

**Course Syllabus
Philosophy 115
Critical Reasoning
Winter 2015**

Instructor: Tim Linnemann
Office Hours: B100A Monday 12:30-1:30 PM
timlinnemann@gmail.com
206-919-6934

Text: Fogelin & Sinnott-Armstrong, *Understanding Arguments: An Introduction to Informal Logic*

(Optional): Damer, *Attacking Faulty Reasoning: A Practical Guide to Fallacy-Free Arguments*

Course Description: Arguments permeate our lives. It is impossible to avoid them even if we wanted to – and we usually don't. They are a deep component of the way that we relate to each other, ourselves, and the world. One doesn't have to be a philosopher to appreciate this or to take up a study to understand them better, but because constructing good arguments is so essential to the practice of philosophy (and reason itself is a frequent topic of philosophical research), philosophers have in the course of history contributed much to our understanding of arguments and our engagement with them.

This course is designed around the premise that critical reasoning is first and foremost an activity in which one can be more or less skilled. Moreover, it is a skill that can be developed through training and practice. The hope is that satisfactory completion of the course will enable you to construct and evaluate arguments with greater understanding, comfort, and productivity. Accomplishing this will of course require a familiarity with the concepts and theories behind what arguments are and how they function, but there will be a constant eye toward how such concepts apply to the *activity* of argumentative reasoning – most specifically within the context of dialogue and conversation.

There will be three main modules in this course: a section on language and how to identify arguments and their various purposes, a section on evaluating arguments for logical validity and strength, and a section on evaluating arguments in ways that extend beyond logic. The first concerns what arguments are and their structure, while the second two concern how to evaluate arguments formally and informally. The section on validity will involve a mini introduction to logic.

Objectives & Outcomes: There will be a two step focus to this course. The first step is to gain a familiarity and competence with some concepts that help to elucidate various features of arguments and how to evaluate them. In this course you will probably find some concepts so simple to understand that they appear trivial, while other concepts you may bang your head against for a while with no success. Which concepts are which will be different from student to student. Don't panic. Some of this just takes practice while others may be merely new and take some getting used to. I make myself very available as an instructor and I am always willing to talk over material for as long as it

takes. If you are having trouble, it is your responsibility to let me know so I can fulfill my responsibility of assisting to the utmost of my ability.

The second step is learning how to apply these concepts to your way of engaging with arguments – either with yourself or other people. Forums for engaging with arguments can include everything from deciding what to think of something, to settling on a course of action, exploring an experience or topic with a friend, or responding to the beliefs and expectations of others. Perhaps most significantly, skill at engaging with arguments is a crucial tool for adjudicating and resolving conflicts. The skills involved in each of these contexts take a lot of practice to develop and I will be trying to make opportunities for you to gain some more experience with them as a part of the course.

Grading:	Class Attendance	20%*(see summary)
	Homework	20%
	Writing Assignments	10%
	Tests (3)	50% (20; 20; 10% respectively)

Class Attendance: Attendance in this course is crucial for a variety of reasons. First, the material in this course builds on itself, so missing a day earlier on may make later work more difficult to do. Second, there is just a lot of material packed into this class. We'll be moving along at a quick pace and I won't be able to manage bringing a chunk of the class up to speed constantly. For these reasons, I'm devoting 20% of your total grade to your attendance record, so as to recognize this commitment of effort. **In addition, (back by popular demand!) anyone who misses more than 7 sessions will automatically fail the course. This is not negotiable, so please respect it!**

Homework: Homework will be assigned every week along with accompanying reading. Performance on these assignments will not be evaluated. I will be merely checking to see if the homework was completed. We will go over the answers to the homework during class, so you will be able to see if you got any answers incorrect and why. This policy leaves it perfectly open that you could (possibly) be less than earnest in your efforts and still get credit for this portion of the course. Toward this possibility I merely offer this advice: more so than other classes, the material in this course takes practice, and insincere effort with homework will 9 times out of 10 be reflected in the test scores. There are no quizzes in this course, so the homework is your best preparation for the tests!

Writing Assignments: I have planned a couple of writing projects that will, more or less, track the material we are working on in the class, but apply it to real world argumentation. While we are picking up the concepts and techniques that the class is introducing, most of the time this will happen under very ideal circumstances – like in textbook homework problems where examples are cherry-picked to be relevant. But the world isn't so accommodating, so these assignments will assist you in taking neat and orderly principles and categories and apply them to actually gain some real insight.

Tests: Tests will involve T/F, multiple choice, and short answer questions (some will ask you to do a good amount of explaining). There will also be some special questions depending on the section. For example, you may have to analyze a chunk of prose identifying the different parts of the argument embedded within it, or you may have to perform a rudimentary proof. I will always hold an informal study session before the test where anyone who wants to review the material more prior to the test can do so with other students who are like-minded. While class may see me directing conversation more (via lecturing), the informal study sessions put the control in your hands. Basically, I will hang

out in a conference room for a couple hours and answer questions students put to me or explain material upon request. One-on-one appointments are also, as always, an option, but in my experience, learning together works better for these test preps. Perhaps there is something that you think you get, but after hearing another student's confusion over it and the explanation you realize that you didn't have it down before (but then you will!).

