

LOGIC AND LANGUAGE
PHL102-22

Dane Muckler, Ph.D. (aka “Professor Muckler” / “Dr. Muckler”)

Office Hours: Tuesday 1000 – 1130 and by appointment.

Phone: 314-856-3402 (feel free to text or call me if we have an appointment and you need to cancel or you can't find me during office hours.)

Textbook: Harrell, *What is the Argument?* (2016)

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Important: To help me keep track of emails please include “Tuesday Logic” in the subject line of your emails.

Course Objectives

Students should...

- (1) Be able to identify the basic structure of an argument found in an ordinary language text.
- (2) Articulate a critical stance towards the text, including identifying possible alternatives to the author's main claim(s), identifying weaknesses in the reasons or evidence offered in support of the author's claim(s), and developing plausible objections to the author's argument.
- (3) Distinguish reasons and evidence that support a claim from rhetorical and other devices aimed only at persuasion.
- (4) Be able to develop their own arguments in support of claims, by unambiguously stating their thesis, clearly laying out their reasons and/or evidence, identifying alternatives to their conclusion, and charitably responding to real and hypothetical objections.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICIES

No electronic device in class. Turn off cellphones. If I have to ask you to turn off your cellphone multiple times in a semester I consider that troublesome behavior.

TROUBLESOME BEHAVIOR

I have a protocol for dealing with behavior that is disruptive, disrespectful or otherwise not conducive to the learning of one's fellow students:

- (1) I call out inappropriate behavior in class if and when I see it, or I send the student an email.
- (2) When I see patterns of inappropriate behavior, I talk to the student outside of class.
- (3) If the pattern continues, I refer the matter to the University administration.

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

You should do your own work. Anyone who represents someone else's work as their own will be punished with a loss of points and/or referral to the dean. Do not use sources on the internet unless explicitly authorized in writing to do so.

GRADES

Inclass Assignments: 11 x 10 – 10 (dropped) = 100 points
Reading Assignments: 13x 10 – 10 (dropped) = 120 points
Final Exam: = 180 points
TOTAL = 400 points

TECHNICAL PROBLEMS WITH ELECTRONIC TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Please avoid technical problems by doing work ahead of time. If you have problems with your electronic tools and resources, you can turn an assignment in one day late for a 50% penalty. If 50% of the class turns in an assignment late due to some kind of electronic situation, then I'll retroactively waive the late penalty for everyone, but I will give the students who turned the assignment in on time a 50% bonus.

MISSED & LATE WORK POLICY

Assignments are due Sunday at midnight (the day prior to the class for which they have been assigned)

Any assignment turned in after Sunday at midnight receive a 50% automatic penalty.

No work will be accepted after the final exam.

I will drop your lowest assignment grade.

JOINING THE CLASS LATE

The University requires me to let students join late up to a certain point, after that point no one may join late. Anyone who joins late has one week to make up any quizzes or assignments.

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Various short writing and problem-solving assignments are due within a week of being covered in class. These are due Sunday before class by midnight. You will upload the assignments through blackboard.

IN CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Sometimes I will have you work in groups. These in class assignments will take various forms. I will drop your lowest in class assignment.

QUIZES

Quizzes are a mix of short-answer, multiple-choice, and short essays. Bring paper and writing utensils to class for quizzes.

MISSED QUIZES

I will drop your lowest quiz grade. Quizzes cannot be made up due to incidental absences. The dropping of lowest grade should cover you for occasional sickness or personal problems (see MAJOR ILLNESSES OR PERSONAL CRISES and ATHLETES for two exceptions). Having the flu or a fender bender is not a major illness or personal crisis.

EXTRA CREDIT

Look for extra-credit opportunities. If an interesting philosopher, political scientist, psychologist, public figure is giving a talk in the St. Louis area on something related to ethics (including a speaker at SLU), then let me know. I will investigate this person and their talk. If I think the event has educational value relevant to our class, then I will make up an extra-credit assignment for the entire class.

FINAL EXAM

The University will schedule our final exam. It will be written and cumulative. More on that later.

MAJOR ILLNESS OR PERSONAL CRISES

If you have some form of documentation that you've been sick or otherwise waylaid to the point where you can't attend classes or go to work for more than 72 hours or the University administration attests to the seriousness of your situation, then I am willing to reschedule quizzes and homework assignments. I will accommodate up to two weeks of this.

Let me know if you're missing class for a personal crisis or major illness as soon as you can.

Two of these and you're done with exemptions. Two (2) personal crises plus one set of dropped grades = three (3) potential dropped days. After that, you'd be missing >25% of class.

EXTENSIONS AND INCOMPLETES

I do not give extensions or incompletes for the course.

