

Thinking Straight - Spring 2008

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Program Overview

Do you want to work on improving your critical reasoning skills? This program is ideal for students as well as others with an interest in exploring techniques of critical reasoning. The program will be taught in a discussion/workshop format with only occasional mini-lectures to set the stage for class work. We will use substantial portions of the two texts listed below and apply them to a variety of short readings, structured workshop explorations, and short group projects. It is scheduled to meet on Tuesday and Friday, 9-4 with a break for lunch.

The program will focus on techniques of understanding and criticizing arguments and theories. It will emphasize a cooperative, dialogic approach to deciding what to believe. *Thinking Straight* will cover standard topics in informal logic including argument reconstruction, assessment of validity and fallacies. The program contains an extensive discussion of ethical theory and reasoning about moral issues. We will explore as well some topics concerning statistical, and scientific reasoning. We will apply critical reasoning techniques to a number of contemporary, contentious issues found in a variety of texts including selections from books, newspaper editorials and columns, Internet documents, and journal articles. We will discuss in detail the controversy over global warming and its policy implications as well as "intelligent design" as an alternative to evolutionary science.

Students will be expected to gather both quantitative and qualitative material and make presentations that clarify and assess the reasoning underlying important current issues. They will be evaluated on the basis of performance on assignments, in class discussion and project work, an annotated portfolio of material they collect over the quarter, as well as exams.

Students will deal with the elements of the program through a series of structured workshops, including small and large group discussion as well as mini-lectures and assignments. In addition, students will be expected to submit essays growing out of the topics covered in the ethics component of the program and participate in a team project leading to a cooperative, critical exchange that debates two sides of a question in front of the class by providing arguments and appropriate criticism.

Course Equivalencies: Informal Logic and Critical Reasoning, Introduction to Ethical Reasoning , Introduction to Statistical Reasoning, and Introduction to Issues in the Philosophy of Science

Basic Texts:

Jerry Cederblom and David W. Paulsen, *Critical Reasoning: Understanding Arguments and Theories* (6th edition)
James Rachels and Stuart Rachels , *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, (5th edition)

(Note: we will also make significant use of a variety of short articles, essays and web documents)

Typical Weekly Schedule

TUESDAY

9-12 Sem 2 B 2109
Critical Reasoning
Discussion/ Workshop
Statistical Reasoning
week 6, 7 10

12-1 Lunch

1:00-4:00 Sem 2 C 2107
Ethical Reasoning
Discussion/
Workshop

FRIDAY

9-12 Sem 2 B 2109 *
Critical Reasoning
Discussion/ Workshop
Statistical Reasoning
week, 7

12-1:30
Lunch/ Office Hours

1:30-4:00 Sem 2 B 2109 *
Ethical Reasoning
Discussion/ Workshop
Special Topics w 5.8 110

*except Friday May 9
meeting in Lib 2708

Tentative Thinking Straight Schedule

WEEK	TUESDAY	FRIDAY
WK 1 Apr 1 Apr 4	Am Intro to Critical. Reasoning Pm Intro to Ethics	Am CR+: <i>Anatomy of Arguments</i> (Read C&P* Ch. 1, 2 to p. 39) PM: ER+: <i>Nature of Ethics</i> (Read: R&R**, Ch. 1)
WK 2 Apr 8 Apr 11	Am CR: <i>Finding Premises and Conclusions</i> (Read rest of C&P Ch 2) Pm ER: <i>Cultural Relativism and Subjectivism</i> (Read: R&R , Chs2&3)	Am: CR <i>Argument Reconstruction</i> (Read C&P: : Ch 3 to p. 61 Pm ER: <i>Morality and Religion</i> (Read: R&R, Ch. 4.)
WK 3 Apr 15 Apr 18	Am CR <i>More on Reconstruction</i> (Read: remainder C&P Ch. 3 Pm ER: <i>Egoisms</i> . (Read R&R, Ch 5)	Am CR: <i>Evaluating Arguments 1</i> (Read: C&P Ch 4) Pm ER: <i>Utilitarianism</i> , (Read: R&R, Ch 6,7)
WK 4 Apr 22 Apr 25	Am CR: <i>Evaluating Arguments 2</i> (Read C&P Ch 5) Pm ER: <i>Kantian Ethics</i> , (Read: R&R, Ch. 8 & 9):	Am CR: <i>Fallacies</i> (Read C&P Ch 6, 7 to p. 186 Pm <i>Review for CR Exam</i> No New Reading Review C&P Chapters 1-6 5 Portfolio entries due
WK 5 Apr 29 May 2	Am Critical Reasoning Exam Pm ER: <i>Ethics: Contractianism</i> , (Read : R&R Ch 10 and handout)	Am <i>Conceptual Theories</i> (Read C&P Ch. 7 Remainder) Pm ER: <i>Contractianism 2</i> , (Read : Rawls handout)
WK 6 May 6 May 9	Am SR+: <i>Sampling Arguments</i> (Read: C&P Ch 8 and handout) Pm: ER <i>Ethics of Care</i> , (Read: R&R Ch 11)	Am: Intelligent Design Seminar/Workshop, Part 1 Pm: Intelligent Design Seminar/Workshop, Part 2
WK 7 May 13 May 16	Am SR: <i>Correlation Arguments</i> (Read: C&P Ch 9 to p.238 and handout) Pm Film/Discussion	Am: SR: <i>Arguments from Controlled Experiments</i> (Read: C&P Ch 9 to p 250. and handout) Pm ER: <i>Virtue Ethics</i> : ((Read: R&R, Ch12 and handout)
WK 8 May 20 May 23	Am <i>Explanation and Theories</i> (Read: C&P Ch. 9) Pm ER: <i>A satisfactory moral theory?</i> (Read: R&R Ch 13)	Am: <i>Review of Theories</i> Pm <i>Seminar/Workshop on Global Warming</i>
WK 9 May 27 June 30	Am CR: <i>Non-deductive arguments and Six Step procedure</i> (Read: C&P Ch. 9 remainder & Ch. 10) Pm ER: <i>Moral arguments</i>	Am CR: <i>Experts and You</i> (Read: C&P Ch.11) Pm <i>Critical Exchange Preparation</i>
WK 10 June 3 June 6	Am SR: Arguments about Risk Pm Critical Exchange preparation	Critical Exchange: Portfolio, Ethics exam Due Wrap up
WK 11 June 10 June 12	Evaluation Conferences Tuesday June 10 & Thursday June 12	

* C&P = Jerry Cederblom and David Paulsen, *Critical Reasoning*, 6th edition

** R&R= James Rachels and Stuart Rachels , *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 5th edition

+CR= *Critical Reasoning Topics*, ER= *Ethical Reasoning Topics*, SR= *Statistical Reasoning Topics*