

ARTSSCI 1BB3: Argumentation

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Coren

Winter 2022 (2021/22)

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Office: University Hall 307

Office hours: Wednesdays 12:30-1:30 & 2:30-3:30 (UH 307)

TA: Miriam Bronski

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Class meets: Mondays 3:30-5:20pm, Wednesdays 4:30-5:20pm (ABB 271)

Course Description

How *do we* reason and argue? How *should we* reason and argue? Those are our two main questions in this course. We will apply those questions to a wide array of interesting issues such as: What is self-control? Is musical quality 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? Can a 'should-claim' be derived from an 'is-claim'? What does it mean to be a happy human being? Would a pain-free life be desirable?

Students will be introduced to some techniques, tools, and distinctions that sharpen exploratory thought in any area. So as to clarify the logic criterion for good reasoning, we will cover the basics of sentential logic; we will then turn to the two other criteria, namely, plausibility and interest. No prior knowledge of any subject will be presupposed.

Course Format

There will be a two-hour class and a one-hour class with lecture and plenty of discussion each week in ABB 271. Assessment will be based on two short papers (1500 words each), participation, and a final examination. All meetings will be in ABB 271. The course web site is on Avenue. Office hours in UH 307.

Objectives

By the end of the course, you should have:

- (1) Developed a thorough understanding the three features of good reasoning (logic, plausibility, and interest);
- (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 an argument.

Course Text

All required readings for this course will be posted on the Avenue course web site for ARTSSCI 1BB3 under Content. These readings will consist in selections from peer-reviewed articles, publicly accessible information and news articles, and instructor-created worksheets. No textbook required.

Course Website

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

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. However, if you are unwell or any reason unable to attend class in-person then there will be Avenue Discussion Topics for you to post your comment or question and earn participation points.

1. Short assignments (60%)

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 30% 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, well in advance of the final exam. No surprises on this exam!

3. Participation (10%)

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. However, as noted above, if you are unwell or for any reason unable to attend class in-person then there will be Avenue Discussion Topics for you to post your comment or question and earn participation points.

Summary and Weights:

Short Paper 1 (maximum 1500 words): Due Friday, February 18, 11:59pm; 30%

Short Paper 2 (maximum 1500 words): Due Friday, April 1, 11:59pm; 30%

Final Exam: During Scheduled Exam Period; 30% (somewhere in April 14-29 period)

Participation: 10%

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 (that 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.

Schedule of Readings & Classes

Class meets: Mondays 3:30-5:20pm, Wednesdays 4:30-5:20pm (ABB 271)

Office hours: Wednesdays 1-3pm (UH 307)

Mid-term recess Feb 21-25; no class that week.

Weeks 1-4: Logic Unit

Classes: Week 1 (Jan 10 & Jan 12). Readings: Logic Toolbox 1 & Trolley Problem reading.

Week 2 (Jan 17 & 19). Readings: Logic Toolbox 2 & self-control worksheet.

Week 3 (Jan 24 & 26). Readings: Logic Toolbox 3 & article on pain-free life.

Week 4 (Jan 31 & Feb 2). Readings: Logic Toolbox 4 & worksheet on is-ought.

Weeks 5-8: Plausibility Unit

Week 5 (Feb 7 & 9). Readings: Avenue worksheet & Deontology reading.

Week 6 (Feb 14 & 16). Readings: Avenue worksheet & planet identification article.

Paper 1 due February 18.

Feb 21-25: Mid-term recess. No class.

Week 7 (Feb 28 & March 2). Readings: Avenue worksheet & animal testing article.

Week 8 (March 7 & 9). Readings: Avenue worksheet & piece on Buridan's Paradox.

Weeks 9-12: Interest Unit

Week 9 (March 14 & 16). Readings: Avenue worksheet & article on sorites paradox.

Week 10 (March 21 & 23). Readings: Avenue worksheet & moral responsibility piece.

Week 11 (March 28 & 30). Readings: Avenue worksheet & piece on absurdity.

Paper 2 due April 1.

Week 12 (April 4 & 6). Readings: Avenue worksheet & Virtue Ethics reading.

Week 13: Exam Review

Week 13 (April 11): Readings: Exam Study Guide on Avenue.

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*](#), located at <https://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

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the [Policy on 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 either by 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.
3. For additional information regarding requests for accommodation, relief for missed term work (e.g. MSAF), deferred examinations, etc., students should read carefully the [Requests](#) and [Resources](#) pages on the Arts & Science Program website.