

TEACHING PORTFOLIO

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I. STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

There was a moment in my teaching that I think of as formative. I had been presenting an argument, and when I moved on to demonstrating ways of objecting to that argument, a student raised her hand to express confusion: ‘How can you say that that premise might be false, when you just told us it was true? Aren’t you contradicting yourself?’ Because of this question, I realized that my students had been copying down my argument reconstruction as if each premise were a matter of fact that added up to a conclusion they were supposed to accept. I realized that I had expected them to engage critically while I hadn’t taught them how.

Moments like these have led me to an ethos: that students have something to contribute. The student who expressed confusion contributed to my thinking about pedagogy, and students have meaningful ideas about the arguments they encounter. So, as a teacher, I aim to help students see the value in what they have to say, and, at the same time, to cultivate their capacity to discern when to change their minds. To this end, I design courses with an eye to maximizing student involvement. When I curate course materials, I consider, *What can I use to spark meaningful disagreement? What will develop the conversation we’ll be having at this point in the term?* I teach figures like Descartes, Hume, and Montaigne because I can help students see what’s exciting and relevant about their works, but I mingle historical writing with literary essays, popular articles, and podcasts. I do this for several reasons. One is that students learn that philosophy is already in (and applicable to) the media they ordinarily engage with. This helps them make connections between course content and their lives outside of class. Relatedly, students see that philosophy isn’t *just* 16th-century armchair thinking, and philosophers don’t always look or express themselves like Descartes, Hume, or Montaigne.

I structure time spent in class so that students always have the big picture in view. On a typical day, I open class by briefly re-describing the key takeaway from last class and how it fits within the broader discussion of the last n class days (I also write this on the board). Then I present the capital-Q ‘Question’ that will guide our discussion for the day. I always craft the Question to get us to the core, most compelling aspect of the assigned material, but I don’t use it to lecture. Students develop their own answers. To this end, I have them begin with a simpler, related question, which they reflect on and answer in small groups. I do this to lower the bar for entry into discussion and to create opportunities for students to learn from each other and develop trust. For example, when I teach the *Meditations*, I ask students to recall a belief they once held—something they were confident was true—and that they later discovered was false. I get responses like, ‘I used to believe superheroes were real’ and ‘I believed I could cast spells’. The overall effect is that students feel a sense of camaraderie for their past, somewhat silly beliefs, and they begin to see why we, like Descartes, might want to reassess our beliefs’ foundations.

One benefit of using class to answer a Question is that students see their own ideas treated as serious philosophical views. They feel the stakes of answering the Question, and they become invested in the collective attempt to answer. Of course, treating students’ views as legitimate means evaluating them with respectful rigor. In my experience, students new to philosophy tend (1) to agree *too much*, e.g., by accepting views that are inconsistent, or (2) to *merely* disagree, without weighing the reasons for an opposing view. So, as I give students feedback, I show them how their ideas shape into views that are either compatible or mutually exclusive, helping them feel the costs and benefits of accepting one and, if necessary, letting go of another. Because I guide students through the trial-and-error process of developing views, over time, students learn to be responsible for their own views, and they learn that this kind of responsibility sometimes requires them to change their minds.

I've found that encouraging students to be actively involved in class requires helping them overcome the fear of getting something wrong. So, I often employ strategies to create distance between students and the (perceived) cost of being wrong. One such strategy is teaching with games. I've designed social deduction games to help students learn inference to the best explanation and, on another occasion, the epistemology of testimony. I've also introduced Rawls' theory of justice by having students play a game where they (behind a 'veil of ignorance') come up with just principles for how they would distribute an arbitrary, fixed number of 'A' grades in the class. I've found that games help students feel more comfortable with trial-and-error learning, and they make for memorable days in class.

Apart from class, I teach students to write effectively by scaffolding their writing assignments. I find that this works best when I require students to write short, focused responses to one aspect of an assigned text each week. As they learn to write focused responses, students develop the skills necessary to think critically about assigned material, and by the time they begin their thesis-defense papers, they have their own set of candidate paper topics. For papers, I have students submit a series of 'benchmarks' before they produce full-length paper drafts. At each benchmark, they receive detailed feedback from me, and their first full draft undergoes in-class peer review. This process makes writing a thesis-defense paper less daunting for first-time philosophy students, and even philosophy majors acquire writing habits helpful for the rest of their coursework.

Seeing students as having something to contribute keeps me engaged in the course and excited about time spent in class. My enthusiasm is evident to students, too. They mention it in their evaluations: "[The instructor] is super passionate and made the course worth paying attention to"; "Beth...did great making the class engaging and exciting, which is especially difficult for an 8am class."; "I loved this course... It was fun, educational, and engaging." I consider this the measure of a good day in class: that even I had fun, felt engaged, and learned something.

II. AREAS OF TEACHING EXPERTISE

Introductory Undergraduate

Logic

Critical Thinking

Introduction to Philosophy

Ethics

Applied Ethics, including:

Bioethics

Medical Ethics

Animal Ethics

Intermediate/Advanced Undergraduate

History of Philosophy, modern era

Philosophy of Mind

Epistemology

Animal Minds

Advanced Seminars

Theory of Intelligence

Guiding questions: What is natural intelligence? What does philosophical and popular writing reveal about how we think about ourselves as intelligent creatures, or as ‘distinctively rational creatures’? What are the criteria for determining what counts as a form or manifestation of intelligence, natural or artificial?

Knowledge and Action, or Skill

Guiding questions: What is the relationship between what we know and what we do? How does *thinking* inform *acting*, when it does? In what ways do cognitive and behavioral sciences contribute to our thinking about this?

Philosophy of Action

Guiding questions: Is there such a thing as an explanatorily basic action, or an action that has no further explanation (i.e., *how* you did it)? If so, what is a basic action? Must full-fledged actions be composed of basic ones?

Knowledge-How

Guiding questions: Is there a distinctively practical kind of knowledge? If so, what are its core features? If not, what do we mean when we ascribe know-how, as in ‘S knows how to φ ’—what must be true of S?

III. QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION DATA

Here I've compiled the mean scores for a representative sample of evaluation criteria. Wherever possible, I've included scores for criteria regarding (a) myself as instructor and (b) aspects of my course design. For complete evaluation criteria and data, please email me at bethbarker@u.northwestern.edu.

Evaluation Scores (Mean), as Instructor of Record

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

5-point scale: 5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree

	<i>Judgment and Decision-Making</i> (fall 2021)	<i>Philosophy and Persons, sec. 3</i> (fall 2022)	<i>Philosophy and Persons, sec. 8</i> (fall 2022)	<i>Philosophy and Persons, sec. 12</i> (fall 2023)	<i>Philosophy and Persons, sec. 16</i> (fall 2023)
course content effectively organized	3.8	4.5	4.1	4.1	4.5
course developed critical thinking	3.6	4.5	4.3	4.5	4.5
technology aided success	3.5	4.2	3.9	4	4.2
opportunity to interact with classmates	3.3	4.4	4.1	4.4	4.5
overall course effectiveness	3.4	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.5
instructor effectively presented content	3.3	4.3	4.1	4.5	4.7
instructor provided constructive feedback	3.9	4.5	4.2	4.6	4.6

B. BARKER TEACHING PORTFOLIO

instructor cultivated inclusive environment	3.8	4.3	4.6	4.4	4.7
instructor overall effectiveness	3.4	4.3	4.2	4.5	4.7

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

5-point scale: 5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree

	<i>Intro to Ethics</i> (summer 2018)*	<i>Intro to Philosophy,</i> sec. 02 (fall 2018)	<i>Intro to Philosophy,</i> sec. 03 (fall 2018)	<i>Introductory Bioethics,</i> sec. 01 (spring 2019)	<i>Introductory Bioethics,</i> sec. 02 (spring 2019)
instructor was knowledgeable, enthusiastic about topic	5	4.56	4.85	4.73	4.38
instructor effectively used examples/illustrations	5	4.19	4.75	4.54	4
instructor fostered questions/participation	5	4.31	4.65	4.73	4.73
instructor clearly explained ideas/concepts	5	4.06	4.5	4.56	3.79
responded appropriately to questions/comments	5	4.5	4.4	4.54	4.07
stimulated student thinking and learning	5	4.56	4.6	4.73	4.41
promoted atmosphere of mutual respect...	5	4.63	4.85	4.73	4.62

B. BARKER TEACHING PORTFOLIO

*The means for this class represent the evaluations of only two students. It was my first course as instructor of record, and I learned to encourage students to complete evaluations. The data for later classes represent the evaluations of at least 16 students (i.e., for *Intro to Philosophy*, sec. 02 of fall 2018), but they average a response rate of 23 students (courses capped at 35 students, but I do not have data for how many enrolled).

