



**UNSW**  
SYDNEY

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University



# **ARTS1362**

Critical Thinking for Today's World

Term Three // 2019

## Course Overview

### Staff Contact Details

#### Convenors

| Name           | Email                 | Availability   | Location         | Phone  |
|----------------|-----------------------|--|------------------|--------|
| Markos Valaris | m.valaris@unsw.edu.au | Virtual office hours (via Moodle): Thursday 12-1. You can also meet me in my office every Monday, 3-4. | Morven Brown 339 | 5 2360 |

#### School Contact Information

School of Humanities and Languages

Location: School Office, Morven Brown Building, Level 2, 258

Opening Hours: Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm

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Email: [hal@unsw.edu.au](mailto:hal@unsw.edu.au)

## **Course Details**

### **Credit Points 6**

### **Summary of the Course**

Subject Area: *Philosophy*

Critical Thinking is a skill that allows you to evaluate, analyse and synthesise information gathered by observation, experience, reflection and communication. In a world that is saturated with information, critical thinking is crucial in deciding what to believe and what to do. As such critical thinking skills are essential to the conduct of a responsible and meaningful life, a successful professional career and successful studies. Critical thinking skills include knowing how to identify and assess arguments, how to construct your own good and persuasive arguments and how to communicate them, and how to recognise common pitfalls of reasoning and rhetorical tricks meant to mislead you. This course draws on examples from politics and policy debates, media and communication as well as ordinary life. It provides tools that can be useful in any program of study.

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

1. Use a variety of techniques to identify and reconstruct arguments.
2. Use a variety of techniques to assess the quality of reasoning.
3. Analyse, and assess different types of reasoning.
4. Construct logically structured and clearly expressed arguments.
5. Recognise and explain common pitfalls of everyday reasoning.
6. Seek out, identify, and synthesise information in order to defend or criticise a thesis or point of view.

### **Teaching Strategies**

This course uses an online mode of delivery, through a mix of recorded lectures and interactive online activities. Lectures will present new material. Students will then have the opportunity to deepen their understanding through online collaborative activities.

# Assessment

## Assessment Tasks

| Assessment task                  | Weight | Due Date                             | Student Learning Outcomes Assessed |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Online quiz                      | 10%    | Open: 16/10/2019 7:00 AM to 11:59 PM | 1,2,3                              |
| Argument Analysis and Evaluation | 50%    | 11/11/2019 11:59 PM                  | 1,2,3,5,6                          |
| Formal Exam                      | 40%    | Not Applicable                       | 1,2,3,4                            |

## Assessment Details

### Assessment 1: Online quiz

**Start date:**

**Details:** This is a mid-term online quiz. You will be asked to answer 20 multiple choice questions. Feedback will be given online via Moodle.

**Turnitin setting:** This is not a Turnitin assignment

### Assessment 2: Argument Analysis and Evaluation

**Start date:** 11/10/2019 12:00 PM

**Details:** You will be asked to use the concepts and methods developed in the course to analyse and evaluate the arguments in a set of texts assigned by the instructor. Your analysis should combine argument maps/diagrams and text. Total length should be about 1600 words. Feedback will be via individual comments on Moodle, as well as model maps.

**Turnitin setting:** This assignment is submitted through Turnitin and students can see Turnitin similarity reports.

### Assessment 3: Formal Exam

**Start date:** Not Applicable

**Length:** 2 hours

**Details:** The final exam will cover material from the entire course, and have a multiple choice format. The final exam must be taken in person, on campus, during the formal examination period. It will be 2 hours in length. Feedback will be given via a numerical grade. Further feedback available upon request and by appointment. This is the final assessment for attendance purposes.

**Turnitin setting:** This is not a Turnitin assignment

## Attendance Requirements

Students are strongly encouraged to attend all classes and review lecture recordings.

## Course Schedule

[View class timetable](#)

### Timetable

| Date                                | Type            | Content  |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Week 1: 16 September - 20 September | Online Activity | <b>Discussion forum:</b> Introductions   |
|                                     | Module          | <b>Unit 1: Basic Concepts of Critical Thinking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Video:</b> Introduction to Unit 1</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 1:</b> What is critical thinking? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice Quiz:</b> What is critical thinking</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 2:</b> What is an argument?</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 3:</b> Arguments and reasons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice Quiz:</b> Statements, arguments, reasons</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 4:</b> Truth, facts, and objectivity</li> </ul> |
|                                     | Reading         | <b>Optional reading:</b> Simon Blackburn, 'Relatively Speaking'<br><br>Nisbett, <i>Mindware</i> , Chapter 1  |
|                                     | Online Activity | <b>Quiz:</b> test your knowledge of the structure and requirements for the course!   |
| Week 2: 23 September - 27 September | Module          | <b>Unit 2: Analysing Arguments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Video:</b> Introduction to Unit 2</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 1:</b> Identifying arguments and their conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> Identifying arguments</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 2:</b> Identifying premises</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 3:</b> Analysing complex arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> Argument diagrams</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 4:</b> Justifying one's premises</li> </ul>               |
|                                     | Reading         | <b>Recommended reading:</b> Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin, <i>Understanding Arguments</i> , chapter 3 and chapter 5 (pp. 79-89)  |
|                                     | Online Activity | <b>Online discussion:</b> Argument diagrams/maps   |

