

Philosophy 115: Critical Reasoning

Fall Quarter 2011

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This is an online course. There are no meeting dates or times. The dates of instruction are 19 Sep 2011 to 7 Dec 2011.

Vista site address:

<http://vista.bellevuecollege.edu/webct/urw/tp0.lc9140011/cobaltMainFrame.dowebct>

Course Overview:

We encounter arguments in all spheres of our daily lives. Arguments, whether made by family members, scientists, politicians, or media figures, are tendered in support of some position or other. This course is designed to introduce you to the various forms of argumentation and the ways to assess the strengths/limitations of those arguments. By the end of the course, you should be able to extract arguments from a variety of sources and offer a philosophical analysis of each.

Goals and Objectives:

- Identify different forms of argument
- Extract and reconstruct arguments from different media
- Develop strategies for critically evaluating arguments
- Sharpen analytical writing skills
- Development of the philosophical vocabulary necessary to practice effective critical thinking

Required Text:

Richard Feldman, *Reason and Argument* (2nd ed), Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999. ISBN: 0-13-624602-8

Additional reading materials may be provided on our Vista site. You'll be responsible for these readings as well. The reading load for the course will be in general quite heavy. Not only do we have a text to read, but in order to develop good argument analysis skills, we'll need to turn to additional sources such as newspaper articles and the like. So, you should plan to spend lots and lots of time reading in order to satisfy the requirements for this course. Additionally, due to the technical nature of some of the concepts and topics covered in the reading, full comprehension will not come easily. Students are hereby advised that it will be necessary to read very closely, and to attempt each of our assigned readings at least twice.

Grades/Assessment

Your final grade will be based on points earned in the following categories, and weighted accorded to the following percentages:

Weekly Homework Assignments	30%
Online Discussion	15%
Analysis Paper (including proposal)	25%
Exams (2)	30% (15% Midterm, 15% Final)

More specific information about assessment:

Please read very carefully the document titled “Getting Started” under the Getting Started section of the Vista site. The information provided here is intended to be only a supplement to the information provided in that document.

Homework will be assigned on a weekly basis, and will be due each week on Sundays at 23.59 PDT/PST. You will submit your homework assignments to me electronically, as Word documents attached to email messages sent using the Vista email tool. Details on how homework will be assessed are laid out in the “Getting Started” document. You must earn a score of “satisfactory” on at least eight (8) of the ten (10) homework assignments in order to earn **any** credit for this category of the course. You can miss one (1) homework assignment without penalty to the final grade.

For the online discussion component of the course, you will be placed in a “peer group” consisting of no more than six (6) students total. Sometimes I will provide topics for discussion, and other times, I will ask you and the other members of your peer group to find your own materials to serve as discussion topics. You’ll be evaluated primarily on the basis of how consistent and thoughtful your contributions to these discussions are. I’ll also take into account the overall quality of your writing when evaluating your performance in online discussion. This means that you should make every effort to avoid failures to use proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, and the like. Additionally, chatspeak (the kind of sloppy and informal writing that people tend to display when chatting online, or sending text messages) is **strictly prohibited** in our class. **Never** use “u” instead of “you”, or abbreviations such as “LOL” or emoticons in written work that will be evaluated for credit. This class is a forum for the development of good critical reasoning **and** good writing skills.

You will select your own topic for the analysis paper, and you will need to track down at least two argumentative articles that can serve as the subject matter for the argument analysis you will conduct therein. By the Monday of the eighth week of the course, you will be expected to turn in to me a short proposal (roughly 1 page) for your analysis paper, in which you will tell me the particular sources you plan to use, and provide a brief overview of the thesis claim you will defend in that paper. **Please be advised that you should begin thinking about the analysis paper early on in the course.** It is strongly suggested that you consider writing on a topic that is of at least some interest to you personally, on which there is plenty of room for reasonable disagreement, and for which there is ample extant literature. It is not required that you find sources in academic journals or texts; you may use (reputable, journalistically-sound) newspapers, online blogs, and the like. If you are having trouble identifying a topic and/or sources, you should consult me as soon as possible.

Our exams will take place online and will be “open book”. These exams cannot be rescheduled for any reason whatsoever. The midterm will be available from Sun 30 Oct at 00.30 PDT to Thu 3 Nov at 23.59 PST, and the final from Sun 4 Dec at 00.30 PST to Wed 7 Dec at 23.59 PST.

INFORMATION PERTINENT TO STUDENT LIFE AND AFFAIRS AT BELLEVUE COLLEGE:

A link to the Philosophy department’s web site: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/philosophy/>

Affirmation of Inclusion

Bellevue College is committed to maintaining an environment in which every member of the campus community feels welcome to participate in the life of the college, free from harassment and discrimination.

We value our different backgrounds at Bellevue College, and students, faculty, staff members, and administrators are to treat one another with dignity and respect.