Evaluation Scores (Mean), as Teaching Assistant

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

6-point scale: 6 = very high; 1 = very low

	<i>Bioethics</i> (winter 2021)	<i>Modern Philosophy</i> (spring 2021)	<i>Elementary Logic II</i> (winter 2022)	<i>Theory of Knowledge</i> (spring 2022)	<i>Introduction to Philosophy</i> (winter 2023)	<i>Modern Philosophy</i> (spring 2023)
able to answer the students' questions adequately	5.34	5.57	4.29	5.5	4.44	5.19
well prepared for each session	5.44	5.64	5.43	5.67	4.22	5.19
communicated ideas in a clear manner	5.28	5.64	4.86	5.5	4.17	5.25
showed strong interest in teaching the course	5.47	5.71	4.43	5.67	4.67	5.47

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

5-point scale: 5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree

	<i>Intro to Philosophy</i> (spring 2017)	<i>Logic & Reasoning, sec. 01D</i> (fall 2017)	<i>Logic & Reasoning, sec. 01E</i> (fall 2017)	<i>Logic & Reasoning, sec. 01F</i> (fall 2017)	<i>Medical Ethics, sec. 01C</i> (Spring 2018)
instructor was knowledgeable, enthusiastic about topic	4.38	3.76	4.05	4.13	4.55
instructor effectively used examples/illustrations	4.23	4	4	4.20	4.32
instructor fostered questions/participation	4.23	4	4.26	4.43	4.65
instructor clearly explained ideas/concepts	4.23	3.8	3.89	3.87	4.45
responded appropriately to questions/comments	4.38	3.76	4.47	4.33	4.35
stimulated student thinking and learning	4.31	4.12	4.37	4.13	4.45
promoted atmosphere of mutual respect...	4.46	4.47	4.68	4.4	4.7

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI (continued)

5-point scale: 5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree

	<i>Medical Ethics, sec. 01E (Spring 2018)</i>	<i>Medical Ethics, sec. 01F (Spring 2018)</i>
instructor was knowledgeable, enthusiastic about topic	4.5	4.61
instructor effectively used examples/illustrations	4.6	4.61
instructor fostered questions/participation	4.7	4.83
instructor clearly explained ideas/concepts	4.35	4.56
responded appropriately to questions/comments	4.45	4.78
stimulated student thinking and learning	4.70	4.72
promoted atmosphere of mutual respect...	4.79	4.83

IV. SELECT STUDENT COMMENTS

Here I've included only select student comments. For complete evaluations, please email me at bethbarker@u.northwestern.edu.

As Instructor of Record, Loyola University Chicago

Fall 2023: Philosophy and Persons (introduction to philosophy)

“This course **genuinely made me have an interest in philosophy** and piqued my interest in the content more and more every class.”

“**I thought I would hate philosophy, but I liked this course a lot.**”

“Beth is a **very motivated and understanding educator**. She always keeps her students' interests in mind whilst challenging them to learn. Additionally she does an amazing job **respecting and elevating** the voices of her students.”

“I loved how she has **so much knowledge** on the subject and was **excited to share** it with us.”

“I thought professor Barker was amazing! I genuinely enjoyed how she held the class so much and **fully looked forward to the next class** because of the discussions and lectures she would hold. She was always so professional but always made the class a space **we could all share any thoughts** and that **we could all share a laugh** together! Loved her”

“Very calm, caring, and organized. Very interesting to listen to and learn from!”

“Beth was a **great professor**. I would recommend her to my classmates. She did well on creating **discussions that were interesting and worth participating in.**”

“I like how she taught the material and **organized everything out with advice from her students.**”

“Incredibly nice and friendly, **best prof. this semester.**”

“Professor Beth was an **amazing professor**. She made me think in a different way when it came to subjects we discussed in class.”

Fall 2022: Philosophy and Persons (introduction to philosophy)

“I **loved this course**. It taught me to think critically, and write from a philosophical perspective. It was **fun, educational, and engaging.**”

“Beth was very good at seeking input from students and implementing it. She also did great making the class **engaging and exciting**, which is especially difficult for an 8am class. I really liked how Beth **made the content applicable to students' personal lives.**”

“I loved the instructor. She is **super passionate** and made the course worth paying attention to. I thought she taught the course in a manner that my generation really appreciates. We did not have tests, but we had reading responses and in class discussions. **People actually participated and it was super informative.** It made me think critically.”

“They are nice to the class, and work well with what the students say, which is really nice for a class about discussing the nature of minds and living things.”

“I felt **very comfortable speaking in her class.**”

As Instructor of Record, University of Missouri

Spring 2019: Introductory Bioethics, sec. 01

“She **cared about everyone** in the room.”

“She **knew what she was talking about and was enthused about it.**”

“You **adapted** the course content with the extreme amount of snow days instead of forcing it all.”

“I loved that we were able to have discussions every day. Beth did a good job of **engaging everyone and letting everyone speak.** The readings were interesting.”

“**She did a splendid job in teaching ways for me to understand.**”

“She taught in a manner where even if the content was a topic I had little knowledge of it didn’t go over my head.”

“She did a really good job of **making concepts as simple as possible for the sake of evaluating the argument.** She focused on learning more than just our ability to memorize information. She made the assigned readings really interesting and **challenged my opinions** on topics. **I learned a lot in this class** and her **teaching style really allowed me to take away information** and not forget it after we change subjects.”

“I really just enjoyed the teacher and the discussion.”

“She did a **really good job getting concepts across.**”

Spring 2019: Introductory Bioethics, sec. 02

“Beth was very **enthusiastic** about the course and made sure we discussed a wide variety of topics and viewpoints.”

“The articles chosen were **very interesting and relevant.**”

“I loved all the topics/articles we covered. I liked the way we talked about them openly in class.”

“She was **knowledgeable** about the subject.”

“The personality of the teacher was super good, and fit perfectly with the class! They are **very kind, knowledgeable, non-judgmental, and open-minded**—all very good traits to have in philosophy. The classroom setting was very **open and safe, so people felt free to speak their mind.**”

“Good argumentations with students and teacher. Teacher challenged students, students challenged teacher.”

“The class discussions were very good and the content itself was interesting.”

“I loved the readings assigned because they offered me a new perspective on arguments that are interesting and I liked hearing what other classmates had to say about the topics.”

“She was **passionate** about the topics she taught.”

Fall 2018: Introduction to Philosophy, sec. 02

“The **kindness and respect** she gave all of us was good, also she was very **enthusiastic** about the subject which helped the class a bunch.”

“Miss. Barker did a **great job teaching a subject 7/10 students have no background knowledge of.** She challenged students and was very approachable.”

“It was an open-minded environment. The instructor was **very engaging.**”

“She’s **passionate** about what she teaches.”

“I liked her **enthusiasm.**”

“The discussion was very open, and the instructor worked to keep the topic moving.”

“The information we learned in class was interesting and Beth Barker taught it really well.”

“**Everything. Very excellent instructor.**” (In response to “What aspects of the teaching or content of this course were especially good?”)

Fall 2018: Introduction to Philosophy, sec. 03

“The **ability to adapt** the course to fit the class direction (e.g., quiz adaptation). On top of that this has become **my favorite class.**” (In response to “What aspects of the teaching or content of this course were especially good?”)

“Lectures were **extremely effective.**”

“Philosophy is a very hard course. Beth Barker made it **easier to understand while still challenging us**. It is definitely easier now to understand philosophy because of this **amazing teacher**. She really **helped me challenge myself**.”

“I liked how the class was structured—how we’d read and then discuss rather than being flat-out lectured to. I also found the topics very interesting and if I actually enjoyed writing and wasn’t so far into my current major, **I’d actually consider switching to philosophy**. Thanks for a great semester, Beth!”

“**Everything**” (In response to “What aspects of the teaching or content of this course were especially good?”)

“Beth’s **personality** made the class so much more intriguing and funny.”

“She **makes class enjoyable** and is **knowledgeable** over the topics we talk about. You can tell she **enjoys what she is teaching**.”

“Listens to students well. **Welcomes challenges**.”

“Teacher communication. Always tried to do what was best for us.” (In response to “What aspects of the teaching or content of this course were especially good?”)

Summer 2018: Introduction to Ethics (online)

“This is **hands down the best course I’ve ever had the pleasure of taking**. My professor was very fair, clear, and consistent with what was expected from us, and a good sense of humor made learning even more enjoyable. We were given enough reading and assignments to effectively learn the material but not so much that it felt overwhelming.”

“I **enjoyed this class so much** in comparison to many other classes that I can’t imagine what would make it much better. If anything I wish it were longer so we could cover more material!” (In response to “What changes could be made to improve the teaching or the content of this course?”)

As Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University

Spring 2023: Modern Philosophy (advanced course)

“Beth was **extremely kind and easy to talk to**. She led incredibly fun discussions surrounding philosophy. She was also very **explicit in her expectations** for the papers and reading reports, which I really appreciated!”

“**YOU ARE THE BEST BETH!!** I absolutely adored being your student. **Your manner, knowledge, and interest made for a fantastic experience as your student**.”

