

Syllabus

Boğaziçi University

PHIL 105 – Informal Logic, Summer 2026

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Office Hours: By appointment

Description: As rational creatures, we human beings routinely engage in reasoning and are frequently in the business of rationalizing (giving reasons for) our beliefs and actions. However, reasoning and rationalization is not an error-free process: it is an everyday fact that our reasoning is prone to committing some well-known fallacies and the rationalizations we provide for our beliefs and actions may actually be far from providing good reasons.

There are two central questions that we will attempt to address and discuss in this course: (1) What is it that makes a set of sentences *an argument*? (2) How are we to distinguish *a good argument* from a fallacy or a bad case of reasoning? The course will discuss a rich set of examples of arguments and fallacies and introduce some of the basic distinctions between different types of arguments. The course aims to endow students with some topic-neutral critical abilities, abilities that can be used in any specific rational inquiry or discipline.

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for the course.

Required Texts: The main material for the course is the following book: Tracy Powell and Gary Kemp, *Critical Thinking: A Concise Guide*, Routledge, 2002.

The chapters of the book will be sent you by email before the corresponding lecture. Additional readings may also be assigned.

Requirements: Evaluation will be based on the following:

- (i) Four in class quizzes (quizzes will be announced in advance, questions will be about the topics previously covered): 20 % of final grade
- (ii) A mid-term exam: 35 % of final grade
- (iii) A comprehensive final exam: 45 % of final grade

Schedule of Topics and Readings (May be subject to change)

1. Introduction
2. Are Human Beings Systematically Irrational?
3. Why Should We Become Critical Thinkers?
4. Logic: Deductive Validity
5. Logic: Inductive Force
6. Arguments about God's Existence (Excerpt from Fisher's The Logic of Real Arguments)
7. Review of Previous lectures
8. Midterm Exam
9. Rhetorical Ploys and Fallacies
10. Rhetorical Ploys and Fallacies (cont.)
11. The Practice of Argument Reconstruction & Argument Assessment
12. Truth, Knowledge and Belief
13. Review of Previous Lectures
14. Final Exam: 14th Lecture

Academic Integrity and Classroom Courtesy: Cheating in exams (e.g., copying from others, or providing answers or information, either written or oral to classmates) is a serious academic offense. An attempt at plagiarism/cheating in exams or homework will lead to a grade of F, irrespective of your performance in the rest of the semester. Cheating includes giving or receiving assistance during a test. Plagiarism includes 'borrowing' in part or in whole from previously written homework or online sources. As a department, we also keep a record of people attempting plagiarism, and report it to the University Disciplinary Committee. Cell phones need to be switched off during the class. Using laptops for purposes that are not class-related is prohibited.

Informal Logic

Aran Arslan, Summer 2024