

Winter Session — January 6 to 24, 2014

Department of Philosophy

Course Descriptions

<http://www.philosophy.buffalo.edu/courses>

PHI 115 LEC	Critical Thinking	Staff/TBA
M T W R F, 9:00-11:40am	Room: NSC 205	#10089

“Critical thinking” is a skill that is widely endorsed but little understood. A simple characterization of critical thinking is that it requires a willingness to consider the falsity of all beliefs, even cherished ones, and an ability to consider, and evaluate, evidence and arguments both for and against any claim. There are three goals of this skill. First, one should be able to analyze the arguments of others, locating the conclusions, intermediate conclusions, and unstated premises of their arguments, as well as some skill in identifying valid or strong arguments (as opposed to invalid or weak ones). Second, one should be able to develop and state the strongest arguments for a position that one believes. Finally one should be able to find conclusions that are entailed by premises, including solving problems and puzzles. The last skill, problem solving, can even be applied to practical and philosophical problems.

In addition to making a student a more careful and critical reader and thinker, this course has benefits in improving the organization of one’s writing, becoming a more careful reader, and improving future performance on tests like the LSAT, MEDCAT, and GRE.

This course contrasts with PHI 215 and PHI 315 insofar as it will not use much symbolic logic. Critical thinking must address to some extent the typical valid and invalid patterns of reasoning, so we will look at some of the more common basic valid and invalid patterns in Aristotelian (using some, all, no) and propositional logic (and, or, if...then).

PHI 337 LEC	Social & Ethical Values in Medicine	TBA/Staff
M T W R F, 1:00-3:40pm	Room: NSC 216	#10090

The course will examine current bioethical controversies surrounding abortion, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, advanced directives, informed consent, embryonic stem cell research, the definition and criterion of death, increasing the supply of organs for transplant, commercial surrogate motherhood, and human cloning. The course is designed to not just help future doctors and nurses morally navigate themselves around their job but to enable students as citizens to develop informed and reasonable positions on the most important bioethical issues of the day. Students will become familiar with the leading arguments on both sides of contemporary bioethical controversies. The readings are chosen to provide opposing positions. Each topic covered will have a second author arguing against the position defended in the first reading,

usually commenting on the very author and essay just read. Even if students don't switch sides on an issue due to the course readings, lectures and discussions, the hope is that they will not only be able to give a stronger defense of their own positions but will also come to better appreciate the considerations that favor the opposing side. This might play a small role in making public debate more civil and reasonable. The methodologies employed in the class should make students more aware of their own basic values, perhaps revealing to them commitments of which they were previously unaware. Students will learn how to construct philosophical arguments and critically read philosophical essays. The course will involve reading and analyzing articles by Judith Thomson and Don Marquis on abortion, Leon Kass, David Velleman and Frances Kamm on euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, Alan Shewmon and Jeff McMahan on death, David Shoemaker and Rose Koch on embryonic stem cell research, Elizabeth Anderson and Richard Arneson on Commercial Surrogacy, Leon Kass and David Hershenov on human cloning, Jim Delaney and Robert Veatch and Michael Gill on organ transplants, James Childress and Veatch on informed consent, Rebecca Dresser and Ronald Dworkin on advance directives. All the readings will be placed on the library electronic course reserve so students will not have to buy any texts or course readers.

PHI 489 SEM
Online

Virtual Media Ethics
Online

Kolodczak, D.
#10091

Examines issues and information related to ethical concerns that are inherent in simulated environments. Based in a computer lab, students engage in research projects that explore ethical questions about how and why people interact with virtual media, ranging from syndromic surveillance analysis, to ever-emergent iterations of shared media, to 3D immersive worlds structured as games to win or lose.

Notes: Cross listed with COM 467

Instruction Mode: Online via UBLearn