“Loved her! Super engaged with students and gave **great commentary on papers**.”

“Very **engaging and fun to talk with**, and tried to stay very **approachable** throughout.”

“She **knew her stuff** and tried to make discussion section as helpful for our learning as possible.”

Spring 2022: Theory of Knowledge (advanced course in epistemology)

“Beth definitely showed strong interest in teaching the course; she **brought energy to every discussion section and clearly got joy in engaging us in conversation**. I appreciated how she read the room in section — that is, if we needed more guidance she would provide it, but she also recognized when to step back and let us have more independent conversations, sometimes jumping in with follow up questions but never dominating discussion sections with a forced/dogmatic agenda. Additionally, she was a **profound help with our papers**. She made herself available to meet even outside office hours to discuss our concerns, and always provided **great guidance and support**. She **explained things clearly**, and **made an active effort to understand our thoughts and questions**, often repeating back to us what we had said to make sure she understood. She asked interesting questions and discussion section was **always clarifying and fun**. Thanks Beth!!”

“Beth was very accommodating and understanding! She is a great TA!”

“Beth was very nice and did a nice job leading discussion. Also appreciated the good paper feedback.”

“Incredibly kind TA, **distilled difficult concepts into quick and easily understandable ideas**, was generous with her time and attention. Cheerful and approachable.”

Winter 2021: Bioethics (intro-level course)

“Beth was **well prepared for every section with questions and videos that were really helpful in stimulating our discussion**. She was also very receptive to different viewpoints and did a good job in summarizing our points, which really made it feel like **she cared about what we had to say**. Finally, Beth was really helpful when I needed to write my essay and had good advice about how to improve my thesis.”

“I especially loved when she showed a scene from The Incredibles to frame our discussion about the right to refuse treatment.”

“Very kind and effective TA. Our section really engaged with each week’s content, and involved us with interesting media like quick videos and mini-articles that extended lecture topics.”

“Made our discussions a **comfortable environment for people to share their ideas**.”

“Beth was **excellent at facilitating peer discussions**.”

Spring 2021: Modern Philosophy (advanced course)

“Beth is **extremely understanding**, and did her absolute best to support students in any way she could. I loved having Beth as my TA. When I was having a tough time this quarter, Beth took time to work out deadline solutions with me and **accommodate** my struggles. Thank you Beth!!”

As Teaching Assistant, University of Missouri

Spring 2018: Medical Ethics (introductory course)

“You did a very good job of asking questions that **sparked discussion** and answering any questions we had.”

“Beth was **enthusiastic about the material** and genuinely worked hard to help other students better understand it! **LOVED this course.**”

“Beth **made everything clear and easy to understand.**”

“Beth is **very patient and attentive to details**. When answering questions, she always gave each question equal consideration and thought. She **made sure that each question was wholly answered.**”

“Responded appropriately when there was not a good answer to a student’s question... **fostered a good, respectful teaching environment.**”

“Beth was **seriously amazing**, she **always answered everyone’s questions**. Was very helpful throughout the entire semester.”

“**Great at stimulating student learning and able to answer questions** that most people had. Created a **great atmosphere for everyone.**”

“Beth was an **amazing TA!** She **fostered wonderful discussions, provided great feedback, and kept everything on track**. She **commands respect** in a quiet sort of way.”

“Always **cheerful and prepared** for class.”

“Calm presence, **very good at listening and fostering good conversations**. Also **willing to take charge** and lead class when needed.”

“Beth was **passionate and knowledgeable**. She fostered in-class participation and asked thought-provoking questions.”

“You were the **best TA I’ve had yet** in these two years.”

“Very good at being patient with all our questions. Always **explained things very thoroughly.**”

“Beth was very **enthusiastic** and always answered any questions we had. **Very positive and open learning environment.**”

“In all honesty, most discussion sections don’t help me. However, this discussion section did. Beth explained things that were unclear and **made the environment very welcoming** for class discussion.”

“Beth was **extremely knowledgeable** and **did a great job of keeping discussions going**. She was also very helpful when I had to miss several class periods for university-sponsored events. Thanks Beth!”

“My TA was **really nice and respectful towards the entire class all the time**. She educated us with further detail than provided in class. Great TA!”

“**Loved the instructor!**”

“Teacher clearly is **passionate** about her career field.”

V. SAMPLE SYLLABI

Here I've included three course syllabi and two course outlines, which are noted as such. All are my own design. For more syllabi or outlines, please email me at bethbarker@u.northwestern.edu.

Introduction to Philosophy

I've taught four sections of 'Philosophy and Persons' at Loyola University Chicago (two sections in the fall semester of 2022, and two sections in the fall semester of 2023). (Note that 'flex day' in the schedule indicates a day reserved to allow flexibility for continuing discussions of special interest.)

PHIL 130: PHILOSOPHY & PERSONS
MWF 12:35-1:25, Corboy L09
Fall 2023

Instructor: Beth Barker

Contact: bbarker5@luc.edu

Office hours: Lewis Towers 916E at 10:30-11:20 MWF; 1:30-2:20 MW, and by appointment

This course will introduce you to the field of philosophy. We'll spend time surveying some of the questions that philosophers work on: *Is certainty rational? What, if anything, can we know for certain? How should we live if it's possible that nothing can be known for certain? What does it mean to think of ourselves as distinctively rational animals? How should we think about meaning in life and death?* And, importantly, *What is it like to be a bat?* We'll use and discuss philosophers' methods for answering these questions. This means that our approach to these questions will be *critical*, where what matters is not *which* answers you think right, but the quality of the reasons you articulate in support of (or against) a particular answer.

Objectives

In this course, you will

- gain familiarity with a variety of questions in philosophy, as well as candidate answers to these questions;
- learn how to evaluate the reasons for accepting/rejecting these answers;
- learn and exercise methods of reading and writing critically;
- learn and exercise methods of respectful disagreement in in-class discussion and in writing.

Required Texts

Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, translated by Donald A. Cress. Fourth Edition. Indianapolis: Hackett. ISBN: 9780872204201 (cost: ~\$12.50)

Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Eric Steinberg. Second Edition. Indianapolis: Hackett. ISBN: 9780872202290 (cost: ~\$9)

Recommended:

Montaigne, Michel de. *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, translated by Roger Ariew and Marjorie Grene. Indianapolis: Hackett. ISBN: 978-0872206809 (cost: ~\$14)

All other course materials will be provided via our online learning platform, Sakai.

Note: If you have not yet purchased the texts for this course, or if you have concerns about being able to purchase them (or receiving them in time for the assigned readings), please let me know.

Assignments & Grading

The only assignments you will submit in this course are three papers and the benchmark requirements for those papers (I will explain!). There are no exams.

20% first paper
25% second paper
35% final paper
20% attendance

You must complete and submit all three papers in order to receive a passing grade for the course. So, e.g., this rules out the possibility that you could skip one of the first two papers then ace the other two in order to pass the course with a 75% or 80% (best case scenarios, respectively).

Schedule

It is your responsibility to do the assigned readings for each class *before* class. I recommend that you write out any questions you have about the assigned reading. You can then email me your questions so I can cover them in class, or else you can raise them during discussion.

What is philosophy, and why does it matter?

8/28 First day! No assigned reading. Learn what to expect in this course and how we will engage in respectful critical discussion.

8/30 Three blog posts: S. Goldberg, “On Being Entitled to One’s Own Opinion”; P. Stokes, “No, You’re Not Entitled to Your Own Opinion”; M. Rowlands, “A Right to Believe?”

9/1 Plato’s *Apology*

9/4 Labor Day *no class*

9/6 Mary Midgley, excerpt from *What is Philosophy For?*

Intro to Epistemology and Rene Descartes’ method for knowing for certain: Doubt and Imagination

9/8 W. Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief”

9/11 W. James, “The Will to Believe”

9/13 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation One

9/15 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation Two

9/18 Magdalena Balcerak Jackson, “The Imagination and The Intellect”:

<https://junkyardofthemind.com/blog/2017/4/17/the-imagination-and-the-intellect?rq=imagination%20and%20intellect>

9/20 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation Three

9/22 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation Four

9/25 *how to write a philosophy paper* (no assigned reading)

Thinking about the Self: How do Mind and Body relate?