|                                  |                 |   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|---|
|                                  |                 | versus 'mind maps'  |
| Week 3: 30 September - 4 October | Module          | <b>Unit 3: Evaluating Arguments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Video:</b> Introduction to Unit 3</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 1:</b> Validity and soundness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> Validity and soundness</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 2:</b> An example</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 3:</b> Hidden premises <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> Hidden premises</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 4:</b> Putting it all together in an extended example</li> </ul>  |
|                                  | Reading         | <b>Recommended reading:</b> Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin, <i>Understanding Arguments</i> , chapter 5 (pp. 90-110)  |
|                                  | Online Activity | <b>Online discussion:</b> Check my argument diagram!  |
| Week 4: 7 October - 11 October   | Module          | <b>Unit 4: The Balance of Reasons</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Video:</b> Introduction to Unit 4</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 1:</b> Weighing reasons part 1</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 2:</b> Weighing reasons part 2</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 3:</b> Counterexamples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz</b> on counterexamples</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 4:</b> Reduction to the absurd <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz</b> on reduction to the absurd</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 5:</b> Vagueness and slippery slopes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz</b> on vagueness and slippery slopes</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|                                  | Reading         | <b>Recommended reading:</b> Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin, <i>Understanding Arguments</i> , chapters 13 and 17  |
|                                  | Assessment      | <b>Argument analysis and evaluation assessment assigned</b>   |
|                                  | Online Activity | <b>Online discussion:</b> practice argument analysis and evaluation   |
| Week 5: 14 October - 18 October  | Assessment      | <b>Online Test</b> , Units 1-4, Wednesday 16 October  |
|                                  | Seminar         | Face-to-face review session for Units 1-3, Friday 18 October  |
| Week 6: 21 October - 25          | Module          | <b>Unit 5: Elements of Logic</b>  |

|                                 |         |  |
|---------------------------------|---------|--|
| October                         |         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Video:</b> Introduction to Unit 5</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 1:</b> The point of logic, and formally valid arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> Formally valid arguments</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 2:</b> Propositional logic: connectives, variables, formulas</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 3:</b> Truth-tables and truth-conditions I: conjunction</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 4:</b> Truth-tables and truth-conditions II: disjunction and negation</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 5:</b> Truth-tables and truth-conditions III: complex formulas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> Translations into propositional logic</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 6:</b> An example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> Truth-table exercises</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 7:</b> Truth-tables and truth-conditions IV: the conditional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> More truth-table exercises</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 8:</b> More on the conditional: The Wason selection task</li> </ul> |
|                                 | Reading | <b>Recommended reading:</b> Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin, <i>Understanding Arguments</i> , chapter 6 (pp. 113-128)  |
| Week 7: 28 October - 1 November | Module  | <p><b>Unit 6: Putting Logic to Work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Video:</b> Introduction to Unit 6</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 1:</b> Recovering logical form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> Complex translations into logic</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 2:</b> The concepts of tautology, contradiction, equivalence and consistency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz</b> on logical concepts</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 3:</b> Using truth-tables to test for validity</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 4:</b> Validity with truth-tables: examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> Testing for validity with truth-tables</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 5:</b> Beyond truth-tables: conditionals and possible worlds</li> </ul>   |
| Week 8: 4 November - 8 November | Module  | <p><b>Unit 7: Probabilistic Reasoning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Video:</b> Introduction to Unit 7</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 1:</b> Why probability?</li> </ul>  |

|                                    |                 |  |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|--|
|                                    |                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 2:</b> Basic laws of probability</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 3:</b> Conditional probabilities and probabilities of conjunctions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> Basic laws of probability</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 4:</b> The conjunction fallacy</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 5:</b> Correlation and Causation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> Correlation and Causation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|                                    | Reading         | <b>Recommended reading:</b> Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin, <i>Understanding Arguments</i> , chapter 11 (pp. 239-251)   |
|                                    | Online Activity | <b>Discussion forum:</b> the 'sophomore slump'   |
| Week 9: 11 November - 15 November  | Module          | <b>Unit 7 (continued): Probabilistic Reasoning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 6:</b> The base-rate fallacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> the base-rate fallacy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 7:</b> Bayes' Law</li> <li>• <b>Video mini-lecture 8:</b> An application of Bayes' Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Practice quiz:</b> Bayes' Law</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
|                                    | Assessment      | <b>Argument Analysis and Evaluation Assessment due 11 November</b>   |
| Week 10: 18 November - 22 November | Seminar         | Face-to-face review session, Friday 22 November  |



## Resources

### Prescribed Resources

All required resources for this course will be made available online, via Moodle.

