

09-27  
App - 9/22/09  
Inv. 7/6/09

**Undergraduate Distance Education Review Form**  
(Required for all courses taught by distance education for more than one-third of teaching contact hours.)

**Existing and Special Topics Course**

**Course:** PHIL 101: Critical Thinking

**Instructor(s) of Record:** Eric M. Rubenstein

**Phone:** x3575

**Email:** erubent@iup.edu

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**Step One: Proposer**

A. Provide a brief narrative rationale for each of the items, A1- A5.

**PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FOR ANSWERS TO A1- A5.**

1. How is/are the instructor(s) qualified in the distance education delivery method as well as the discipline?

2. How will the course objectives in the course be met using distance education technologies?

3. How will instructor-student and student-student, if applicable, interaction take place?

4. How will student achievement be evaluated?

5. How will academic honesty for tests and assignments be addressed?

B. Submit to the department or its curriculum committee the responses to items A1-A5, the current official syllabus of record, along with the instructor developed online version of the syllabus, and the sample lesson. This lesson should absolutely demonstrate how the distance education instructional format adequately assists

Forward form and supporting materials to Liberal Studies Office for consideration by the University-wide

Committee for graduate-level section.

**Step Three: University-wide Undergraduate Curriculum Committee Approval**

Recommendation:  Positive (The objectives of this course can be met via distance education)

Negative

*Gail Sedquist*  
Signature of Committee Co-Chair

*9-22-09*  
Date

**REVIEW FORM for Distance Education version of Course**

**Step One: Proposer: Eric M. Rubenstein (for PHIL 101 Critical Thinking (DE))**

A1. How is/are the instructor(s) qualified in the distance education delivery method as well as the discipline?

I have been teaching Philosophy for well-over a decade, including many courses in Logic. In addition, I have now taught 5 Distance Education sections of PHIL 101, 200, 201, 202, and 203.

...ranging knowledge of many computer technologies, have used WebCT for a number of years in different courses, have done a lot of digital recording and sound processing (with a...

Objective 2: Students will develop the skills of critical thinking and critical reasoning.

making, and other aspects of the critical process of by studying and applying fundamental principles of critical reasoning.

Here is a good place to make use of discussion boards, email threads, and in general, interaction among the students. Being asked to think through examples and to assess other's reasoning, is a way of getting students to be active participants, instead of just passive receivers of information. Critical thinking is a skill, and like all skills, requires practice. Being asked to engage in critical reasoning about examples, and to assess their own and others arguments is the best type of practice, and as such will help students develop their critical thinking skills.

**For example, I will ask students to pick a topic that we have discussed and which they find interesting. They will be asked to write an explicit argument that supports their view or beliefs on that topic. They will, in other words, be asked to identify the premises and**

Final Exam	20% of grade
Discussion Participation	15% of grade
Short Writing Exercises	10% of grade

participation in online discussion. This is facilitated using the Discussion tool of WebCT (or

with an eye to making academic dishonesty simply less easy to accomplish. To put it in a perhaps overly philosophical manner, one might think of concepts as abilities and so to have the concept of  $x$  is to have the ability to think about  $x$ . In an exam or essay context, this means that a student who has

also to new ones, and will be able to show their command of a given concept by showing how to apply

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categorical logic, some basic mistakes we make in reasoning, the nature of scientific reasoning,

Critical thinking is not something that you can merely *absorb* by having someone lecture to you in class. You must *engage* with the material. It's thus very important that you both do the readings *and* the exercises. You will need to go through the assigned material slowly (and be willing to *re-read* it) in order to understand it and apply it in the exercises assigned for that day. You should also come with a willingness to ask questions and participate in class discussion. You're partly responsible for how much you get out of the course, and how interesting it is. Although class participation is not a requirement, *borderline grades will be bumped upwards for those who have been active participants during class sessions.*

A word about participation in online discussions: Your contributions to these discussions will count towards your final grade. I will circulate a handout which describes in more detail what I'm looking for, but for now let me say this. Unlike some online courses, I am not going to require a certain number of contributions, nor that you contribute to every discussion. That leads students to do it for the sake of doing it, even if they have nothing to offer or ask. Instead, I will be looking for the quality of your contributions, and what they add to the discussion. *Good questions can be just as important, if not more so, than good "answers."*



categorical logic, some basic mistakes we make in reasoning, the nature of scientific reasoning, the difference between science and pseudo-science, and more.