9/27 Selections from Descartes' correspondence with Princess Elisabeth

9/29 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation Six

10/2 G. Ryle, "Descartes' Myth"

10/4 T. Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?"

recommended: https://www.snexplores.org/article/artificial-intelligence-animal-language-technology?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

10/6 *flex day: wrap up discussion*

10/9 Break *no class*

10/11 Peer-Review Workshop! *remote; find instructions on Sakai*

10/13 *first paper, final draft due; come to class for an editing session*

10/16 *instructor away, no class*; recommended: start reading Hume for Wednesday

Skepticism and Testimony: Hume on Causation and Miracles

10/18 Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, IV-V, VIII

recommended: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/10/how-david-hume-helped-me-solve-my-midlife-crisis/403195/>

10/20 Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sections X & XI

10/23 *flex day*

10/25 Jennifer Lackey, "Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge from Others"

10/27 Hume, "Of Miracles"

10/30 Veronica Ivy (formerly Rachel McKinnon), "Epistemic Injustice"

11/1 Adriana Clavel-Vázquez and María Jimena Clavel Vázquez, "Embodied Imagination: Why We Can't Just Walk in Someone Else's Shoes"

<https://junkyardofthemind.com/blog/2018/8/5/embodied-imagination-why-we-cant-just-walk-in-someone-elses-shoes>

Skepticism and Animal Life: Montaigne

11/3 Michel de Montaigne, *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, excerpt

11/6 Alison Gopnik, “How Animals Think”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/05/how-animals-think/476364/>

11/8 Montaigne, *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, excerpt

11/10 Markus Wild, “Fellow-Brethren and Compeers: Montaigne’s Rapprochement between Man and Animal”

11/13 Christine Korsgaard, “Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror”

11/15 Second Paper Workshop! *you must bring *two* printed copies of your draft to class*

The Meaning of Life, Death, and Becoming

11/17 J.-P. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, excerpt

11/20 J.-P. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, excerpt

11/22 Break *no class*

11/24 Break *no class*

11/27 Agnes Callard, *Aspiration: The Agency of Becoming*, excerpt

11/29 Laurie Paul on transformative experience

Recommended podcast: <https://hiphination.org/season-5/s5-episode-8-vampires/>

12/1 A. Camus, “Myth of Sisyphus”

12/4 T. Nagel, “The Absurd”

12/6 T. Nagel, “Death”

12/8 Final Paper Workshop! *you must bring *two* printed copies of your draft to class*

Course Policies

Attendance. Attendance is required since your success in the class depends on attending class *and* participating in class discussion. You have five “free” absences before absences will affect your course grade. You will receive a 2% deduction for each absence after your fifth. What this looks like: if you miss ten class days, your attendance score will be 50%, which means that the *best* course grade you can achieve—if you get 100% on all papers!—is a 90%; if you miss fifteen class days, your *best possible grade* becomes an 80%.

Discussion. Discussion will be our primary method of developing and testing our understanding of the views we'll read about in this course, so it is important that everyone in class has opportunity to contribute. These are the guidelines for discussion in this course:

- (1) No individual contribution (question or comment) should exceed ~90 seconds in initial presentation
- (2) I will prioritize calling on folks who have not yet participated in a given class session (so, e.g., if four people have their hands raised, I will call on the person who has not yet contributed to that discussion)
- (3) I reserve the right to limit in-class contributions to two questions/comments per student in a given class session

Communication. If at any point you have questions or concerns about the course or your standing in it, please feel free to contact me at bbarker5@luc.edu, or to drop by during my office hours. If your email requires a response, I will typically respond within 24 hours (except over weekends). If after 24 hours you have not heard from me, you may send a reply via the same email thread (send a “nudge”) to remind me you need a response (I am only human!). If your email does not require a response, I may not reply.

Accommodations. If you are eligible for accommodations through the Student Accessibility Center (SAC), please register with the SAC so that I can know how to accommodate your learning in this course. You can find information about registering here: www.luc.edu/sac/registerwithsac/

Academic Integrity and AI. All work submitted for this course must be the result of your own exercise of your own intellect. The following shortcuts for intellectual work count as plagiarism and will be treated as such: using AI (such as but not limited to ChatGPT or Google Bard) to write all or part of an assignment, getting another human person to produce the work for you, or reproducing (in whole or in part) the work of others found online, etc., etc. Plagiarized work will be reported to the dean and will receive a grade of 0%. If you're still not sure what counts as plagiarism, please talk with me about this! The student handbook is also available to consult: www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

Grades. Grades are meant to reflect the quality of your work in this course. I will not adjust any grades for extraneous reasons, so please do not request any changes to your grade *unless* you can provide me with good reason to believe that I have underestimated the quality of one of your pieces of submitted work.

Fail-Safe Clause. I reserve the right to adjust aspects of this syllabus, such as the course policies and schedule, but I will only make changes that fit the following criteria: (1) the changes reflect the interests of the class (re *which topics of discussion interest the class* and *what is best for the class*), (2) the changes do not unduly burdensome while benefiting others (i.e., they're “fair” to students and instructor), and (3) the changes are announced to the class in advance of their taking effect.

Bioethics

I taught two sections of this course at the University of Missouri.

PHIL 1150: INTRODUCTORY BIOETHICS
MWF 9-9:50am, Strickland 213
Spring 2019

Beth Barker

bethbarker@mail.missouri.edu

Strickland 421: find me here MWF 10-10:50am, or by appointment

Course description

In this course, we'll critically examine a variety of philosophical quandaries within the field of bioethics. The goal of this course is not to resolve these quandaries once and for all, but to introduce you to creative, careful ways of responding to them that respect their real-life consequences.

Course objectives

1. To familiarize students with a range of important philosophical problems in bioethics, ways of responding to such problems, and the implications they have for how to live.
2. To cultivate students' reasoning skills so they may critically engage the aforementioned problems, as well as others, with creativity and intellectual responsibility.
3. To enable students to improve their own writing skills and process for the sake of clear thinking and communicating.

Required text

Bioethics: An Anthology, edited by Helga Kuhse, Udo Schuklenk, and Peter Singer

Available through the university library at this link:

<https://login.proxy.library.umkc.edu/login?url=https%3a%2f%2fbookcentral.proquest.com%2flib%2fumkc%2fdetail.action%3fdocID%3d4042986>

Assignments and grading

Three tests (each is 15% of your final grade)

None of these tests will be cumulative, but each will cover approximately four weeks' worth of material. There will be no final exam, but there will be quizzes and reflections to keep you accountable for the final weeks' readings.

One thesis-defense paper (20% of your final grade)

This will be a 1,000-1,250 word essay (*strict* word limits) defending a thesis related to a philosophical problem. I will provide guidelines for choosing an appropriate paper topic. You will complete the paper in five steps; each contributes to your overall paper score: brain vomit, thesis, outline, full draft, paper partner comments, and final draft. This paper takes the place of your final exam, and the final draft will be *due by midnight on Wednesday, May 15*.

Reflections (totaling 15% of your final grade)

Check Canvas for reflections assigned for particular readings. For full credit, reflections should be *between 250 and 500 words each* (strict lower limit of 250; and don't go too far over 500, even when you're inspired) and *must answer the following questions*: (1) what is the main idea (thesis) the reading argues for? (2) what are (at least two of) the main reasons in support of that thesis? (3) is there one of these reasons that you think fails to support the thesis in the right way? If so, why/how? (Or is there one you think is especially good for supporting the article's thesis? If so, why/how?)

Quizzes (totaling 10% of your final grade)

There will be approximately twelve pop quizzes. These quizzes allow me to assess your understanding of the main ideas in assigned readings. Each quiz will be given at the beginning of class, so be sure to arrive on time.

Participation (10% of your final grade)

Attendance is required, but I do not give participation credit for mere attendance. You earn participation credit by asking or responding to questions and contributing to small-group discussions in class.

Grading scale:

A 93%-100%
A- 90%-92%
B+ 87%-89%
B 83%-86%
B- 80%-82%
C+ 77%-79%
C 73%-76%
And so on...

Course schedule

All readings are available online in one of three ways: via the university library (see link on the first page), the course Canvas site, or the syllabus (links below).

Week 1: Introduction

1/23: Intro to the class and how to study philosophy
Resource: Jim Pryor, "Guidelines on Reading Philosophy,"
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

1/25: Introduction to moral reasoning: Ruxandra Teodorescu, "Science Fiction as Resource for the Moral Imagination":
<https://junkyardofthemind.com/blog/2023/11/25/science-fiction-as-resource-for-the-moral-imagination>

Week 2: Life and death and their significance

1/28: Jonathan Glover, "The Sanctity of Life," and Duncan Purves, "The Badness of Death":
<https://1000wordphilosophy.com/2014/05/01/the-badness-of-death/>

1/30: Thomas Nagel, "Death"

2/1: Anastasia Berg and Rachel Wiseman, "On Choosing Life":
<https://thepointmag.com/letter/on-choosing-life/>

Week 3: The beginning of life

2/4: Derek Parfit, "Rights, Interests, and Possible People"

2/6: Laura M. Purdy, "Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children be Immoral?"

