

ARTSSCI 1BB3: Argumentation

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Coren

2019-2020 (Term 2)

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Office: University Hall 314

Office hours: Thursdays 1:30-2:30pm

Phone: 905-525-9140, ext. 23881

Class meets: Tuesdays 9:30-10:20am (T13/127) and Wednesdays 9:30-11:20am (BSB/B156)

TA: Bilal Haroon (haroobl@mcmaster.ca)

Course Description

How *do we* reason and argue? How *should we* reason and argue? Those are our two main questions in this course. We'll apply those questions to relevant, interesting issues such as: Should the Canadian government increase environmental regulations on businesses to reduce carbon emissions? Is morality as objective as mathematics or as subjective as taste in ice cream flavours? Should Canada increase or decrease military spending? Should researchers be allowed to use animals in testing the safety of drugs, vaccines, medical devices, and cosmetics?

I will introduce students to some techniques, tools, and distinctions that sharpen and encourage careful and exploratory thought in any area. The skills students develop in this course form the foundations for systematic analysis that can be applied to problems in psychology, economics, indigenous studies, mathematics, politics, and other areas. No prior knowledge of philosophy or any other subject will be presupposed. Topics covered will include: logical strength; soundness; kinds and methods of definitions; ambiguity; validity; relevance; fallacies; deductive reasoning; inductive reasoning; causation vs. correlation; bias; vagueness; and humour.

Course Format

There will be a two-hour lecture and a one-hour lecture per week. Assessment will be based on two short papers (1500 words each), participation, and a final examination.

Objectives

By the end of the course, you should have:

- (1) Developed a thorough understanding of what counts as a good argument (relevance of conclusion, truth of premises, logical validity);
- (2) Appreciated many of the sorts of errors (fallacies) that sometimes occur when human beings reason;
- (3) Applied many of the critical thinking tools, techniques, and distinctions learned in this course to topics and problems of interest to you; and
- (4) Understood the thought and care required when formulating and defending good arguments.

Course Text

William Hughes and Jonathan Lavery. *Critical Thinking: An Introduction to the Basic Skills* (Canadian Seventh Edition). Broadview Press. (Available at the Campus Bookstore.)

Course Website

I will use a course web site on Avenue to Learn (<http://avenue.mcmaster.ca>) to post regular updates

and information about the course, copies of material distributed in class (including PowerPoint slides), short paper questions, and preparatory questions for the final exam. In addition, I will open up discussion on Avenue concerning course topics and material. I strongly encourage you to regularly check the course web site.

Method of Assessment

Assessments for this course will be based on two short papers, a final examination, and tutorial participation. You will be expected to attend tutorials regularly and to contribute to discussion.

1. Short assignments (50%)

You will be asked to write two short papers for this course, each of which should be no more than 1500 words in length. There are two main purposes of these papers: (1) Test whether you have understood the critical thinking tools covered and explained in class, and (2) give you a chance to apply those critical thinking tools, using your own examples (on topics of interest to you). Each essay will count for 25% of your course grade. Further information about the essays, and expectations for them, will be provided in class and on the course web site.

2. Final exam (30%)

Students will be asked to answer a series of questions in short answer form, in relation to material covered in class. A list of preparatory questions will be distributed and detailed instructions will be provided.

3. Participation (20%)

Students are expected to participate in classes – I will record not attendance but, rather, names of students who participate in classes. I am genuinely interested in your questions, comments, and views, and encourage you to make them explicit in class. In addition, on Avenue, I will open up discussions and grade students on the quality and quantity of their respectful contributions to those discussions.

Summary and Weights:

Short Paper 1 (maximum 1500 words): Due Friday, February 14, 11:59pm; 25%

Short Paper 2 (maximum 1500 words): Due Friday, March 20, 11:59pm; 25%

Final Exam: During Scheduled Exam Period; 30%

Participation: 20%

Penalties for Late Work:

Late essays will be penalized at the rate of 4% for the first day or part day late, then 2% for each subsequent day or part day (this includes weekend days), up to a maximum penalty of -10% for essays up to one week late. Essays more than one week late will not be accepted.

Topics and Readings

Week 1 (Jan 7, 8): Intro to the Course

Reading = Hughes & Lavery (“HL”), pages 3-9

Week 2 (Jan 14, 15): Deductive Reasoning Part 1

Reading = HL 161-177

Week 3 (Jan 21, 22): Deductive Reasoning Part 2 and the Complexity of Language

Reading = (1) Handout posted on Avenue, (2) review HL 161-177

Week 5 (Jan 28, 29): Inductive Reasoning Part 1

Reading = HL 179-197

Week 5 (Feb 4, 5): Inductive Reasoning Part 2 and the Principle of Charity

Reading = (1) Handout posted on Avenue, (2) HL pp.47-48 (Section 3.1, Principle of Charity), and (3) review HL 161-197

Week 6 (Feb 11, 12): Assessing Arguments Part 1: Strategies and Structures

Reading = (1) HL 78-84 (Section 4.6, The Structure of Arguments) and (2) HL 91-97 (Chapter 5, Strategies for Assessing Arguments)

Essay 1 due Friday, February 14 (on Avenue)

Mid-term break

Week 7 (Feb 25, 26): Assessing Arguments Part 3: Relevance

Reading = HL 127-137

Week 8 (March 3, 4): Assessing Arguments Part 4: Adequacy

Reading = HL 141-155

Week 9 (March 10, 11): Assessing Arguments Part 5: Application & Practice

Reading = (1) Handout on Avenue and (2) review Weeks 6-9 reading

Essay 2 due Friday, March 20 (on Avenue)

Week 10 (March 17, 18): Moral Reasoning 1

Reading = HL 233-250

Week 11 (March 24, 25): Moral Reasoning 2

Reading = HL 233-250, Avenue handout

Week 12 (March 31, April 1): Arguing Back

Reading = HL 281-288

Week 13 (April 7): Exam Review

Reading = Exam Study Guide

Final exam on a date scheduled by the Office of the Registrar

Sustainable Submission Standard Guidelines

The written work submission guidelines have been chosen to support the more sustainable use of paper, energy, and toner, and meet the Platinum standard of the Office of Sustainability;

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/sustainability/>. All written work should be submitted on Avenue. Please do not submit any written work in hard copy.

McMaster Policy on Academic Integrity:

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences—e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#), located at: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: 1) Plagiarism—e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained. 2) Improper collaboration in group work. 3) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF):

In the event of an absence, students should review and follow the Academic Regulations in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work.” Please consult the MSAF statement on our website (<https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/current-students/requests-2/>) and direct any questions or concerns to Shelley Anderson or Madeline Van Impe in the Arts & Science Program Office.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities:

Students who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. SAS can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or email sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Students registered with **Student Accessibility Services (SAS)** are most welcome to come to see me early in the semester to discuss accommodations. To do this, we should set an appointment. To do that, send me an email.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous, or Spiritual Observances (RISO):

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous, or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office (i.e. to Shelley Anderson or Madeline Van Impe in the Arts & Science Program Office) normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Email Contact and Student Responsibility Statement

Please Note:

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L, and/or McMaster email. It is the responsibility of students to check **their McMaster email** and course websites regularly during the term and to note any changes. Announcements will be made in class and by using the

course email distribution list.

Authenticity/Plagiarism Detection Statement

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student-submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.