

**PL 398  
Critical Thinking  
An Online Course  
Summer 2015**

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**John Carroll University**

**Instructor: Dr. Sharon Kaye**  
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**Course Work:** Two midterm exams, each worth 15%  
Final exam, not cumulative, worth 20%  
10 quizzes, together worth 20%  
12 one-page papers, with peer review, together worth 30%

**Required Text:** *How to Think Logically*  
by Gary Seay and Susana Nuccetelli

**Course Description:**

Critical thinking skills are more vital than ever as a component of a liberal education. In a world where college graduates face increasingly fierce competition for jobs, those who are careful reasoners, lucid writers, and clear-headed thinkers are simply better equipped to succeed in any area of specialization. Learning these skills, however, should not be a dry, dull process, but an exercise leavened with humor and down-to-earth examples that students can understand.

Focused throughout on arguments and how we may evaluate them, this course is intended to show students how to distinguish between arguments that ought to persuade us and those that should not. It presents students with criteria for assessing both deductive and inductive reasoning.

We will discuss natural language, meaning, truth, belief, and definition. We will also examine twenty of the most common informal fallacies, explaining what is wrong with each type and how to avoid it. We will study deductive reasoning, both in modern, propositional logic (including the rudiments of symbolic notation and natural deduction) and traditional, syllogistic logic.

**Learning Outcomes:**

In this course you will:

1. Develop the skills necessary to critically evaluate arguments and evidence.
2. Understand the relationship between philosophy and other academic disciplines.
3. Develop the skills necessary to become critically engaged citizens.

These outcomes are applications of the following university learning outcomes:

- 1 Demonstrate an integrative knowledge of human and natural worlds;
2. Develop habits of critical analysis and aesthetic appreciation;

### 3. Apply creative and innovative thinking

#### **Evaluation:**

Your final grade will be calculated in accordance with standard university letter grades.

A = 92 and above    A- = 90-92    B+ = 88-89    B = 82-87    B- = 80-81  
C+ = 78-79    C = 72-77    C- = 70-71    D+ = 68-69    D = 62-67    D- = 60-61  
F = 59 and below

#### **Quizzes**

Each day that a chapter is assigned you will take a quiz on the chapter. You may take the quiz any time on the day it is due. It will consist of 40 true/false or multiple choice questions. You may consult your textbook as much as you wish during the quiz, but you will need to read the chapter carefully before you take the quiz in order to answer the questions accurately within the time limit—40 minutes. You may not stop and restart the quiz. These quizzes are designed to promote reading comprehension—a valuable skill for any future career.

#### **Canvas Discussion Sessions**

Every other day, we will hold an asynchronous online class discussion of questions concerning the reading. Submit your 400-word answer to the question given on the timetable below by noon. Then, read the peer essay (which Canvas will assign to you at noon) and submit a 150-word review of it by midnight. In this review, you can agree with your classmate or disagree, or point out related insights. It often helps to use an example of your own to illustrate your view and make your case. These submissions must meet the requisite word number and must be substantive. They will be graded according to four criteria—accuracy, clarity, originality, and sophistication. For a further description of these criteria, see the grading rubric under assignments on Canvas.

#### **Exams:**

There are three exams for this course; all are required in order to pass. Like your quizzes, you may take them any time on the day they are due. Unlike your quizzes, these exams are closed-book. You may not consult any aids in taking these exams. This is to encourage you to internalize the material you have learned. **YOU WILL NEED TO USE RESPONDUS LOCKDOWN BROWSER TO TAKE THE EXAM ALONG WITH A WEBCAM ON YOUR COMPUTER TO ENSURE THAT YOU DO NOT USE AIDS.** Access codes for the exams are: summer 1, summer 2, and summer 3. The first exam covers chapters 1-3; the second covers 4-7; the third and final covers 8-10. The first two have 60 multiple choice questions and must be completed in 60 minutes. The final has 80 multiple choice questions and must be completed in 80 minutes.