2/8: Anastasia Berg, *What Are Children For?* excerpt

Week 4: Abortion

2/11: *flex day: no reading; wrap up discussion*

2/13: Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"

2/15: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"

Week 5: Disability and the right to life

2/18: Ruth Chadwick and Mairi Levitt, "Genetic Technology: A Threat to Deafness"

2/20: R. M. Hare, "The Abnormal Child: Moral Dilemmas of Doctors and Patients," and
Alison Davis, "Right to Life of Handicapped"

2/22: *flex day: wrap up and review!*

Week 6: Racial disparity in healthcare

2/25: **Exam I**

2/27: Linda Villarosa, "Why America's Black Mothers and Babies are in a Life-or-Death
Crisis":

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/11/magazine/black-mothers-babies-death-maternal-mortality.html>

Recommended: Shalon Irving's story at

<https://www.npr.org/2017/12/07/568948782/black-mothers-keep-dying-after-giving-birth-shalon-irvings-story-explains-why> (listen or read!)

3/1: Christine Henneberg, "A Modest Proposal to Save Mothers' Lives":

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2023/11/pregnancy-childbirth-postpartum-physical-therapy-evaluation/675865/>

Recommended: <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/solving-the-black-maternal-health-crisis>

Week 7: Voluntary euthanasia: Choosing to die

3/4: Chris Hill, “The Note”; Gillian Bennett, “Goodbye and Good Luck!” (link below)
<https://deadatnoon.com/index.html>
Recommended: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T524oCAHV1A&t=18s>

3/6: Daniel Callahan, “When Self-Determination Runs Amok”

3/8: John Lachs, “When Abstract Moralizing Runs Amok”
Recommended: Adriana Clavel-Vázquez and María Jimena Clavel Vázquez, “Embodied Imagination: Why We Can’t Just Walk in Someone Else’s Shoes”:
<https://junkyardofthemind.com/blog/2018/8/5/embodied-imagination-why-we-cant-just-walk-in-someone-elses-shoes>

Week 8: Killing v. letting die

3/11: Review Glover from week 2; read Peter Singer, “Is the Sanctity of Life Ethic Terminally Ill?”

3/13: James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia”

3/15: Winston Nesbitt, “Is Killing No Worse than Letting Die?”

Week 9: Wrap-up and review

3/18: *flex day: wrap up Rachels/Nesbitt discussion*

3/20: Exam review

3/22: **Exam II**

Week 10: Spring Break

Week 11: Nonvoluntary euthanasia

4/1: Franklin G. Miller et al., “Moral Fictions and Medical Ethics”

4/3: Ronald Dworkin, “Life Past Reason”

4/5: Rebecca Dresser, “Dworkin on Dementia: Elegant Theory, Questionable Policy”

Week 12: Organ economics

4/8: Eike-Henner W. Kluge, “Organ Donation and Retrieval: Whose Body is it Anyway?”

4/10: Janet Radcliffe-Richards et al., “The Case for Allowing Kidney Sales”

4/12: Debra Satz, “Ethical Issues in the Supply and Demand of Human Kidneys”
Recommended feature-length film: *Never Let Me Go*, Mark Romanek, dir., based on the novel by Kazuo Ishiguro

Week 13: Clinical trials

4/15: Benjamin Freedman, “Equipoise and the Ethics of Clinical Research”

4/17: Peter Lurie and Sidney M. Wolfe, “Unethical Trials of Interventions,” and Danstan Bagenda and Philippa Musoke-Mudido, “We’re Trying to Help our Sickest People”

4/19: Review

Week 14: Non-human animals

4/22: ****Exam III****

4/24: Cartesian conception of non-human animals: René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, excerpt

4/26: Amia Srinivasan, “The Sucker, The Sucker!?”: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v39/n17/amia-srinivasan/the-sucker-the-sucker> (listen or read!)

Week 15: Non-human animals

4/29: Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”

5/1: Immanuel Kant, “Duties Towards Animals”

5/3: Christine Korsgaard, “Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror”

Week 16: Experimentation

5/6: R. G. Frey and Sir William Paton, “Vivisection, Morals and Medicine: An Exchange”

5/8: *flex day: wrap up and review*

5/10: University reading day, no class

Exam week

****Final paper due before midnight on Wednesday, May 15****

Course policies

Attendance. This is required. Discussion is a key method of learning in this course, so regular class attendance will be necessary for your success in it. Additionally, you must come to class having carefully studied the assigned reading.

Devices. Please be respectful when using any devices (e.g., phones, tablets, laptops) in class. What does it mean to be respectful? Well, class is largely discussion based. So consider what it is like to try to have a conversation with someone whose attention is absorbed by the screen in front of them. I suspect you find it frustrating just like I do, so please don’t let a screen absorb your attention in our discussion-based class.

Communication.

Your responsibilities:

(1) *Checking Canvas regularly*, since that's how I'll communicate with you about all important course information, including assignment due dates. If you don't already have Canvas set up to send you email notifications, please do that.

(2) *Keeping in touch with me* about classes you expect to miss, and any difficulties you may be having with course materials. I'm happy to work with you—you just need to let me know when you need help!

My responsibilities:

(1) *Responding to your inquiries* in a timely manner. Please don't hesitate to contact me via email or drop in during my office hours. To any emails that require response, I will respond within 24 hours.

(2) *Holding regular office hours*. Please stop in!

Late work, or missing assignments. You are responsible for keeping track of due dates and submitting work on time. In general, I will not accept work turned in late. If you expect to be unable to turn in an assignment on time, **let me know in advance** so I can determine whether and, if applicable, how you might make up that assignment.

Accommodations. If you have accommodations through the Disability Center (such as typically receiving time and a half for tests), please let me know so I can accommodate you appropriately in this course. <https://disabilitycenter.missouri.edu/register/>.

Academic integrity. All work submitted must be your own, original work. **Any ideas that come from another source (e.g., videos, assigned readings, an internet search, or a peer) must be cited in all written work.** I will use Turnitin to detect plagiarism and will report any cases of plagiarism to the provost, as I'm required to do. I take plagiarism very seriously. **Plagiarized assignments (in part or in whole) will receive a failing grade.** Repeat instances of plagiarism will result in course failure. If you're not sure what counts as plagiarism, see Mizzou's description at <https://oai.missouri.edu/students/>.

Flexibility. Finally, as the course progresses, we may find it best to amend the reading plan laid out in the syllabus. I reserve the right to do so and will notify you of any changes to this plan via Canvas as well as in-class announcement.

Critical Thinking

I'm currently teaching this course at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). In future iterations of this course, I'll curate materials so students won't need to purchase a textbook.

HUM 3311: CRITICAL THINKING
Fall 2024
Fridays 3:30-6:15, Lakeview 203

Syllabus

Instructor: Beth Barker (she/her)

Contact: bbarker@saic.edu

Office: by appointment—please reach out!

Introduction

Formally, critical thinking is a matter of knowing and implementing a set of rules or facts about what amounts to a *good* set of reasons to believe something, about what makes a good *argument*. Arguments are everywhere—whether we realize it or not, we encounter them all the time—so critical thinking is the kind of skill you already have ample opportunity to exercise. The primary goal of this course is to help you recognize arguments in a variety of media, and to cultivate your skills for discerning good arguments from bad ones. Additionally, throughout this course, we'll be testing the hypothesis that critical thinking requires *creative* thinking. So we'll be finding and implementing creative methods of argument formation, analysis, and improvement.

Formal objectives: By the end of this course, you should...

- be able to identify a variety of argument forms.
- be able to detect and articulate hidden premises (reasons).
- be able to find and evaluate arguments in a variety of media.
- be able to craft and improve arguments.

Big-picture objectives: By the end of this course, you should...

- be able to creatively collaborate with peers.
- be able to recognize when to change your mind.
- have a sense of epistemic (intellectual) pride!

Materials

Required:

A Concise Guide to Critical Thinking, by Lewis Vaughn, any edition. ISBN: 9780197768365
(Note: You don't have to buy your own copy of the text if you can find a friend willing to go in on a copy with you—this is feasible, but be sure to agree on terms for sharing, etc.)

Recommended:

A real notebook, and a good pen or pencil. (In fact, I *strongly* recommend this!)

Creativity for Critical Thinkers, by Anthony Weston. ISBN: 9780195306217

(Note: Some of our in-class exercises will come from this book, but you won't need to have a copy of it.)

What makes the difference between a 'credit' and 'no credit' grade in this course?

To receive credit for this course, both of these statements must be true of you by the end of the semester:

- (1) You've satisfactorily completed both core assignments.
- (2) You've capital-'P'-Participated (a technical term) in at least 12 out of our 14 class sessions.

Here's what this means:

There will be two 'core' assignments. These are your 'mid-semester presentation' (due 10/18) and your 'final semester project' (due 12/13). At least three weeks before each due date, I'll provide you with assignment details as well as a rubric, letting you know what *satisfactory* completion of the assignment looks like. The basic idea, in each case, is that you'll creatively apply what you've learned up to that point in the semester.

What does capital-'P'-Participation amount to? The time we spend together in class will very much depend on how you've prepared, what you bring to class. So Participation requires preparing for class *before* showing up to class, and then actively contributing to in-class activities (e.g., team-based activities, problem solving, reflective journal entries). See the course schedule for what you should do to prepare for a given class. Your journal entries (which you'll upload to Canvas) will serve as the primary record of your Participation.

