

# CCC8011 LEC 1 Critical Thinking: Analysis and Argumentation

Adam F. Gibbons

[adam.gibbons@ln.edu.hk](mailto:adam.gibbons@ln.edu.hk)

HSH215, Department of Philosophy, Ho Sin Hang Building

Office Hours: Tuesday 4pm-6pm; Thursday 11am-1pm

Class Times: Tuesday 11am-12.30pm; Thursday 3.30pm-5pm

Class Room: Tuesday MB-G12; Thursday LKK 302

## Course Outline

The primary aim of this course is to teach the basic but crucial skills of analyzing problems, evaluating inferences, and presenting arguments for or against claims or decisions. Students will acquire these skills by learning about the basic concepts and methods of critical thinking, and by working through exercises which require them to employ these concepts and methods. Students will further develop these skills by producing extended arguments defending their responses to accessible but challenging real-world issues and problems.

In this class students will become more skilled at forming and assessing arguments, detecting logical fallacies, articulating positions in a debate, and organizing their thinking. The class is also designed to instill habits of critical thinking, which include an open and inquiring attitude towards new evidence, the curiosity to look for reasons for and against one's views, and a willingness to change one's views in the face of evidence.

## Class Materials

The primary course text is the following website: <https://philosophy.hku.hk/think/>

Additional readings will be posted on Moodle. The Moodle page is your guide to the course. It will contain course materials (syllabus, lecture slides, etc.) Please check it regularly.

## Course Aims

To provide an introduction to the methods of critical thinking and argumentation.

## **Learning Outcomes and Measurement**

### **Learning Outcomes**

Students are expected to demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

1. The ability to successfully employ a number of central concepts of critical thinking and argumentation;
2. The ability to recognize and clearly present arguments in ordinary language and to analyze the structure of these arguments;
3. The ability to establish the deductive validity or invalidity of an argument, to recognize and criticize the flaws of a weak argument, and to develop counter-arguments;
4. The ability to evaluate the reasons for and against positions in sophisticated debates and to construct clear and persuasive arguments in such debates;
5. The ability to construct valid arguments, including in the form of an argumentative essay.

### **Measurement of Learning Outcomes**

Students' progress towards the learning outcomes will be measured by the performance of students in:

- class discussions and activities (L1-5)
- debate activities (L1-5)
- assignments and end of term exam (L1-5)
- argumentative essay (L1-5)

## **Course Requirements**

### **Grade Breakdown**

Attendance and Participation – 10%

In-class Assessment – 30% (Class Quiz 20%/ Debate Activity 10%)

Argumentative Essay – 20%

Final Exam – 40%

## Late Assignments

Late take-home assignments will be penalized at a rate of 5% of the assignment grade per day late (unless you have a reasonable excuse and make arrangements with me).

Debates, the final exam, and argumentative essay must be completed on assigned dates.

**Note:** If you have a documented (medical, personal, etc.) reason why you cannot complete a particular assignment on the stated day and time, get in touch with me as soon as possible.

## Important Notes

1. Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e., 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
2. Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarized ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
3. Students are required to submit writing assignments using Turnitin.
4. To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>

## Course Schedule

Readings from HKU Critical Thinking web are listed with a letter and number (i.e., C01). Here is a key to the abbreviations: Critical Thinking (C), Basic Logic (L), Meaning Analysis (M), Argument Analysis (A), Sentential Logic (SL), and Fallacies and Biases (F).

Date	Topic	Reading
January 17 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction	C01; C03

January 19 <sup>th</sup>	Statements, Arguments, Validity, and Soundness	A01; A02; A03; A04; L02
January 24 <sup>th</sup>	<i>No class</i>	
January 26 <sup>th</sup>	<i>No class</i>	
January 31 <sup>st</sup>	Argument Forms	A05
February 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Hidden Assumptions and Inductive Reasoning	A07; A08; A09
February 7 <sup>th</sup>	Argument Mapping	A10
February 9 <sup>th</sup>	Modal Concepts	M06; M07; L04
February 14 <sup>th</sup>	Modal Concepts (ctd.)	
February 16 <sup>th</sup>	Definitions	M02; M03; M05; M08; M09
February 21 <sup>st</sup>	<i>No Class</i>	
February 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Fallacies	F01; F02; F03; F04; F05; F06
February 28 <sup>th</sup>	Deduction: Symbolization	SL06
March 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Truth Tables	SL03
March 7 <sup>th</sup>	Complex Truth Tables	SL04
March 9 <sup>th</sup>	Validity and Counterexamples	SL07
March 14 <sup>th</sup>	Natural Deduction	SL11; SL12; SL13; SL14; SL15
March 16 <sup>th</sup>	Natural Deduction (ctd.)	
March 21 <sup>st</sup>	Review	
March 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Class Quiz	
March 28 <sup>th</sup>	Ethical Arguments: An Introductory Survey	
March 30 <sup>th</sup>	The ethics of abortion	Korman, 'The Ethics of Abortion'
April 4 <sup>th</sup>	The Ethics of Eating Meat	Korman, 'Eating Animals'
April 6 <sup>th</sup>	Utilitarianism	Korman, 'What Makes Things Right'

April 11 <sup>th</sup>	Debate 1	
April 13 <sup>th</sup>	Debate 2	
April 18 <sup>th</sup>	Debate 3	
April 20 <sup>th</sup>	Review + Writing Tips	Korman, 'Writing'
May 5th	Argumentative Essay	
TBD	Final Exam	

### **Syllabus Revision Policy**

I reserve the right to make changes to the course syllabus throughout the term as necessary. If I need to make any substantial changes, I will inform you as soon as possible and provide you with an updated version of the syllabus.