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A word about participation in online discussions: Your contributions to these discussions

accounts through <http://webmail.iup.edu> , a web-based interface for the university e-mail system. Remember, my non-WebCT email address is [erubentst@iup.edu](mailto:erubentst@iup.edu) and should be used if there is a problem with WebCT.

3. All students should have a backup plan for a computer failure, such as computers available in local libraries, other SSHF universities, at local copy shops or other locations as a temporary

measure.

4. All students MUST test their computer as soon as possible to verify that it is capable of interacting with WebCT, sending and receiving e-mail, reading PDF documents, downloading and listening to mp3 files.

### **B. Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the representation of another person's words and ideas as one's own. A student who plagiarizes all or part of an assignment can expect strong penalties, ranging from failure in that assignment to being recommended for a hearing before a judiciary body of the University. I recommend that you review the *IUP Academic Policy and Procedures* in the University Catalogue, found at <http://www.iup.edu/registrar/catalog/acapolicy/index.shtm>

Academic honesty is an essential component of intellectual development. And it is a vital

Philosophy Encyclopedia's that are reliable, though: "Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy";  
"The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy". Beyond that you are on your own. In particular I

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### **Schedule and Reading Assignments (Fogelin and Sinnott-Armstrong)**

#### Week One: Introduction, Arguments (Ch. 3)

##### *Introduction*

Basic Structure of Arguments, pp. 45-49; Exercise I.

#### Week Two: Validity, etc. (Ch. 3)

Validity, Truth, and Soundness, pp. 50-53; Exs. II, III, IV.



Eric M. Rubenstein

(Topic: Scientific Reasoning: What Makes Science Rational?)

Below you will find:

- I. Instructions for this lesson
- II. Lecture Notes/Outline

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I. Instructions

A. *Hume's Problem of Induction*

Let us examine closely a bit of inductive reasoning:

The sun has risen every day for 5 billion years.

Therefore, it will rise tomorrow.

How much support does the premise provide for the conclusion? We might think a lot; but

How plausible is that premise?

Our first temptation might be to appeal to cases in the past where the future has resembled the past. This won't help though. It begs the question because it relies on an unstated premise

A. *Hume's Problem of Induction*

The sun has risen every day for 5 billion years.  
Therefore, it will rise tomorrow.

How much support does the premise provide for the conclusion? We might think a lot; but only if we are implicitly adding another premise, namely: The future will resemble the past.

Let 'bleen' =df x is bleen iff x is blue before t and green after t, where t = 2050 C.E.

If we were raised using the predicates 'grue' and 'bleen', we would understand the predicate 'green' as follows:

Green =df x is green iff x is grue before t and bleen after t.

Green is the temporal predicate, grue is the temporal predicate, bleen is the temporal predicate, and it does not depend on a temporal



Let  $f(x)$  be a function which is blue before  $t$  and green after  $t$ , where  $t=2050$  C.E.

# GENERIC SYLLABUS

## I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION

PHILOSOPHY 103 GENERAL LOGIC: METHODS OF CRITICAL THINKING

3 credits

- 2. Arguments taken from selected readings in philosophy:  
Sample below.

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Proof for God's existence

Anselm & Descartes, ontological argument  
 Aquinas, cosmological arguments  
 Paley, teleological argument  
 Hume, teleological argument

Problem of Evil

Hick, solution  
 defense of atheism (Nagel or Mackie)  
 Adequate Evidence: Should we believe in God without it?  
 Pascal, wager  
 James, Will to Believe  
 criticism of James & Pascal (Clifford or Stich)

VALUES: Sexual and Racial Equality

Allison Jagger, "Political Philosophies of Women's  
 Liberation"