### Recommended Resources

The following books are recommended, and are available from the UNSW bookshop

- Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Robert Fogelin, *Understanding Arguments*, 9th edition (Cengage Publishing)

*This is a textbook on critical thinking, which covers much the same material as this course. It is written in easy and accessible language, and may help you follow the course. Relevant bits will be identified throughout the course. However, the course has been designed so as to allow you to follow without a textbook.*

- Richard Nisbett, *Mindware: Tools for smart thinking* (Penguin Books)

*Richard Nisbett is a psychologist who has spent much of his career working on human thinking and its pitfalls. This book is intended, as its title suggests, to provide practical advice for improving your thinking in real life. It covers much of the same ground as this course, but its style and emphasis is different.*

### Course Evaluation and Development

This course will be evaluated using UNSW's myExperience system. Informal feedback, in the form of suggestions or comments is very welcome from all of you at any time during or after the course.

## **Submission of Assessment Tasks**

## **Submission of Assessment Tasks**

### **Turnitin Submission**

If you encounter a problem when attempting to submit your assignment through Turnitin, please telephone External Support on 9385 3331 or email them on [externalteltsupport@unsw.edu.au](mailto:externalteltsupport@unsw.edu.au) . Support hours are 8:00am – 10:00pm on weekdays and 9:00am – 5:00pm on weekends (365 days a year). If you are unable to submit your assignment due to a fault with Turnitin you may apply for an extension, but you must retain your ticket number from External Support (along with any other relevant documents) to include as evidence to support your extension application. If you email External Support you will automatically receive a ticket number, but if you telephone you will need to specifically ask for one. Turnitin also provides updates on their system status on Twitter.

Generally, assessment tasks must be submitted electronically via either Turnitin or a Moodle assignment. In instances where this is not possible, it will be stated on your course's Moodle site with alternative submission details.

For information on how to submit assignments online via Moodle: <https://student.unsw.edu.au/how-submit-assignment-moodle>

## Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of others and presenting them as your own. It can take many forms, from deliberate cheating to accidentally copying from a source without acknowledgement.

UNSW groups plagiarism into the following categories:

**Copying:** using the same or very similar words to the original text or idea without acknowledging the source or using quotation marks. This also applies to images, art and design projects, as well as presentations where someone presents another's ideas or words without credit.

**Inappropriate paraphrasing:** Changing a few words and phrases while mostly retaining the original structure and/or progression of ideas of the original, and information without acknowledgement. This also applies in presentations where someone paraphrases another's ideas or words without credit and to piecing together quotes and paraphrases into a new whole, without appropriate referencing.

**Collusion:** working with others but passing off the work as a person's individual work. Collusion also includes providing your work to another student before the due date, or for the purpose of them plagiarising at any time, paying another person to perform an academic task, stealing or acquiring another person's academic work and copying it, offering to complete another person's work or seeking payment for completing academic work.

**Inappropriate citation:** Citing sources which have not been read, without acknowledging the "secondary" source from which knowledge of them has been obtained.

**Duplication ("self-plagiarism"):** submitting your own work, in whole or in part, where it has previously been prepared or submitted for another assessment or course at UNSW or another university.

Correct referencing practices:

- Paraphrasing, summarising, essay writing and time management
- Appropriate use of and attribution for a range of materials including text, images, formulae and concepts.

Individual assistance is available on request from The Learning Centre (<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/>). Students are also reminded that careful time management is an important part of study and one of the identified causes of plagiarism is poor time management. Students should allow sufficient time for research, drafting and proper referencing of sources in preparing all assessment items.

UNSW Library also has the ELISE tool available to assist you with your study at UNSW. ELISE is designed to introduce new students to studying at UNSW but it can also be a great refresher during your study.

Completing the ELISE tutorial and quiz will enable you to:

- analyse topics, plan responses and organise research for academic writing and other assessment tasks
- effectively and efficiently find appropriate information sources and evaluate relevance to your needs
- use and manage information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- better manage your time

- understand your rights and responsibilities as a student at UNSW
- be aware of plagiarism, copyright, UNSW Student Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use of UNSW ICT Resources Policy
- be aware of the standards of behaviour expected of everyone in the UNSW community
- locate services and information about UNSW and UNSW Library

Some of these areas will be familiar to you, others will be new. Gaining a solid understanding of all the related aspects of ELISE will help you make the most of your studies at UNSW.

<http://subjectguides.library.unsw.edu.au/elise/aboutelise>

## **Academic Information**

For essential student information relating to:

- requests for extension;
- late submissions guidelines;
- review of marks;
- UNSW Health and Safety policies;
- examination procedures;
- special consideration in the event of illness or misadventure;
- student equity and disability;
- and other essential academic information, see

<https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/current-students/academic-information/protocols-guidelines/>

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