# ARTSSCI 1BB3: Argumentation

**2022-23 (Winter 2023)**

Instructor: Dr. Alexander Leferman

Email: [lefermaa@mcmaster.ca](mailto:lefermaa@mcmaster.ca)

Office hours: Mondays 11:30AM-12:20PM or by appointment

Office Location: UH-304

Lecture Time: M 2:30-4:20 and W 2:30-3:20

Lecture Location: PGCLL B131

Teaching Assistant: Hannah LaGrand

TA’s Email: [lagrandh@mcmaster.ca](mailto:lagrandh@mcmaster.ca)

## Course Description

Humans exchange reasons and present arguments to each other. Typically, we use reason to help us arrive at the truth and to convince others of the truth. But arguments are not always *good* arguments and, consequently, we should not trust the conclusion of such arguments. But how should we evaluate whether an argument is good or bad? This is a crucial task because we should only believe claims or conclusions that we have good reason to believe. The aim of this class is to develop critical thinking skills by learning to recognise errors or fallacies in reasoning, that is, to recognise bad arguments. With these skills, one has the tools to avoid fallacies in one’s own reasoning and, thus, put forward more convincing arguments. After developing these skills, we will put them to use in domains such as ethics, law, and medicine.

## Course Objectives

By the end of term, students should:

1. Learn the fundamentals of critical thinking and argumentation;
2. Be able to identify errors in reasoning and explain the errors;
3. Be able to reason effectively by avoiding the fallacies and errors covered in class;
4. Be able to think critically about reasoning in science, law, medicine, and ethics.

## Textbooks, Materials, & Fees

Texts (hardcopy and E-book) are available in the campus bookstore or are provided on the course website.

Required:

Macdonald and Vaughn, *The Power of Critical Thinking*, 5th Canadian edition (Oxford UP, 2018).

Susan Stebbing, “Epilogue” in *Thinking to some purpose* (Routledge, 2022).

Audrey Yap, “Ad Hominem Fallacies”, *Argumentation* (2013) 27: 97-109.

Katharina Stevens, “Fooling the Victim”, *Philosophy & Rhetoric* (2021) 54: 109-127.

## Method of Assessment

Short Assignment 1 5% **Due:** Jan. 25(before class)

Short Assignment 2 10% **Due:** Feb. 8 (before class)

Short Assignment 3 10% **Due:** March 15(before class)

Short Assignment 4 20% **Due:** March 29(before class)

Midterm 25% Feb. 27 (in class)

Final Exam 30% TBD

\*\*\*All written assignments will be submitted electronically via Avenue to Learn

and scrutinised by Turnitin\*\*\*

Midterm: Students will need to apply the skills covered in class up until the midterm.

Short Assignment 1: Write a 1-page critical reflection on a reading covered in class.

Short Assignment 2: Students must diagram a long argument.

Short Assignment 3: Students must find the fallacies in the argument provided.

Short Assignment 4: Students must write a 2-page paper answering the provided prompt.

Final Exam: The exam is structured like the midterm, but it will be comprehensive.

## Policy on Missed Work, Extensions, and Late Penalties

All deadlines in this course are firm.  There are no extensions unless you have prior permission from me, or follow the necessary procedures (e.g., submitting an MSAF) to request relief for the missed deadline.  Late assignments without extension receive a penalty of 3% per day and may not receive comments.

Students are required to be available for all mid-term and final exams listed in your course syllabus. If a student misses a test due to illness, she must inform the instructor and follow the necessary procedures to set up a make-up test that will be written at a later date. Vacation, job-related, or any other travel plans are not excuses for missing tests or exams. Students are also responsible for completing all course requirements on the dates specified on their syllabus. Specific accommodations can be negotiated for students registered with disability services, but it is the responsibility of the student to make these arrangements ahead of time.

## Topics and Readings (Provisional Schedule)

Week 1: Introduction to Critical Thinking (Jan. 9,11)

Reading: Chapter 1

Week 2: Reasoning, Emotions, and Social Pressures (Jan. 16, 18)

Reading: Susan Stebbing, ‘Epilogue’ (.pdf on A2L) and Chapter 2

Week 3: Arguments (Jan. 23, 25)

Reading: Chapter 3

\*\*\*Assignment 1 Due\*\*\*

Week 4: What should we believe? And Fallacies (Jan. 30, Feb. 1)

Reading: Chapter 4 and Chapter 5

Week 5: Fallacies (Feb. 6, 8)

Reading: Yap, ‘Ad Hominem Fallacies’ (.pdf on A2L)

\*\*\*Assignment 2 Due\*\*\*

Week 6: Fallacies Continued (Feb. 13, 15)

Reading: Stevens, ‘Fooling the Victim’ (.pdf on A2L)

**Reading Week (Feb. 20-26)**

Week 7: Fallacies Continued (Feb. 27, Mar. 1)

\*\*\*Midterm\*\*\*

Week 8: Fallacies Continued (Mar. 6, 8)

Week 9: Inductive Reasoning (Mar. 13, 15)

Reading: Chapter 8

\*\*\*Assignment 3 due\*\*\*

Week 10: Inductive Reasoning (Mar. 20, 22)

Reading: Chapter 8

Week 11: Inference to the Best Explanation (Mar. 27, 29)

Reading: Chapter 9

\*\*\*Assignment 4 Due\*\*\*

Week 12: Scientific Reasoning (Apr. 3, 5)

Reading: Chapter 10

Week 13: Moral, Medical, Legal Reasoning (Apr. 10, 12)

Reading: Chapter 11

## Other Course Information

### Email

Any questions received over email may take me up to 2 days to respond, but usually less.  If you do not receive a response in 2 days, please send your question again.  When writing to me, please use the course title as the subject line and use your full name to identify yourself.

### 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 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.

### Courses with an On-Line Element

Some courses use on-line 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 on-line 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 lockdown their browser during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the 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 e-mail to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities policy.

### Email correspondence policy

It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from each student’s own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student.  Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

### Modification of course outlines

The University reserves the right to change dates and/or deadlines etc. for any or all courses in the case of an emergency situation or labour disruption or civil unrest/disobedience, etc. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. Any significant changes should be made in consultation with the Department Chair.

### Request 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 and 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.
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](https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/forms-requests/) and [Resources](https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/current-students/resources/) pages on the Arts & Science Program website.