

ARTSSCI 1BB3: Argumentation

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Coren

Winter 2021

Email: corenda@mcmaster.ca

Office: via Zoom link posted on Avenue

Office hours: Mondays 12:30-1:30 & 2:30-3:30 (via Zoom)

Class meets: Tuesdays 4:30-5:20pm, Wednesdays 3:30-5:20pm (via Zoom)

TA: Elizabeth Bloomfield (bloomfie@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 a wide array of interesting issues such as: What is friendship and how do we maintain friendships during a pandemic? Is morality as objective as mathematics or as subjective as taste in ice cream flavours? Should researchers be allowed to use non-human animals as test subjects for testing on cosmetics and medical devices? Is there, and should there be, objective criteria for evaluating art? What does it mean to be a happy human being?

Students will be introduced 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 class and a one-hour class with lecture and plenty of discussion each week (via Zoom). Assessment will be based on two short papers (1500 words each), participation, and a final examination. All meetings will run through Zoom, using our McMaster Zoom licenses.

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 and through delivery.)

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, a recurring Zoom link for our (synchronous) classes, a recurring Zoom link for my office hours, and preparatory questions for the final exam. In addition, I will open up discussion on Avenue concerning course topics and material.

Method of Assessment

Assessments for this course will be based on two short papers, a final examination, and class participation. You will be expected to attend classes 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. Take-home 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. The exam will be take-home. No surprises!

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 12, 11:59pm; 25%

Short Paper 2 (maximum 1500 words): Due Friday, March 26, 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 12, 13): Intro to the Course
Reading = Hughes & Lavery (“HL”), pages 3-9

Week 2 (Jan 19, 20): Deductive Reasoning Part 1
Reading = HL 161-177

Week 3 (Jan 26, 27): Deductive Reasoning Part 2 and the Complexity of Language
Reading = (1) Handout posted on Avenue, (2) review HL 161-177

Week 4 (Feb 2, 3): Inductive Reasoning Part 1
Reading = HL 179-197

Week 5 (Feb 9, 10): 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

Essay 1 due Friday, February 12 (on Avenue)

Mid-term break

Week 6 (Feb 23, 24): 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)

Week 7 (March 2, 3): Assessing Arguments Part 3: Relevance
Reading = HL 127-137

Week 8 (March 9, 19): Assessing Arguments Part 4: Adequacy
Reading = HL 141-155

Week 9 (March 16, 17): Assessing Arguments Part 5: Application & Practice
Reading = (1) Handout on Avenue and (2) review Weeks 6-9 reading

Week 10 (March 23, 24): Moral Reasoning 1
Reading = HL 233-250

Essay 2 due Friday, March 26 (on Avenue)

Week 11 (March 30, 31): Moral Reasoning 2
Reading = HL 233-250, Avenue handout

Week 12 (April 6, 7): Arguing Back
Reading = HL 281-288

Week 13 (April 13, 14): Exam Review
Reading = Exam study guide

Take-home final exam during the period scheduled by 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.

SENATE-APPROVED ADVISORY STATEMENTS

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. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

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. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](http://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <http://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., online search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster’s use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ONLINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use online elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-

mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses online elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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

REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK

[McMaster Student Absence Form \(MSAF\)](#): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

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 should submit their request to their Faculty 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.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to 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.

NOTES FOR ALL ARTS & SCIENCE COURSES

1. Some of the statements above refer to a “Faculty Office”; please note that the Arts & Science Program Office serves in this capacity.
2. It is the responsibility of students to check their McMaster email regularly. Announcements will be made in class, via A2L, and/or via the course email distribution list <d-as1BB3@mcmaster.ca>.