

Philosophy 210 WIP: Arguing Philosophically

Northeastern Illinois University
Fall Semester 2010
MWF 1:00-1:50 PM, CLS 2094

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MWF 7:15-8:00 AM; 10:10-11:45 AM

Course Description

For as long as people have reasoned philosophically, they have noticed that there is something about successful arguments which compels any rational listener to either embrace the conclusion or, barring that, to offer equally compelling reasons for rejecting it. Indeed, what makes for a compelling reason is a matter worthy of careful investigation. Compelling reasons come in various forms—from the extremely compelling deductive arguments of formal logic, to the comparatively weak forms of everyday presumptive reasoning. While we will cover some of the former, we will focus our study of philosophical argument on the various forms of non-deductive argument—inductive, presumptive, and defeasible argument. While our aim is to participate in the exploration of argument, our goal will be the decidedly practical one of analyzing actual arguments in ordinary language.

This course has been approved as a Writing Intensive course as part of the Writing Intensive Program (WIP). Successful completion of this course fulfills the Writing Intensive graduation requirement for Philosophy majors who entered the university in fall 2008 or later. Speak to your advisor or visit <http://www.neiu.edu/~wip> for more information. Note also that in order to take this course you must have completed English 101 or its equivalent with a grade of C or better.

Objectives

Since this course is a required writing intensive course in the major, writing of various kinds will be the primary means of assessment of the following learning outcomes.

1. to distinguish arguments from non-arguments;
2. to recognize and identify different types of argument;
3. to distinguish factual claims from inferential claims;
4. to evaluate inferential claims in different types of argument;
5. to uncover and correct sophistical reasoning.

Required Texts

- Douglass N. Walton, *Fundamentals of Critical Argumentation* (Cambridge, 2006).
- Douglass N. Walton, Christopher Reed, and Fabrizio Macagno, *Argumentation Schemes*. (Cambridge, 2008).
- Internet readings (daily newspapers, major American periodicals, and select blogs).
- Course handouts available on Blackboard under “course documents.”

Course Requirements

A. *Reading*: this course will involve two kinds of reading.

(i) *Assigned Reading*. The assigned readings can be found in the course schedule. These readings must be completed *before* the class period in which they are to be discussed. Reading assignments will be difficult, sometimes very difficult, but they are generally short enough so that you should be able read them *at least* twice. Keep in mind also that even though you will be

required to do all of the readings assigned, it's very unlikely that we will get to all of them in our class discussion. Please note also that the schedule of readings and assignments is tentative and therefore subject to change at my discretion. Experience has shown me that such changes are very likely.

(ii) In addition to the assigned readings, you will be expected to keep current with (a) the general news and op-ed pages of three major newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Chicago Tribune*) and (b) a series of well known blogs (listed under links on Blackboard). Be aware that in addition to the readings listed on the schedule, a series of relatively short supplementary readings will be made available on the Blackboard page. *These are required*. Finally, not knowing about changes in the class schedule due to absence will not constitute an excuse for missing a reading, an assignment or a quiz.

B. *Writing*. This is a writing intensive course, so you can expect to do a lot of writing. There are two kinds of writing in this course.

(i) *Formal*: There will be a total of about 16 pages of graded writing (equaling 60 percent of the course grade). All of the formal writing will be short (roughly equivalent to about 2 pages in length per assignment). I will, however, assign more than 16 pages of writing during the semester, but only your highest scores across at least 16 pages of writing will calculate into your course grade. This means you will be welcome to skip some assignments. Nonetheless, you can expect to do some formal writing almost every week. Some of the formal writing in this course will take the shape of short formal papers (about two pages in length). Other formal assignments will involve less "scholastic" forms of writing, such as emails, statements of purpose, blog posts and blog comments, letters to the editor, argument diagrams, and so forth. Detailed instructions for each assignment, general expectations for graded written work, and links to writing resources can be found under the "assignments" tab on Blackboard. While all formal writing is revisable at the instructor's request for a change in the assignment's grade, some of the formal writing assignments will take place in stages, so they will require ungraded (but nonetheless required) drafts (on which I will provide feedback). This process will vary depending on the assignment.

A note about grading: all (graded) written work is evaluated on the basis of content, clarity of presentation, and originality. A successful paper is (1) factually accurate, (2) carefully and clearly reasoned, (3) original, and (4) free of errors in spelling, grammar and style. More extensive discussions of grading (including the rewrite policy and scoring rubrics), writing, and arguing are posted on the Blackboard page for this course. Please familiarize yourself with them as soon as possible—you are responsible for their contents.

