

Philosophical Skills

ARU Q1-Q2, 2023

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Course Description: The purpose of this course is to teach students the skills of finding, analyzing, and assessing argumentation as presented in written communication.

Texts & Resources:

- “[Analyzing and Assessing Arguments](#)” by Gregory Salmieri
- Students must make an account on [ReasonSpace](#)
- We will be using [PollEverywhere](#). No account is required, but an app is available on smartphones and tablets.
- Misc. additional readings will be distributed electronically

Class Times & Office Hours:

Class meets on Thursdays at 1:00pm - 3:00pm PT

Dan’s Office Hours: Mondays/Wednesdays 7:00am - 8:00am PT

Mike’s Office Hours: Mondays/Wednesdays 3:00pm - 5:00pm PT

Assignments & Grades:

Homework assignments (50%): At the end of each class we will assign homework, due on the following Monday. Homework will be discussed at the beginning of the subsequent class.

Q1 project (25%): Over break, students will choose one of several readings to map and evaluate. Details will be provided in a separate document.

Q2 project (25%): After Wk16, students will choose one of several readings to evaluate in the form of an English-prose essay. Details will be provided in a separate document.

Class participation (5% bonus): Students are expected to actively participate in in-class exercises. Students who do so will be awarded bonus points based on their level of participation and their attendance of office hours.

Policies: All policies from the OAC Handbook apply to this course, including policies on late work and extensions. Extensions must be requested at least 48 hours before the deadline. Extension requests must be submitted through the LearnDash extension request feature.

Students are expected to keep their cameras on during class time. Those who would believe they have a good reason not to must contact an instructor for an exemption.

Course Schedule

Q1 - Basic Argument Analysis & Evaluation

Wk1: *What is an argument?*

- Why we need to evaluate the arguments of others and to make our own.
- What an argument is: the parts and structure of arguments.
- How to model argumentation.

Wk2: *Finding and reconstructing an argument.*

- How to find an argument in prose writing.
- How to reconstruct an argument using argument mapping.

Wk3: *Evaluating arguments.*

- Epistemic status: arbitrary, possible, probable, certain and how these apply to premises and inferences.
- How epistemic status transfers through an argument.

Wk4: *Skills Workshop #1.*

Wk5: *Extended arguments.*

- How to distinguish argumentative from non-argumentative components of longer writing.

Wk6: *Arguments & other forms of reasoning: terms and definition.*

- How to define a term.

- Equivocation: how to check to see if terms within an argument being used consistently.

Wk7: *Arguments & other forms of reasoning: explanation.*

- What is an explanation? vs. an argument.
- How should we evaluate explanations?

Wk8: *Skills Workshop #2*

Q2 - Philosophical Skills in Action.

The details of Q2 will be determined based on student needs as evidenced in Q1. The instructors reserve the right to modify the contents of Q2 to ensure students master the basic skills taught in Q1.

Wk9: Rand's argument that philosophy is worth studying.

Wk10: Russell's argument that philosophy is worth studying.

Wk11: Mill's Proof the Principle of Utility.

Wk12: Hobbes' Reply to the Fool.

Wk13: Skepticism I

Wk14: Skepticism II

Wk15: Lucretius on the fear of death.

Wk16: Michael Sandel's "The Case Against Perfection."