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/about/goals/inclusion.asp>

Division Statements

You should also review the Arts and Humanities Expectations posted here:

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/artshum/policy.html>

Information about Bellevue Colleges copyright guidelines can be found at:

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/links/copyright.html>

A good resource for Plagiarism is the Writing

Lab: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/Plagiarism.html>

Student Code of Academic Conduct

“Cheating, stealing and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one’s own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive classroom behavior are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue College. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: talking out of turn, arriving late or leaving early without a valid reason, allowing cell phones/pagers to ring, and inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates. The instructor can refer any violation of the Student Code of Conduct to the Vice President of Student Services for possible probation or suspension from Bellevue College. Specific student rights, responsibilities and appeal procedures are listed in the Student Code of Conduct, available in the office of the Vice President of Student Services.” The Student Code, Policy 2050, in its entirety is located at: http://bellevuecollege.edu/policies/2/2050_Student_Code.asp

Bellevue College E-mail and access to MyBC: All students registered for classes at Bellevue College are entitled to a network and e-mail account. Your student network account can be used to access your student e-mail, log in to computers in labs and classrooms, connect to the BC wireless network and log in to MyBC. To create your account, go to: <https://bellevuecollege.edu/sam> .

BC offers a wide variety of computer and learning labs to enhance learning and student success. Find current campus locations for all student labs by visiting the Computing Services website.

Disability Resource Center (DRC) The Disability Resource Center serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact us as soon as possible. If you are a person who requires assistance in case of an emergency situation, such as a fire, earthquake, etc, please meet with your individual instructors to develop a safety plan within the first week of the quarter. The DRC office is located in B 132 or you can call our reception desk at 425.564.2498. Deaf students can reach us by video phone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. Please visit our website for application information into our program and other helpful links at www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc

Public Safety

The Bellevue College (BC) Public Safety Department's well trained and courteous non-commissioned staff provides personal safety, security, crime prevention, preliminary investigations, and other services to the campus community, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Their phone number is 425.564.2400. The Public Safety website is your one-stop resource for campus emergency preparedness information, campus closure announcements and critical information in the event of an emergency. Public Safety is located in K100 and on the web at: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/publicsafety/>

Academic Calendar

The Bellevue College Academic Calendar is separated into two calendars. They provide information about holidays, closures and important enrollment dates such as the finals schedule.

Enrollment Calendar - <http://bellevuecollege.edu/enrollment/calendar/deadlines/>. On this calendar you will find admissions and registration dates and important dates for withdrawing and receiving tuition refunds.

College Calendar - <http://bellevuecollege.edu/enrollment/calendar/holidays/0910.asp>. This calendar gives you the year at a glance and includes college holidays, scheduled closures, quarter end and start dates, and final exam dates.

ONLINE COURSE

It is the sole responsibility of the student to ensure that she has access to a reliable internet connection for purposes of working through the course. An inability to connect to the internet cannot count as an excuse for failing to turn in work on time. You are not required to be online at any particular time or on any particular day. However, I will assume that you are checking in with the course at least once every 48 hours. You are responsible for ensuring that you are checking in often enough to catch any important all-course communication I may have sent, or to be apprised of any changes in due dates or assignments.

TENTATIVE COURSE READINGS AND CALENDAR OF DUE DATES (subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. In the event of a change, timely advance notice will of course be provided.) Please remember that there is a homework assignment for each week of the course, which is always due electronically on Sunday of that week at 23.59 PDT/PST.

Week 1 (19 Sep-25 Sep) - **CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS**

Reading: Feldman, Chs. 1 and 2

Week 2 (26 Sep-2 Oct) - **DEDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS**

Reading: Feldman, pp. 55-80, 94-102

Week 3 (3 Oct-9 Oct) - **INDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS**

Reading: Feldman, pp. 80-92, 102-110

Week 4 (10 Oct-16 Oct) - **RECONSTRUCTING ARGUMENTS**

Reading: Feldman, Ch. 5

Week 5 (17 Oct-23 Oct) - **RECONSTRUCTING ARGUMENTS CONTINUED**

Reading: Feldman, Ch. 6

Week 6 (24 Oct-30 Oct) - **EVALUATING ARGUMENTS**

Reading: Feldman, Ch. 7

Note: Midterm exam available from Sun 30 Oct at 00.30 PDT to Thu 4 Nov at 23.59 PDT

Week 7 (31 Oct-6 Nov) - **TESTIMONY**

Reading: Feldman, Ch. 8

Week 8 (7 Nov-13 Nov) - **STATISTICAL ARGUMENTS AND PREDICTIONS**

Reading: Feldman, Ch. 9

Week 9 (14 Nov-20 Nov) - **CAUSAL ARGUMENTS**

Reading: Feldman, Ch. 10

Weeks 10 and 11 (21 Nov-4 Dec) - **MORAL ARGUMENTS**

Reading: Feldman, Ch. 11

Note: Final exam available from Sun 4 Dec at 00.30 PDT to Wed 7 Dec at 23.59 PDT