ATHLETES

Athletes can makeup quizzes if the University provides documentation, but they cannot makeup writing assignments. Athletes who want to get credit for those assignments need to do the following:

1. Let me know in writing when you will be missing class during the first two weeks of the semester.
2. Complete the writing assignment ahead of time.

KEEPING TRACK OF WHATS GOING ON IN THE CLASS:

I put things on blackboard and use three guiding documents for planning: (a) syllabus, (b) class preparation calendar, (c) reading assignments document. You can look at these documents to figure out what to do next. If you miss class, then ask a friend what you missed. If something is confusing or unclear, you may email me. I make many announcements through blackboard and check "send email immediately" so you should have an email account that regularly gets announcements from me. I will put revised schedules onto blackboard and announce when they are revised.

FINAL EXAM

The final exam will be a mix of different question styles, including essays. Everyone must bring a bluebook to the final exam. It may cost a dollar or so. Plan for that.

EMAIL (AGAIN!)

All emails should contain the following in the subject line "Tuesday Night Ethics." Emails that do not contain this in the subject line will be lost or deleted.

OFFICE HOURS:

I am always interested in talking to students about how class is going and whatever you are thinking about. I have arranged some scheduled office hours.

BE GOOD TO EACH OTHER

I ask to be treated with respect and in return I promise to treat you with respect. I also ask that you treat other students with respect or else I will ask you to leave. Be polite. This class may involve discussing things that are emotionally charged, controversial, or even disturbing. Successful students show the ability to handle these things without shouting, name-calling, or dismissive behavior, but rather with patience, thoughtfulness, empathy and decency.

I don't judge people for the things that they profess to believe in a classroom or casual discussion. That is, I do not think that you can learn much about a person's character from what they claim to believe or reveal themselves to believe in discussion. It takes a long time and a lot of attention to learn about a person's character from the things that they say out loud. I am charitable, which means I endeavor to interpret the speech and behavior of my students in the best possible light. I encourage you to keep an open-mind and be charitable towards your fellow students.

I hope that I set an example you can learn from about how to engage with people who believe things that you find strange, offensive, or disturbing. It is part of advanced philosophical training to learn how to engage with others from a standpoint of reasonableness, humility, and open-mindedness. I am not going to claim it is a skill I have fully mastered, but it is something that is important to me and that I have already spent a lot of time working on.

Class Preparation Calendar

Month	Day	Preparation Due	Topic for class
January	15	None	Introductions. Goals of the class. Film: The Big Short
January	22	Reading: <i>Black Swan</i> (online) Assignment 1 due before class.	We can train ourselves to be more rational thinkers. Discussion of last week's film as it relates to Taleb's <i>Black Swan</i> . Reducing confirmation bias through disconfirmation. Class exercise 1: disconfirmation activity.
January	29	Harrell, Chapter 2 Assignment 2 due before class.	Foundational concepts in logical analysis Premises, conclusions, validity, soundness, strength, cogency, inductive, abductive, arguments, introduction to argument diagrams. Class exercise 2

February	5	Harrell, Chapter 3 Assignment 3 due before class	Analyzing real-life arguments Complex arguments, implicit premises/conclusions. Class exercise 3: group analysis of newspaper editorial
February	12	Reading: <i>Wason Selection Task</i> (online) Assignment 4 due before class	Argument forms Modus ponens/tolens, dilemmas, hypothetical syllogism, etc. Class Exercise 4: The Wason Selection Task Game.
February	19	Assignment 5 due before class	Advanced Argument Forms Analogical argument, proof-by-contradiction Class Exercise 5: Should you bite the bullet?
February	26	Reading: <i>15 fallacies...</i> (online) Assignment 6 due before class	Informal fallacies Class Exercise 6: Fallacies in documentary film
March	5	Harrell, chapter 4-5 Assignment 7 due before class	Arguments for/against existence of God Class exercise 7: Martin's "Three Reasons for Unbelief"
March	12	No meeting.	Spring break
March	19	Harrell, chapter 8.1 Assignment 8 due before class	Arguments about knowledge Class exercise 8
March	26	Harrell, chapter 9.1 Assignment 9 due before class	The problem of induction Class exercise 9
April	2	Harrell, chapter 11.1 & 12.1 Assignment 10 due before class	Arguments for/against materialism Class exercise 10
April	9	Harrell, chapter 14.1 & 15.1 Assignment 11 due before class	Arguments for/against free will. Class exercise 11
April	16	Harrell, chapter 19.1 & 19.2 Assignment 12 due before class	Arguments for/against altruism. Class exercise 12

April	23	Harrell, chapter 20.2 & 20.3 Assignment 13 due before class	Argument for/against hedonism. Class exercise 13
April	30	-----	Review
May 5			
Final Exam			
Tuesday/Thursday 0800 class has a final exam on May 14th @ 0800			
Tuesday 1800 class has a final exam on May 7th @ 1830			