

Practical Reasoning: PHIL 105

Syllabus

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Description

Reasoning should help us accurately understand the world, guiding us to true beliefs and good actions. In this class we'll try to get a better grip on how to do this well by exploring lessons from philosophy, cognitive science, social psychology, and behavioral economics.

Our goal will be to get better at reasoning, and the way we'll pursue that goal is to learn a lot about what good reasoning looks like, what's required of us to pursue it, and why we often fail (sometimes without even realizing it). We'll practice being aware of reasoning, thinking about our thinking, and trying to cultivate habits that will lead to better reasoning.

As a 4-credit course, the expected amount of work outside of classroom time by university standards is 8-12 hours per week (which includes reading, taking notes, preparing for class, and working on essays and your project).

Objectives

The goals of this course are to empower you to:

- Identify what the requirements for good reasoning are and the common ways in which we fail to meet those requirements.
- Engage in reflective and respectful discussion with your peers about the topic of the course.
- Reflect meaningfully on the relevance of what you've read and discussed with the goal of developing better habits of reasoning in your own life.

I'll measure your progress in these objectives by recording your performance on the assignments mentioned below.

Modality

This is an asynchronous course, which means we aren't meeting face-to-face or at any particular time. We are, however, connecting throughout each week online for discussion of course material.

All course assignments will be hosted on the Top Hat platform. The cost to purchase use of the platform for one term is \$30 and the cost to use the text is an additional \$30, so you'll need to create a Top Hat account and pay the total of \$60 to access the platform and text.

The course syllabus and all course lectures will be made available on Blackboard.

Communication

I will be available to contact via email every weekday before 5pm and will endeavor to respond to an email within 48 hours. To make sure your email is responded to in a timely manner, please put "PHIL 105" in the subject line.

If I email you, the email will be sent to your school email, so you should check that once per day on weekdays. If my email requires a response, please respond within 48 hours.

If you're contacting me to ask a question about the course, an assignment, or something related, make sure to check the syllabus or the assignment instructions first! Communication doesn't just need to be about assignments, though. If you want to email me or arrange office hours to talk about life or how your semester is going, you're welcome to.

Texts

The following text is required.

Reason Better, David Manley. Available on the Top Hat platform.

Assignments and Grading

Your grade for this course will be determined by your performance on weekly homeworks, weekly online discussion, weekly journal entries, and three exams. All assignments will be hosted on the Top Hat platform.

HOMEWORKS		10%
WEEKLY DISCUSSION		20%
JOURNAL		20%
EXAMS	MIDTERM 1	15%
	MIDTERM 2	15%
	FINAL	20%

Homeworks

Each chapter of *Reason Better* will contain at least 10 homework questions, to be completed as you read the text. Reading and homework are due by the end of the class week during which the reading is assigned. So, for a reading assigned during the week of 02/01-02/07, the reading and associated homework has a due date of 02/07 at 11:59 p.m.

Weekly Discussion

Our text-based classroom discussion will take place on Top Hat Discussion boards. Every week, you're required to make at least two substantive posts about the reading for that week in the discussion forum associated with the week. A substantive post is a post that asks a question, makes an argument, poses an objection, or in some other way interacts thoughtfully with a course text, the related lecture video, another substantive post, or something (say, in the news) that directly relates to the topics of the course.

Journal

During each week in which there is assigned reading, you'll be asked to write a "long answer" response to a question about how the material from that week's reading applies to your own life. The focus in this series of journal entries is to pay attention to your own thinking, or to practice what's called "metacognition". These journal entries are a chance to be aware of things like what your reasoning mindset is, how you use generalizations in everyday reasoning, or how your thinking could be more clear. Each entry should be between 200-400 words and should relate directly to the reading material of the week by exploring how that material applies to one's own patterns of reasoning or experiences with reasoning.

Exams

There will be three exams. The first midterm will cover material from chapters 1-4. The second midterm will cover material from chapters 5-8. The final will be cumulative, covering material from chapters 1-10. Each exam will be timed.

Late Work

I won't take late homeworks. I will take other assignments or exams late. Please just communicate with me ahead of time and provide a reason to receive an excuse. Late Journal entries without an excuse won't be counted. The penalty for late exams without an excuse is one third of a letter grade per day. For example, an exam that would've been an A, if handed in one day late would instead be given an A-. If handed in two days late it would instead be given a B+. Work is to be submitted on Moodle on

the day it is due before the start of class. Work will be considered one day late if it is to me between any time in the 24 hours after the due date, two days late if to me between 24-48 hours of the due date, and so on.

Academic Dishonesty

Don't plagiarize or cheat. I'll know if you do, and you will receive a 0 on the assignment (and possibly fail the course). It's also immoral and you'll be worse off as a person if you do it. You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is. If you aren't sure whether something counts as plagiarism or cheating, ask me. Simple cases are things like copying words or ideas from others, answering an exam question with material you didn't write, or helping anyone else do any of those kinds of things. You can research our school's stance on plagiarism and cheating online.

Students with Disabilities

If you desire accommodations for this class on the basis of physical, learning, psychological or emotional disability, you should contact Disability Services. Make sure to plan ahead if you are going to ask for adjustments to assignment requirements.

Tentative Course Schedule

Our course lasts for 13 weeks. On the following page you will find a schedule of how—tentatively—the readings and assignments will break down over those weeks.

Dates	Unit	Reading Due	Assignments Due
02/01-02/07	Reasoning	RB, ch. 1	ch. 1 homework, ch. 1 journal, discussion posts
02/08-02/14	Mindset	RB, ch. 2	ch. 2 homework, ch. 2 journal, discussion posts
02/15-02/21	Clarity	RB, ch. 3	ch. 3 homework, ch. 3 journal, discussion posts
02/22-02/28	Entailment	RB, ch. 4	ch. 4 homework, ch. 4 journal, discussion posts
03/01-03/07	Review 1-4		Midterm 1
03/08-03/14	Evidence	RB, ch. 5	ch. 5 homework, ch. 5 journal, discussion posts
03/15-03/21	Generalizations	RB, ch. 6	ch. 1 homework, ch. 6 journal, discussion posts
03/22-03/28	Causes	RB, ch. 7	ch. 7 homework, ch. 7 journal, discussion posts
03/29-04/04	Updating	RB, ch. 8	ch. 8 homework, ch. 8 journal, discussion posts
04/05-04/11	Review 5-8		Midterm 2
04/12-04/18	Theories	RB, ch. 9	ch. 9 homework, ch. 9 journal, discussion posts
04/19-04/25	Decisions	RB, ch. 10	ch. 10 homework, ch. 10 journal, discussion posts
04/26-05/02	Review All		
05/03-05/10	Final		Final Exam