(ii) *Informal*: informal writing assignments fall into two groups: in-class writing and out-of-class writing. In class writing (e.g., minute papers) will not receive any credit at all (though they will be responded to). Out-of-class writing may include short comments on the class blog, discussion forum posts, and emails. These will not be graded as such, but you will receive feedback on them and their completion will be factored into the course participation component of the final grade.

C. *Quizzes*. Short unannounced (they are not listed on the schedule) quizzes on straightforward factual questions about the assigned readings will be given from time to time.

D. *Class Discussion and Attendance*. You'll find that we will typically focus on one or at most two salient philosophical points per class meeting. I will set the ball rolling by making some

expository or critical observations on the reading. Sometimes, but not very often, I'll give a longer, more structured introduction. Since class time is very limited, and because we're here to *do* philosophy, I prefer to handle those questions via handouts or secondary sources. Once the question or the issue of the day emerges from the introduction, class discussion begins. Discussions can be heated, boisterous, occasionally difficult to follow, tangential, apparently unrelated to the topic of the course, at times annoying, but more often enlightening and exciting. Don't be afraid to participate; besides, your class attendance and participation are required. Please, however, do so in a manner that is serious, respectful and courteous. Disruptive or disrespectful behavior in class will be not be tolerated. This behavior includes (but is not limited to) making demeaning remarks or derisive gestures towards other members of the class or the teacher, attempting to derail class discussion with irrelevant observations or questions, showing up late, talking to other classmates, sleeping, text messaging, and so forth.

Grading and Academic Honesty

Grading: The final grade is determined as follows:

- 60% Graded writing
- 20% Quizzes
- 20% Class participation

Academic Honesty: This course is conducted in compliance with the University Student Code of Conduct. Misconduct such as cheating on an exam or homework or plagiarizing on a paper will result in a failing grade for the course, expulsion from the class, and notification of the Dean.

Tentative Schedule of Readings

1. Introduction: What is an argument?
 - August**
 - 25. Syllabus
 - 27. Walton, *Fundamentals* Chapter 1
 - 29. *Fundamentals*, 1
2. Arguments in context
 - September**
 - 1. **No Class-Labor Day**
 - 3. *Fundamentals*, 1
 - 5. *Fundamentals*, 1
3. Basic types of argument
 - 8. *Fundamentals*, 2
 - 10. *Fundamentals*, 2
 - 12. *Fundamentals*, 2
4. Argument Diagrams
 - 15. *Fundamentals*, 4
 - 17. *Fundamentals*, 4
 - 19. *Fundamentals*, 4
5. Argument Schemes
 - 22. *Fundamentals*, 3
 - 24. *Fundamentals*, 3

	26. <i>Fundamentals</i> , 3
6. Argument Schemes	29. Walton, et al., <i>Argumentation Schemes</i> , I
October	1. <i>Schemes</i> , I
	3. <i>Schemes</i> , I
7. Arguments from analogy	6. <i>Schemes</i> , 2
	8. <i>Schemes</i> , 2
	10. <i>Schemes</i> , 2
8. Arguments from Knowledge	13. <i>Schemes</i> , 3
	15. <i>Schemes</i> , 3
	17. <i>Schemes</i> , 3
9. Arguments from Generally Accepted Opinions	20. <i>Schemes</i> , 4
	22. <i>Schemes</i> , 4
	24. <i>Schemes</i> , 4
10. Causal Argument Schemes	27. <i>Schemes</i> , 5
	39. <i>Schemes</i> , 5
	31. <i>Schemes</i> , 5
11. Bias	
November	3. <i>Fundamentals</i> , 6
	5. <i>Fundamentals</i> , 6
	7. <i>Fundamentals</i> , 6
12. Relevance	
	10. <i>Fundamentals</i> , 7
	12. <i>Fundamentals</i> , 7
	14. <i>Fundamentals</i> , 7
13. Practical Reasoning	
	17. <i>Fundamentals</i> , 8
	19. <i>Fundamentals</i> , 8
	21. <i>Fundamentals</i> , 8
14. Practical Reasoning	
	24. <i>Fundamentals</i> , 8
	26. <i>Fundamentals</i> , 8
	28. Thanksgiving Break
15. Rebuttal and Refutation	
December	1. <i>Schemes</i> , 7
	3. <i>Schemes</i> , 7
	5. <i>Schemes</i> , 7
16. Final week	
	8. TBA
	9. TBA