<b>Timetable</b>	Mon June 15 1. For today, view:
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	<p><i>Critical Thinking</i> Parts 1-6  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSZ3BUru59A&amp;list=PL3srtaIPWjyeERtFRxL7Liu0b2rzVzYG0">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSZ3BUru59A&amp;list=PL3srtaIPWjyeERtFRxL7Liu0b2rzVzYG0</a></p> <p>2. By noon: submit a 400-word essay discussing what you found most interesting about the videos.  3. By midnight: submit a 150-word review of the peer essay assigned to you. (Assignments made by Canvas at noon.)</p>
<p>Tues June 16</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For today, read Chapter 1</li> <li>2. Take Chapter 1 Quiz</li> </ol>	<p>Wed June 17</p> <p>Canvas discussion session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By noon: select a claim you feel very strongly about and submit a 400-word essay explaining what you take to be the best reasons for that claim.</li> <li>2. By midnight: submit a 150-word review of the peer essay assigned to you. (Assignments made by Canvas at noon.)</li> </ol>
<p>Thurs June 18</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For today, read Chapter 2</li> <li>2. Take Chapter 2 Quiz</li> </ol>	<p>Fri June 19</p> <p>Canvas discussion session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By noon: submit a 400-word essay describing a rhetorically skillful speaker you recently heard. Explain why the speech was persuasive.</li> <li>2. By midnight: submit a 150-word review of the peer essay assigned to you. (Assignments made by Canvas at noon.)</li> </ol>
<p>Mon June 22</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For today, read Chapter 3</li> <li>2. Take Chapter 3 Quiz</li> </ol>	<p>Tues June 23</p> <p>Canvas discussion session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By noon: submit a 400-word essay describing three logically impossible scenarios. Explain why they are logically impossible.</li> <li>2. By midnight: submit a 150-word review of the peer essay assigned to you. (Assignments made by Canvas at noon.)</li> </ol>
<p>Wed June 24</p> <p>First Midterm Exam</p>	<p>Thurs June 25</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For today, view:  Here Be Dragons  <a href="http://herebedragonsmovie.com/">http://herebedragonsmovie.com/</a></li> <li>1. By noon: submit a 400-word essay discussing the aspect of the</li> </ol>

	<p>video you found most interesting.</p> <p>2. By midnight: submit a 150-word review of the peer essay assigned to you. (Assignments made by Canvas at noon.)</p>
<p>Fri June 26</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Chapter 4</li> <li>2. Take Chapter 4 Quiz</li> </ol>	<p>Mon June 29</p> <p>Canvas discussion session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By noon: submit a 400-word essay describing a normative argument you find persuasive. Explain what makes it normative. (Due by beginning of class.)</li> <li>2. By midnight: submit a 150-word review of the peer essay assigned to you. (Assignments made by Canvas at noon.)</li> </ol>
<p>Tues June 30</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Chapter 5</li> <li>2. Take Chapter 5 Quiz</li> </ol>	<p>Wed July 1</p> <p>Canvas discussion session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By noon: select a blog on the web making an argument you find persuasive. Submit a deductive reconstruction of the argument.</li> <li>2. By midnight: submit a 150-word review of the peer essay assigned to you. (Assignments made by Canvas at noon.)</li> </ol>
<p>Thurs July 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Chapter 6</li> <li>2. Take Chapter 6 Quiz</li> </ol>	<p>Fri July 3</p> <p>Canvas discussion session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By noon: submit a 400-word essay describing three superstitious beliefs. Explain why you think they are unworthy of belief.</li> <li>2. By midnight: submit a 150-word review of the peer essay assigned to you. (Assignments made by Canvas at noon.)</li> </ol>
<p>Mon July 6</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Chapter 7</li> <li>2. Take Chapter 7 Quiz</li> <li>3. Canvas discussion session: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By noon: submit a 400-word essay describing a mistake in reasoning one of your teachers recently made. Explain how you think the reasoning should be corrected.</li> <li>2. By midnight: submit a 150-word review of the peer essay assigned to you.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>Tues July 7</p> <p>Second Midterm Exam</p>

