aids

Class discussion slides and practice quizzes, found in the applicable module folders, are both useful as study aids. Practice quizzes become available after the related for-credit homework quizzes are due. Students are encouraged to condense the materials into a study guide to promote learning.

## Academic Integrity

Cheating is a serious offense. Students are accountable for complying with [campus policies on academic integrity](https://sacramentostate.policystat.com/policy/11300038/latest/).

Plagiarism may include not only direct quotation without quotation marks or attribution, but also paraphrasing without attribution, or otherwise using the ideas of others (including me or fellow students) as though they were one’s own. Plagiarism can result from the careless error of forgetting to cite. Students are urged to protect themselves by *immediately* recording, in their document to be submitted, information about *any source consulted*, even if it’s not intended for use (since students might unknowingly use words or ideas from them), and even if it’s not yet complete and/or in proper citation format.

Facilitating other students’ cheating is itself a form of cheating. For example, if one student gives a copy of their writing to another student, who then plagiarizes the writing, *both* students are subject to cheating accusations. Students can be penalized *after* leaving the class, including the rescinding of their recorded grades in the class, if they facilitate the cheating of students in later terms. Students are urged to protect themselves by never risking their work being copied in this way.

A violation of academic integrity may result in a zero on the applicable assessment, communication of the incident to the dean and/or department chair, and the filing of a student conduct violation report for possible administrative sanctions up to and including expulsion from the institution.

## Equity

In conducting my courses and assessing my students’ work, I am committed to equitable treatment of students irrespective of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, age, family situation, language, dialect, or other socioeconomic factors.

## Disability Accommodations

I’m committed to ensuring an accessible learning environment where course content is usable by all students. If you believe that you need disability-related academic adjustments for this class, please contact [campus disability support services](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/disability-access-center/) as soon as possible for an assessment. A current accommodation letter from them is required.

## Recording and Sharing of Course Material

Video or audio recording of any portion of our class meetings is generally not permitted, except in accordance with properly documented disability accommodations or as may be required by law. Any such recordings that have been authorized are proprietary and may not be posted online or otherwise shared beyond the authorized use.

Slides and other course materials (other than the readings) are proprietary and may not be posted online or otherwise shared with anyone, except as needed for the student’s own completion of course work.

## Mandated Reporting

All faculty are considered “mandated reporters” for suspected child abuse or neglect under the California Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act, California Penal Code sections 11164-11174.3.

## Contingencies

If I am unavailable to conduct scheduled meetings or manage the course at any time during the term, you will be contacted and advised how the course will proceed, including any needed changes in instructor or modality.