A note about participation: **you shouldn't be using electronic devices in class** unless you have either (a) an accommodation for a disability (see statement below) or (b) explicit permission from me. Using a phone or another device without permission during class can put your Participation for that day in jeopardy. I'll let you know if your Participation is in jeopardy, and we'll discuss whether you've nonetheless counted as Participating that day.

What if something comes up, and you have to miss more than two classes because of illness or an emergency? I will not punish you for encountering unexpected circumstances! **Please communicate with me!** Here's what you should do: notify me via email as soon as you realize that you'll be missing a third class (but please don't write to me with details of any illness—there are some things I don't need to know). Then, together, we'll figure out what's best for you in your circumstances: how you should make up work for missed Participation so you can still earn credit for the course!

Preview of Assignments

Core assignments:

For your [mid-semester project](#), you'll find, reconstruct, and evaluate an 'unexpected' argument. I know this isn't a lot of information yet, but trust me: you'll be prepared for this when the time comes!

For your final semester project, you'll design a sort of 'public service announcement' (PSA) with a critical thinking theme. The idea is that you'll choose a medium for sharing a bit of 'critical thinking advice' with a particular audience outside of class, and you'll design a PSA in that medium. Again, you'll be prepared for this when the time comes!

Ongoing assignments:

In-class team-based exercises—you'll have a team that you work with on in-class activities throughout the semester. In-class activities will vary with the course content, but your team won't. You should be able to count on each other!

Reflective journal entries—we'll end each class session with time for you to reflect and jot down a few sentences about what you learned that day. The idea is that you should write down whatever you'd like to remember as the key takeaway from that class (no wrong answers!). Having this information will turn out to be useful for your final project, and it will serve as a record of your Participation. (See Canvas for how this works.)

Course Schedule

Please note: I reserve the right to change or adjust scheduled readings and assignments for this course as our time together develops and reveals interests or pitfalls, as the case may be. I will always discuss changes and adjustments with you, in class, in advance of implementing them. And I will always—when a change or adjustment is settled upon—provide you with written notice of the change (for this reason, you must keep up with our Canvas page!).

PART I: WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING? WHY THINK 'CRITICALLY'?

Goals: reflect on the purpose of critical thinking as an activity, cultivate comradery, learn what an argument is

8/30: Introduction to the course and subject of analysis—what is critical thinking? And what are arguments, where do we find them?

9/6: What are arguments for?
Please read the syllabus!

And read these three blog posts:

S. Goldberg, “On Being Entitled to One’s Own Opinion,”

(<https://blogs.cardiff.ac.uk/openfordebate/on-being-entitled-to-ones-opinion/>)

P. Stokes, “No, You’re Not Entitled to Your Own Opinion,” (<https://theconversation.com/no-youre-not-entitled-to-your-opinion-9978>)

M. Rowlands, “A Right to Believe?” (<https://aeon.co/essays/everyone-is-entitled-to-their-beliefs-if-not-to-act-on-them>)

We’ll also cover content from ch. 1* (in this case, you may either read ahead or discover in class)

*note that all ‘ch. #’ references are to chapters in our main text, *Concise Guide to Critical Thinking*

PART II: ARGUMENT FORMS AND FALLACIES

Goals: become familiar with argument forms, learn the fallacies associated with these, and practice recognizing, evaluating, and improving on ‘found’ arguments

9/13: How to Find Arguments ‘Out There’

Ch. 3: Identifying and Evaluating Arguments, pp. 54–70

Low-stakes assignment due: bring a short blog piece/video/text excerpt to share in class. Together, we’ll test these pieces of media for arguments.

9/20: Deductive v. Inductive arguments

Ch. 4: Deductive Argument Patterns, pp. 78–84

and

Ch. 5: Inductive Arguments and Statistics, pp. 90–106

9/27: Inductive Arguments: Causal

K. Setiya, “‘The Colour out of Space’: Lovecraft on Induction,”

(<http://www.ksetiya.net/uploads/2/4/5/2/24528408/grue.pdf>)

Ch. 9: Causal Arguments, pp. 185–195

receive instructions for mid-semester project and presentation, due in class on 10/18

10/4: [Inductive Arguments: Inference to the Best Explanation](#)

Ch. 10: Inference to the Best Explanation, pp. 203–225

10/11: Arguments Gone Wrong: Informal Fallacies

C. Thi Nguyen, “The Limits of Data,” (<https://issues.org/limits-of-data-nguyen/>)

Selections from ch. 12: Fallacies and Persuaders

10/18: *[mid-semester project](#) presentations*

In class: (1) you’ll present the arguments you’ve found, analyzed, and improved (5 minutes/student, max!); (2) you’ll fill out a midterm evaluation of this course.*

*This evaluation will be anonymous, and it will provide me with invaluable information about your experience in the course (so far). This helps me know what kinds of adjustments to make so that the next half of the course will be *even better*.

PART III: APPLYING OUR SKILLS, FINDING THE LIMITS OF CRITICAL THOUGHT

Goals: apply your skills to arguments in select contexts, become familiar with obstacles to critical thinking, formulate strategies for avoiding these obstacles (when possible), discuss challenges to ‘epistemic agency’ (a technical term I’ll introduce)

10/25: Arguments in Advertising

Ch. 8: Advertising: Commercial and Political

11/1: Conspiracy Theories

Ch. 13: Critical Thinking and Extremism, pp. 308–316

Recommended: Hi Phi Nation, “Chamber of Facts,” (<https://hiphination.org/complete-season-two-episodes/s2-episode-10-chamber-of-facts/>)

11/8: Epistemic agency and responsibility

H. Joshi, “Socially Motivated Belief and Its Discontents,”

(<https://soar.suny.edu/bitstream/handle/20.500.12648/14805/2023-2024.%20Joshi.%20Socially%20motivated%20belief%20and%20its%20epistemic%20discontents%202021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>)

Selections from ch. 2: Psychological Obstacles

Recommended: C. Thi Nguyen, “Seductions of Clarity,”

(<https://philpapers.org/archive/NGUTSO-2.pdf>)

11/15: Is Critical Thinking Always Required?

M. Huemer, “Is Critical Thinking Epistemically Responsible?” (find on Canvas)

11/22: J. Matheson, “Why Think for Yourself?” (find on Canvas)

discuss expectations for final assignment

11/29: Holiday break! (no class)

12/6: Critique Week! (no class)

PART IV: CONCLUSION

12/13: It's been a long time since we've had class!

In our final class: you'll take the lead, presenting the final projects you've designed. But we'll also have a concluding discussion. For this, please read a short blog post about changing our epistemic environments in social media:

P. Faulkner, "I hate cyclists!" (<https://blogs.cardiff.ac.uk/openfordebate/i-hate-cyclists/>)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago is committed to full compliance with all laws regarding equal opportunities for students with disabilities. If you know or suspect you have a disability, such as a Reading/Writing Disorder, ADD/ADHD, and/or a mental health condition, and you think you would benefit from assistance or accommodations, first contact the Disability and Learning Resource Center (DLRC) to schedule an appointment. DLRC staff will review your disability documentation and work with you to determine reasonable accommodations. They will then provide you with a letter outlining the approved accommodations for you to deliver to all of your instructors. **This letter must be presented before any accommodations will be implemented.** You should contact the DLRC as early in the semester as possible. The DLRC is located on the 13th floor of the MacLean Center, 112 S. Michigan Ave., and can be reached via phone at 312.499.4278, or email at dlrc@saic.edu.

Statement on Academic Freedom and Free Expression

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago is a community of educators, students, and staff whose artistic, design, and scholarly work is characterized by an ethos of intellectual and imaginative curiosity, the love and production of knowledge, art, and design, and the joy of creating. This ethos can be sustained, and the above learning goals can be achieved, only in an institutional and cultural framework of academic freedom, freedom of expression, and equality, which is the only framework within which learning, research, and creative output can flourish. Such a framework allows members of communities whose speech has historically been silenced to fully and equally participate in the same free expression that has historically been the privilege of only some segments of society. The framework also helps us navigate through conflict and tension—themselves vital aspects of educational, creative, and intellectual growth—and it helps us differentiate between the concepts of tension or offense on the one hand, and those of harm, discrimination, and harassment on the other.

Academic Misconduct Statement

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago prohibits "dishonesty such as cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the School" (Students' Rights and Responsibilities, Student Handbook). Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. One plagiarizes when one presents another's work as one's own, even if one does not intend to. The penalty for plagiarizing may also result in some loss of some types of financial aid (for example, a No Credit in a course can lead to losing the Presidential Scholarship), and repeat offenses can lead to expulsion from the school. To find out more about plagiarism and how to avoid it, use SAIC's "Avoid Plagiarism - Quick Guide," found under "Guides and Forms" on SAIC's Academic Advising Page [here: https://www.saic.edu/lifeatsaic/%20academicadvising/](https://www.saic.edu/lifeatsaic/%20academicadvising/).

