PHI 1103, Section 902: Critical Thinking

Instructor: Liz Skolnick (contact: liz.skolnick@gmail.com)

TR 5:00-6:15PM

Rm. CPR 125

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 3:20 – 4:20PM, FAO 232

Course Description/Objectives: The aim of this course is to help you develop fundamental critical skills so that you may better understand and evaluate arguments. We will go over the structure and different parts of an argument and then apply what we have learned to the thought and writings of major philosophical figures throughout history. Using the tools of logic we will determine what makes an argument “good” or “bad,” valid or invalid, etc. We will also go over the basics of what it means to construct a good, logical argument – students will have the chance to use what they have learned to produce their own original arguments.

After establishing our foundation in logic, we will move on to explore the thought of different philosophers from the pre-Socratic era up through the 19th Century, and analyze various arguments put forth by these figures. In general, I will lecture on the day’s material and I highly encourage you to jump in with questions.

After this, I’d like to open up the topics for discussion – although we will devote a lot of time to understanding the structure of argumentation, thinking creatively and hearing different opinions about and approaches to philosophical issues is a huge part of critical thinking. If there is time left at the end of class, we will go over some of the Discussion Questions (see below) together.

This course satisfies the Gordon Rule Communications requirement. This course is part of the University of South Florida’s Foundations of Knowledge and Learning (FKL) Core Curriculum. It is certified for the Social and Behavior Sciences core area, and in the Scientific Processes and Ethical Perspectives dimensions. Students enrolled in this course will be asked to participate in the USF General Education assessment effort. This might involve submitting copies of writing assignments for review, responding to surveys, or participating in other measurements designed to assess the FKL Core Curriculum learning outcomes.


Assignments:

You will be responsible for 3 papers during the semester. They must be 3 pages each – I will take off points for papers that are too brief.
Discussion Questions - At the beginning of each class you will be required to turn in one question or comment about the reading. This will count for the bulk of your Participation grade.

Grading:

3 papers at 20% each (=60%)  Logic Exam 20%
Participation 10%  Attendance 10%

Attendance Policy: Attendance is required and will count for 10% of your final grade. Show up to class and you’ll generally do well, don’t show up and this will hurt your grade and most likely leave you confused about the material. You are allowed 2 free absences, everything after that comes out of your grade UNLESS you provide me with a legitimate excuse for missing class – this will mean a doctor’s note for illness or another form of legitimate written excuse which can be determined on a case-by-case basis. If you leave class early without clearing it with me before class, you will be marked absent for that day! Also, keep in mind that Discussion Questions are due every class, so missing a class can also damage your Participation grade.

Participation: Participation counts for 10% of your grade. This will largely be based on the number of Discussion Questions you have handed in, but participation in class (adding to the discussion) will also be a big factor.

Late Paper Policy: Papers must be handed in at the beginning of class on the date they are due. We all have computer malfunctions so plan on something going wrong at the last minute – this means give yourself enough time to account for technological difficulties. If your computer/printer doesn’t work, find another one that does BEFORE class. I will take off 2/3 of a grade for every day that papers are late (An A will become a B+). If you have a valid excuse for being late, talk to me as soon as you can before the due date.

Plagiarism: DON’T DO IT. The punishment for plagiarism is a FF in the ENTIRE COURSE. This indicates academic dishonesty. If you wish to use the words or ideas of someone who is not you, you can quote them or paraphrase but remember to ALWAYS cite your source(s). Ignorance of what plagiarism is does not count as a defense – see pp. 69-70 of the USF Undergraduate Catalog 2010-2011, for clarification about what counts as plagiarism. You can find it here: http://poly.usf.edu/Documents/Admissions/USFP%20UG%20Catalog%202010-11%20Final.pdf

Go to http://www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/mla#mla, or ask me, for any help with citation.

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities are responsible for registering with Students with Disabilities Services in order to receive academic accommodations. SDS encourages students to notify instructors of accommodation needs at least 5 business days prior to needing the accommodation. A letter from SDS must accompany this request.

*Tentative Schedule:
8/22    Introduction and Syllabus
8/25    Logic – Munson Ch. 1, pp. 1-13
8/30    Logic – Munson Ch. 2, pp. 14-27
9/ 1    Logic – Munson Ch. 3, pp. 28-48
9/6     no class
9/8     Logic – Munson Ch. 4, pp. 124-145
9/13    Logic – Munson Ch. 4/8
9/15    LOGIC EXAM
9/20    Melchert Intro pp. xv-xix
9/22    Melchert Ch. 2, pp. 10-38
9/27    Melchert Ch. 4, pp. 61-72
9/29    Melchert Ch. 5, Euthyphro, Phaedo
10/ 4   Melchert Ch. 6, pp. 119-156
10/ 6   Melchert Ch. 6, cont’d
10/11   Melchert Ch. 7, pp. 157-198 PAPER 1 DUE
10/13   Melchert Ch. 7, cont’d
10/18   Melchert Ch. 8, pp. 199-217
10/20   Melchert Ch. 10, pp. 228-264
10/25   Melchert Ch. 11, pp. 266-298
10/27   Melchert Ch. 13, pp. 321-362
11/ 1   Melchert Ch. 13, cont’d
11/ 3   Melchert Ch. 14, pp. 363-399
11/ 8   Melchert Ch. 15, pp. 400-428 PAPER 2 DUE
11/10   Melchert Ch. 15, cont’d
11/15   Melchert Ch. 16, pp. 429-463
11/17  Melchert Ch. 16, cont’d
11/22  Review Hume and Kant
11/24  NO CLASS – Thanksgiving
11/29  Melchert Ch. 17, pp. 464-490
12/ 1  Melchert Ch. 18, pp. 491-510 (Kierkegaard only)
12/ 8  **PAPER 3 DUE in CPR 125 at 5:30 PM**

*Be advised: As the Instructor I may make changes to the readings/assignments if I deem it necessary. Usually these changes will have to do with readings; for example, if I think we should spend an extra class working through difficult material I may push the readings back a day. Unless there is some very special circumstance, I will never push due dates forward. Any changes will be made with an eye to manageability – I will make sure that you are not unduly burdened with an unmanageable workload.*