

# Reasoning and Critical Thinking (PHIL 156.003) Spring 1997

## *Political Philosophy*

## Syllabus

Instructor: Stephen Scholz    Advisor: A.M. Yaqüb (277-4119)  
 Office: Hum 565    Phone: 277-7419    Home 265-8791  
 Office Hours: W 10:00 - 12:00 and by Appointment  
 Class Meets: TU TH 9:30 - 10:45 in Sara Reynolds Hall 101

*"I have made a ceaseless effort not to ridicule, not to bewail,  
 not to scorn human actions, but to understand them"*    *Baruch Spinoza*

**Class Description:** Most intellectual endeavors involve argumentation. From short letters to the editor to complex philosophical essays, from simple everyday discussions to sophisticated legal debates, arguments are constantly invoked to support or criticize points of view. The purpose of this course is to help students learn how to analyze, critique and construct arguments. (An argument is a piece of reasoning, not a quarrel or a fight.) The course material is organized into two main parts. The first part is an introductory survey of important linguistic and logical concepts and tools that are needed for analyzing arguments. The second (and longer) part is an in-depth examination of a few philosophical essays focused on a small set of closely related questions and issues. Although no background in philosophy or logic is presupposed, the course requires a moderate degree of linguistic sophistication and a strong commitment to rational inquiry.

This section will focus on issues pertaining to political philosophy. We will discuss and evaluate arguments pertaining to the rights of man and the responsibilities and powers of the state. The political world is one where the claims of individuals and groups conflict. We aim to understand and evaluate different theories on how this has come to pass and how we ought best resolve the conflict.

**Class Requirements:** We shall be moving quickly through a great deal of reading and writing. Therefore rigorous attendance is mandatory. If for any reason you cannot make class let me know before class if possible or **before** the next meeting. Each unexcused absence or incomplete homework assignment will result in losing 1% of your grade. There shall be daily written homework. In addition there shall be three quizzes, three small writing assignments and a final paper. Students will be expected to participate in class discussions and contribute in group activities.

**Required Books**    *The Elements of Style*, Strunk & White, MacMillan 3rd edition.  
                           *A Rulebook for Arguments*, Weston, A. Hackett 2nd edition  
                           *Reason at Work*, 3rd Ed. Cahn, Kitcher, Sher, Markie, Harcourt Brace  
                           *Handbook for PHIL 156 section 003* Scholz

All of these are available in the UNM Bookstore and elsewhere, except for the Handbook, which is available in the **Quik Copy Center** on Central at Yale. Numerous other readings will be given out during class.

<b>Grades:</b>	Participation/Homework	10%
	Quizzes	30%
	Writing Assignments	30%
	Final Paper	30%

Students are encouraged to meet with me during office hours or at a scheduled appointment to discuss any difficulties or problems in the class. If, after such meetings, the problem is still present, the student may contact Professor A.M. Yaqub the supervisor of this program.

## Tentative Schedule (Subject to minor changes)

<b>Week Of</b>	<b>Subject Matter</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
1/21	Introduction What is Critical Thinking? What is an argument? Schematization, Inference Analysis, Plausibility Analysis.	Warm body. Short Writing Assignment.
1/28	Language: What is logical writing? Logical and Rhetorical Styles. Pesky grammar rules. What you should have learned in High School.	Readings: Strunk & White, Introduction and pages 16-22  <b>Quiz 1</b>
2/4	Logic: Taxonomy of Arguments	Readings: Weston sections II & III Handout, 1A - 1D2
2/11	Deductive Arguments Logical Form	Weston sections IV - VI Handout, 1C - 1E, 1G <b>Quiz 2</b>
2/18	Probabilistic Arguments Normative Arguments	Handout, 1E - 1F3, 2A Weston sections VII - IX
2/25	Review: Fallacies	Handout 2B Weston Section X <b>Quiz 3</b>
3/4	Introduction to Political Philosophy Hobbes	Readings: Reason at Work 198 - 209 Thomas Hobbes
3/11		<b>Writing Assignment 1</b>
3/18	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
3/25	Mill	Readings: Reason at Work 242 - 246 John Stuart Mill
4/1		<b>Writing Assignment 2</b>
4/8	Rawls	Readings: Reason at Work 262-276 John Rawls
4/15		<b>Writing Assingment 3</b>
4/22	Fienberg, Nozick, Walzer	Readings: Reason at Work 247 - 261 Joel Feinberg 277 - 289 Robert Nozick 291 - 305 Michael Walzer
4/29	Tutorials No Class	<b>Rough Draft of Final Paper</b>
5/9	Tutorials No Class	
5/13	Final Paper Due (4pm)	<b>Final Paper</b>