Theory of Knowledge

This is an outline for an intermediate course in epistemology, which I'm contracted to teach at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) in spring of 2025. Here I require a textbook because I've been asked to cover some traditional topics in epistemology.

THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

SPRING 2025

In this course, we'll cover a variety of issues in the study of knowledge, known as *epistemology*. We'll consider candidate answers to questions like these: What does it mean to be rational? When do we have the right to believe something? What kinds of considerations do we owe each other as 'knowers'? Can it be morally wrong to have certain beliefs? How should we resolve disagreement with our peers? And how does what we know inform what we do?

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you should...

- Be familiar with key concepts in epistemology, and why they matter outside of epistemology.
- Know how to participate critically and creatively in discussions.
- Know yourself better as a thinker and reasoner.
- Know when to change your mind.
- Have a sense of epistemic (intellectual) camaraderie!

MATERIALS

Required: Richard Fumerton's *Epistemology* (<https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Epistemology-p-9781405125673#tableofcontents-section>; cost: ~\$37)

Recommended: Plato's *Theaetetus* (e.g., this one: <https://hackettpublishing.com/theaetetus>; cost: ~\$13)

Recommended: a good notebook and pen or pencil!

SCHEDULE

Week 1. *Introduction to the course and subject: What does rationality require?*

S. Goldberg, "On Being Entitled to One's Own Opinion,"

(<https://blogs.cardiff.ac.uk/openfordebate/on-being-entitled-to-ones-opinion/>);

P. Stokes, "No, You're Not Entitled to Your Own Opinion," (<https://theconversation.com/no-youre-not-entitled-to-your-opinion-9978>);

M. Rowlands, "A Right to Believe?" (<https://aeon.co/essays/everyone-is-entitled-to-their-beliefs-if-not-to-act-on-them>)

Week 2. *What is knowledge?* read Plato's *Theaetetus*; we'll also cover Fumerton ch. 2, "The Analysis of Knowledge" (recommended but not required reading)

Week 3. *Justification*: read Fumerton ch. 3, “Epistemic Rationality and Its Structure,” and Fumerton ch 4, “Traditional (Internalist) Foundationalism”

Week 4. *Externalism and the Gettier Problem*: read Fumerton ch. 5, “Externalist Versions of Foundationalism,” and E. Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”

Week 5. *Skepticism*: read excerpts from M. Montaigne’s *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, and excerpts from P. Bayle, “Pyrrho”

Week 6. *Expertise and Autonomy*: read J. Matheson, “Why Think for Yourself?” and J. Kawall “Epistemic Autonomy and The Shaping of Our Epistemic Lives”

Week 7. *Disagreement*: read [J. Matheson, “The Epistemology of Disagreement,”](#) and J. Lackey, “What Should We Do When We Disagree?”

Week 8. *Self-Knowledge*: B. Reed, “Self-Knowledge and Rationality,” and B. Gertler, “Self-Knowledge and Rational Agency: A Defense of Empiricism”

Week 9. *Bias*: G. A. Cohen, “Paradoxes of Conviction,” and T. Gendler, “On the Epistemic Costs of Implicit Bias,”

Week 10. *Epistemic Injustice*: read K. Dotson, “Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression,” and V. Ivy, “Epistemic Injustice”

receive final project instructions

Week 11. *Ethics of Belief*: read William Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief,” and William James, “The Will to Believe”; recommended: Berislav Marušić, “The Ethics of Belief”

Week 12. *Practical Knowledge*: G. Ryle, “Knowing How and Knowing That,” and J. Fodor, “The Appeal to Tacit Knowledge in Psychological Explanation,” *The Journal of Philosophy*

Week 13. *Practical Knowledge, round 2*: A. Noë, “Against Intellectualism,” and P. Snowdon, “Knowing How and Knowing That: A Distinction Reconsidered”

Week 14. *Friendship*: read J. Kawall, “Friendship and Epistemic Norms,” and S. Goldberg, “Against Partiality in Friendship: Value-Reflecting Reasons”

Week 15. Wrap-Up and Review
present final projects

FINAL PROJECT OPTIONS

Each will include an in-class presentation/discussion element.

1. Design a ‘public service announcement’ (PSA) with a theory-of-knowledge theme. The idea is that you’ll choose a medium for sharing a bit of ‘knowledge advice’ with a particular audience outside of class, and you’ll design a PSA in that medium.

B. BARKER TEACHING PORTFOLIO

2. Choose a real-world disagreement between experts on a topic that interests you. Your task is to find and articulate the core of this disagreement, recommend a principled resolution, and articulate reasons for this resolution. You may write this as a paper, or we can discuss other media for you to work with. You might also consider drafting a letter to a relevant expert and seeing what they think of your proposal.
3. Think of your own Gettier case and find a way to represent or illustrate it. Plan and conduct a poll (must be approved in advance): how many people judge that your subject *knows* that P? How do your findings bear on the theories of knowledge we've discussed? Write up your results and analysis.
4. Write a response to one of the articles we've read for class (or a related article that I've approved). Articulate new reasons to think the author's view is correct or somehow mistaken.

Animal Minds

This is an outline for an advanced course on the nature of animal minds. I've drawn the readings from philosophy and comparative psychology/cognitive science, but I could easily adapt this course in one of two ways: so that it centers the methods and findings of comparative psychology/cognitive science, or so that it centers the connections between our concepts of rationality, intelligence, and what it means to be a human animal.

ANIMAL MINDS

CORE TEXTS

Kristen Andrews, *How to Study Animal Minds* (available here, free:
<https://philpapers.org/archive/ANDHTS-3.pdf>)

Michel de Montaigne, *Apology for Raymond Sebond* (recommended: Hackett ed., \$14,
<https://hackettpublishing.com/apology-for-raymond-sebond>)

René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (recommended: Hackett ed., \$9,
<https://hackettpublishing.com/discourse-on-method>)

Apart from these texts, links (or Canvas access) will be provided for all assigned readings.

RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER READING

Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Other Minds: The Octopus, the Sea, and the Deep Origins of Consciousness*

Robert W. Lurz, *Mindreading Animals: The Debate over What Animals Know about Other Minds*

CORE OBJECTIVES

To cultivate self-understanding.

To cultivate curiosity about the world around us.

To become familiar with some of the diverse capacities of other creatures.

To become familiar with a variety of methods of studying minds.

SCHEDULE

Week 1. Introduction to the course and to each other

day 1: introduction, ice-breaking, team building

day 2: Nagel, 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?'; recommended: podcast interview, Jonathan Birch,
<https://manyminds.libsyn.com/the-space-of-possibly-sentient-beings>

PART I. HISTORICAL THINKING ABOUT ANIMAL MINDS

Week 2. Humans as rational animals

day 1: Aristotle's *De Anima*, excerpt

day 2: Sophia Connell, 'Animal Cognition in Aristotle'

Week 3. Humans as *distinctively* rational animals?

day 1: Gilbert Ryle's 'A Rational Animal'

day 2: Giacomo Melis and Susana Monsó, 'Are Humans the Only Rational Animals?'

Week 4. Animals as machines

day 1: Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, excerpt

day 2: read Carruthers, *Human and Animal Minds*, ch. 1 (available on Canvas)

Week 5. Animals as reasoners

day 1: wrap up discussion of Descartes and Carruthers

day 2: Montaigne's *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, excerpt

Week 6. Animals as reasoners, continued

day 1: Montaigne's *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, excerpt

day 2: wrap up discussion of Montaigne and cf. Descartes

PART II. CONTEMPORARY COMPARATIVE COGNITIVE SCIENCE

Week 7. Intro to comparative cognitive science/psychology

day 1: Alexandria Boyle, 'Disagreement and classification in comparative cognitive science'

day 2: Kristen Andrews, *How to Study Animal Minds*, read ch. 1: 'Methods of Comparative Psychology'; and ch. 2: 'Conscious Animals in Comparative Psychology', (pp. 1–29)

Week 8. Methodology and obstacles

day 1: Kristen Andrews, *How to Study Animal Minds*, read ch. 3: 'Objectivity and Bias in Comparative Psychology'; and ch. 4: 'Biases in Ape Cognition Studies', (pp. 30–64)

day 2: Joanna S. Brebner et al., 'Through an animal's eye: The implications of diverse sensory systems in scientific experimentation'

(<https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rspb.2024.0022>); recommended: podcast interview, Ximena Nelson, <https://manyminds.libsyn.com/consider-the-spider>

Week 9. Speech and Metacognition

day 1: Tereza Roubalová et al., 'Comparing the productive vocabularies of grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) and young children' (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10071-024-01883-5>)

day 2: Lorraine Subias et al., 'Metagocnition in wild Japanese macaques: Cost and stakes influencing information-seeking behavior' (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10071-024-01851-z>)