Homework Labs: I am super excited to announce that starting this quarter I will be holding an *optional* lab once a week on Thursdays starting at 12:30. I pledge to stay for at least an hour, but I don't want to necessarily limit ourselves to that! Location is TBA.

These labs are intended to be another useful supplement to the coursework. They will be an opportunity for you to ask more questions about the ideas in the readings, and to have more practice and assistance with the homework problems. I'm quite open to adapting the format to suit the needs and preferences of those students who attend, but I'm hoping that these two goals are getting met no matter what we do.

Homework in this class will be reviewed *in class*, but because of the temporal limits on human cognition and verbal expression, we will never be able to cover everything assigned. These labs provide another resource for you to get some practice/advice time in with me. It's like I'm offering myself as a *free weekly tutor* – crazy!

If the time doesn't fit with your schedule and you want to attend, please let me know!

Student academic conduct: The principle of academic honesty underlies all that we do and applies to all courses at Bellevue College. One kind of academic dishonesty is plagiarism, which may take many forms, including, but not limited to, using a paper written by someone else, using printed sources word-for-word without proper documentation, and paraphrasing or summarizing the ideas of others without acknowledging the source. Plagiarism can also occur when non-written ideas are taken without documentation--using someone else's design or performance idea, for example. In short, plagiarism is passing off someone else's ideas, words, or images as your own; it amounts to intellectual theft--whether or not it was your intention to steal. Bellevue College instructors have access to commercial plagiarism detection software, so please be advised that any work you submit may be tested for plagiarism.

Participating in academic dishonesty in any way, including writing a paper or taking a test for someone else, may result in severe penalties. Dishonestly produced papers automatically receive a grade of "F" without the possibility of make-up. The Dean of Student Services will also be notified of such conduct, and repetition of the behavior will result in progressively more serious disciplinary action (for example, an instructor may recommend that the student fail the course for a second offense or even that a student be expelled for a serious offense, such as stealing an exam).

Grades lowered for plagiarism or other forms of dishonesty may be appealed through the regular channels, and any further disciplinary action taken by the Dean may also be appealed through existing processes.

Information about Bellevue College's copyright guidelines can be found at:
<http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/policies/id-2050/>

Disability Resource Center: 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.

If you are a student with a documented autism spectrum disorder, there is an additional access program available to you. Contact asn@bellevuecollege.edu or 425.564.2764. ASN is located in the Library Media Center in D125. www.bellevuecollege.edu/autismspectrumnavigators/

The DRC office is located in B132 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: Public Safety is located in the K building and can be reached at **425-564-2400** (easy to remember because it's the only office on campus open 24 hours a day—2400). Among other things, Public Safety serves as our Parking Permits, Lost and Found, and Emergency Notification center. Please ensure you are signed up to receive alerts through our campus alerting system by registering at <http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/alerts/?ref=footer>

If you work late and are uneasy about going to your car, Public Safety will escort you to your vehicle. To coordinate this, please phone ahead and let Public Safety know when and where you will need an escort.

Please familiarize yourself with the emergency postings by the door of every classroom and know where to go in the event of an evacuation. Your instructor will be asked if anyone might still be in the building, so check in before you do anything else. Emergency responders will search for anyone unaccounted for.

If a major emergency occurs, please follow these two rules:

- 1) Take directions from those in charge of the response - We all need to be working together.
- 2) Do not get in your car and leave campus (unless directed to) - Doing so will clog streets and prevent emergency vehicles from entering the scene. Instead, follow directions from those in charge.

Please do not hesitate to call Public Safety if you feel safety questions or concerns at any time.

Disclaimer: I reserve the right to make any changes to the course (content, grading, etc.). Further, I reserve the right to establish procedures for grading of students in exceptional cases. All and any modifications to this syllabus will be in accordance with the rules and regulations of Bellevue College. This syllabus does not constitute a contract between any combination of the student, the professor, or Bellevue College.

TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

1	Introduction to the Course	
2	<u>The Language of Arguments</u> Linguistic, Speech, and Conversational Acts Grice's Maxims of Conversational Implicature	<i>Understanding Arguments</i> Chapter 2
3	The Building Blocks of Arguments: Argument Markers Standard Form Guarding, Assuring and Discounting Moves Evaluative Language	<i>Understanding Arguments</i> Chapter 3; Chapter 8 pg. 215-218
4	8 Steps for Argumentative Analysis Fundamental Principles	<i>Understanding Arguments</i> Chapter 5
5	<u>Review & Test #1</u>	
6	<u>Formal Evaluations of Arguments</u> Deductive Arguments: Primer in Propositional Logic Checking for Validity	<i>Understanding Arguments</i> Chapter 6
7	Inductive Arguments: Statistical Generalizations and Applications Causal Arguments Inference to the Best Explanation Argument from Analogy	<i>Understanding Arguments</i> Chapter 8, 9, 10
8	<u>Review & Test #2</u>	
9	<u>Informal Evaluations of Arguments</u> Informal Fallacies Related to: Structural Principle Relevance Principle Acceptability Principle	<i>Attacking Faulty Reasoning</i> (handout) Selections from Chapters 5, 6, 7
10	Informal Fallacies Related to: Acceptability Principle (cont.) Sufficiency Principle Rebuttal Principle	<i>Attacking Faulty Reasoning</i> (handout) Selections from Chapters 7, 8, 9
11	<u>Review & Test #3</u>	