(Assignments made by Canvas at noon.)	
<p>Wed July 8</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Chapter 8</li> <li>2. Take Chapter 8 Quiz</li> </ol>	<p>Thurs July 9</p> <p>Canvas discussion session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By noon: submit a 400-word essay describing three beliefs/actions that you think fall beyond the limits of tolerance. Explain why they commit the fallacy of accident.</li> <li>2. By midnight: submit a 150-word review of the peer essay assigned to you. (Assignments made by Canvas at noon.)</li> </ol>
<p>Fri July 10</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1: Read Chapter 9</li> <li>2. Take Chapter 9 Quiz</li> </ol>	<p>Mon July 13</p> <p>Canvas discussion session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By noon: Submit a 400-word essay describing a slippery slope argument you have heard. Explain how you think the slippery slope could be avoided.</li> <li>2. By midnight: submit a 150-word review of the peer essay assigned to you. (Assignments made by Canvas at noon.)</li> </ol>
<p>Tues July 14</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Chapter 10</li> <li>2. Take Chapter 10 Quiz</li> </ol>	<p>Wed July 15</p> <p>Canvas discussion session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By noon: submit a 400-word essay describing a fallacious argument you have recently heard (other than accident or slippery slope). Explain how you think the argument could be corrected.</li> <li>2. By midnight: submit a 150-word review of the peer essay assigned to you. (Assignments made by Canvas at noon.)</li> </ol>
<p>Thurs July 16</p> <p>Final Exam</p>	

## University Policies

### 1. Policy on Documentation and Accommodation of Disabilities:

In accordance with federal law, if you have a documented disability (learning, psychological, sensory, physical, or medical) you may be eligible to request accommodations from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). To make a request for accommodations, please contact SSD Director Allison West at (216) 397-4967 or visit the SSD office, located in Room 7A, on the garden (lower) level of the Administration Building. Please keep in mind that

accommodations are not retroactive so it is best to register with SSD at the beginning of each semester. Only those accommodations approved by SSD will be recognized by your instructors. Please contact SSD if you have further questions.

## **2. Policy on Academic Honesty**

For the full JCU policy on academic honesty, please refer students to the 2013-2015 Undergraduate Bulletin, pp. 110-112 or the Community Standards section of the Dean of Students Website (<http://sites.jcu.edu/deanofstudents/pages/community-standards/academic-honesty/>).

Academic honesty, expected of every student, is essential to the process of education and to upholding high ethical standards. Cheating, including plagiarism, inappropriate use of technology, or any other kind of unethical behavior, may subject the student to severe academic penalties, including dismissal.

All work submitted for evaluation in a course, including tests, term papers, and computer programs, must represent only the work of the student unless indicated otherwise.

Material taken from the work of others must be acknowledged. Materials submitted to fulfill requirements in one course may not be submitted in another course without prior approval of the instructor(s).

Concerns about the propriety of obtaining outside assistance and acknowledging sources should be addressed to the instructor of the course before the work commences and as necessary as the work proceeds.

## **3. Policy on Mutual Respect:**

John Carroll University is committed to fostering ethical and moral values that are consistent with Jesuit and Catholic traditions. Among the central values of the University are the inherent dignities of every individual as well as the right of each person to hold and to express his or her viewpoint. When these views conflict it is the obligation of members of the community to respect other perspectives.

The University welcomes students, faculty, staff, and visitors from diverse backgrounds and it works to ensure that they will find the University environment free of discriminatory conduct. It is unacceptable and a violation of University policy to harass, abuse, or discriminate against any person because of age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

## **4. Stop Bias:**

John Carroll University is committed to fostering ethical and moral values that are consistent with Jesuit and Catholic traditions. Among the central values of the University are the inherent dignities of every individual as well as the right of each person to hold and to express his or her viewpoint. When these views conflict it is the obligation of members of the community to respect other perspectives.

The University welcomes students, faculty, staff, and visitors from diverse backgrounds and it works to ensure that they will find the University environment free of discriminatory conduct. It is unacceptable and a violation of University policy to harass, abuse, or discriminate against any person because of age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

Furthermore, each member of the JCU community is expected to take an active role in fostering an appreciation for diversity and inclusion and sending the message that bias-related acts will not be tolerated. "Bias" is defined as intentional or unintentional actions targeting a person because of a real or perceived aspect of that person's identity, including (though not limited to) age, gender, religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, or (dis)ability.

All bias incidents, including those occurring in the classroom, should be reported using the JCU Bias Reporting System at <http://sites.jcu.edu/bias/>.

Questions about the Bias Reporting System or bias incidents may be directed to Dr. Terry Mills, Assistant Provost for Diversity and Inclusion, at [tmills@jcu.edu](mailto:tmills@jcu.edu) or (216) 397-4455. For more information about University policies and community standards for appropriate conduct, please refer to the Dean of Students web page at <http://sites.jcu.edu/deanofstudents>. For more information about the University commitment to diversity and inclusion, please see <http://sites.jcu.edu/diversity>.