Week 10. Problem-Solving

day 1: Eli Shupe, 'The Irreconcilability of Insight'
(<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10071-024-01844-y>)

day 2: Laure Cauchard et al., 'How to solve novel problems: The role of associative learning in problem-solving performance in wild great tits *Parus major*'
(<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10071-024-01872-8>)

receive final project instructions

Week 11. Tools

day 1: Erno Vincze et al., 'Are comparable studies really comparable? Suggestions from a problem-solving experiment on urban and rural great tits'
(<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10071-024-01885-3>)

day 2: Anna A. Smirnova et al., 'Hooded crows (*Corvus cornix*) manufacture objects relative to a mental template' (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10071-024-01874-6>)

Week 12. Sociality

day 1: Rhys Borchert and Aliya R. Dewey, 'In Praise of Animals'

day 2: Kathrin S. Kopp, et al., 'The proximate regulation of prosocial behaviour: Towards a conceptual framework for comparative research'
(<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10071-024-01846-w>)

Week 13. Culture

day 1: Lori Marino, 'Cetacean Cognition'

day 2: Ross Anderson, 'How First Contact with Whale Civilization Could Unfold'
(<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2024/02/talking-whales-project-ceti/677549/>)

Week 14. Reflection

day 1: Christine Korsgaard, 'Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror'

day 2: Mark Rowlands and Susana Monsó, 'Animals as Reflexive Thinkers: The Aponoian Paradigm'

Week 15. Wrap-up and Review

present final projects

FINAL PROJECT OPTIONS:

1. Choose a creature and an aspect of cognition; design and propose a study—how would you conduct the study? What would it aim to show? What might be some potential pitfalls?
2. Write a thesis-defense paper in response to one of the studies discussed in class (or, with permission, another study that you have an interest in responding to).
3. Write a thesis-defense paper that revives an idea from Descartes or Montaigne—did either have a key insight worth revisiting in light of current research?

VI. SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS

Mid-Semester Project, Critical Thinking

This is the mid-semester project I assigned my students in [Critical Thinking](#). By the time students receive this assignment, they've already practiced each of its elements (e.g., finding the conclusion of a long-text argument, formulating premises, evaluating argument strength, and so on). This project asks them to put these skills to work on two arguments that they find in familiar media.

HUM 3311: CRITICAL THINKING MID-SEMESTER PROJECT

INSTRUCTIONS

Overview: for this project, you'll find, reconstruct, evaluate, and improve two arguments. You'll present *some* of your work in class and submit documentation for *all* of your work on Canvas.

Steps:

- (1) **Find two arguments.*** You should look for these arguments somewhere 'out there', or 'in the wild' (i.e., not from a textbook!). The best way to do this is to pay attention to media you already interact with, such as news media, popular media (blogs, social media), literature, visual art, public signage, etc.

***Requirement:** at least one of these arguments must come from a *text* (something written or transcribed). So you couldn't, for example, pick two pieces of visual art for your argument reconstructions.

- (2) Once you have two arguments to work with, you'll **reconstruct them**. The end product for each argument should be this: two premises (each must be a complete sentence, as succinct as possible!) and a conclusion.

1. Premise
2. Premise
3. Conclusion

You've already practiced this, but here are the steps for reconstructing each argument:

- a. **Identify the conclusion** by asking, *What's the main idea being advanced here?* What am I supposed to *believe* based on what's given? What's the takeaway? (Note: the author might have left their conclusion unstated! So you'll have to do some interpretive work.)
- b. **Identify the reasons** that the author gives for accepting the main idea/conclusion. Why does the author think that *you* should think that the main idea/conclusion is true? (Some reasons might also be left unstated.)

- c. Boil the reasons down to **two key premises**. (You'll have to simplify on the author's behalf. And don't worry—if you think you're leaving out too much, you'll have the chance to add implied premises later.)
- (3) **Evaluate each argument.** Keep in mind that in order to evaluate each argument, you'll first need to correctly identify the kind of argument you've found (e.g., is it a modus ponens or modus tollens? enumerative induction? abduction?)
- a. To the best of your knowledge, are the premises true? (You might have to do a little sleuthing to find out whether they're true, but don't get carried away at this stage since this isn't a research project.)
 - b. What kind of support do the premises provide for the conclusion? (Do they guarantee the truth of the conclusion? Or, is the support strong or weak?)
- (4) **Improve each argument.** Here you make recommendations for how one would “fix” the shortcomings you identified in step (3). Use some creative thinking here! Some suggestions for how to go about this (use your judgment about which of these—or other strategies—is best):
- a. If one of the premises isn't true, can you replace it with a premise that is true?
 - b. If the premises provide only weak support for the conclusion, can you recommend a way to gather the evidence/data needed to strengthen their support for the conclusion?
 - c. Are there any hidden or “implied” premises that you can supply/fill in on the author's behalf? (If so, at this stage you can show what the argument looks like with more than two premises—just be sure to mark which premises are implied.)
 - d. Is there some aspect of the topic that the author has failed to consider? Or do they make any ungrounded assumptions? If so, what are they? How would acknowledging these assumptions change the argument?
- (5) **Reflect.** How does this argument change your thinking about its topic? If you don't find the argument convincing, why not? Or, if you think the argument is important and more people should pay attention to it, why?

IN-CLASS PRESENTATION

You'll **choose just one of your arguments** to present in class on October 18. You should:

- (1) **Present** your reconstruction. (Say a little about how you identified the premises/conclusion, and note any challenges that arose in interpreting the author's argument.)
- (2) **Demonstrate** your evaluation of the argument.
- (3) **Make** your recommendations for improvement—what does the improved argument look like?

- (4) **Share** some of your reflections about the argument, as well as any takeaways you have from the process of reconstructing it.

Important: you have only **five minutes (max!)** for your presentation, so you will probably not have time to cover everything fully—you'll need to use your judgment about what's most important.

Medium of presentation: you may use computer/PowerPoint, you may bring handouts, you may use the dry erase board(s)—whatever you think best! Just two requirements: **others in the class must be able to see/read your reconstruction and evaluation** (this means you can't *just* speak, or read from a script, for example).

Note: **if your presentation requires any amount of set-up, you must let me know** what this involves at least **24 hours before class!** (So we can avoid delays.)

CANVAS DOCUMENTATION

On Canvas, you'll submit a PDF or .doc or .docx file with all of the following:

Argument 1

- (1) Link to (or picture of) original content (wherever it is your reconstruction 'comes from'). Cite the source.
- (2) Your reconstruction—two premises and conclusion, in this format:

- 1. Premise**
- 2. Premise**

- 3. Conclusion**

- (3) Your evaluation (~a paragraph of your own writing; cite any sources you use in determining whether the premises are true!)
- (4) Your improved argument (with a paragraph of explanation—why you improved it in the way you did).

Argument 2

- (1) Link to (or picture of) original content (wherever it is your reconstruction 'comes from'). Cite the source.
- (2) Your reconstruction—two premises and conclusion, in this format:

- 1. Premise**
- 2. Premise**

- 3. Conclusion**

- (3) Your evaluation (~a paragraph of your own writing; cite any sources you use in determining whether the premises are true!)
- (4) Your improved argument (with a paragraph of explanation—why you improved it in the way you did).

RUBRIC

How you'll be assessed: I'll give you written feedback, as well as a score (1 through 5) for each of the questions below. What this means:

5 = Excellent!

3 = Good.

1 = Needs improvement.

Note: In order **to receive credit** for the mid-semester project, you need an average (mean) score of 3.

Content:

Is the argument reconstruction *accurate*?

Is the argument reconstruction *charitable*?

Are the premises and conclusion of the reconstruction succinct?

Does the evaluation make use of *key concepts* learned in class?

Do the evaluation and improved argument *demonstrate understanding* of what makes for a good argument of that type?

Does the argument improvement *exhibit creativity*?

Technical:

Are the argument reconstruction and improved argument represented in standard argument format? (pictured above)

Is the content of your in-class presentation organized clearly?

Did the presentation fit within the allotted time?

Is the content of your Canvas documentation organized clearly?

In-Class Activity, [Critical Thinking](#)

I wrote this social deduction game to get students to practice forming and evaluating inferences to the best explanation (and to discuss how Sherlock Holmes doesn't do as much *deducing* as he claims). I find that playing games like this helps re-energize students in the middle of the semester. (This is a draft of the game that's been revised based on helpful feedback from my critical thinking students at School of the Art Institute of Chicago.)

A STUDY IN ABDUCTION
A Social Inference-to-The-Best-Explanation Game

STARTING CHARACTERS
(randomly assigned)

Sherlock (in disguise, knows who henchpersons are)
Watson (knows who Sherlock is)
Inspector Lestrade (knows who Watson is, makes up to two arrests)
Moriarty (recruits henchpersons)
Henchperson 1 (knows who Moriarty is)
Henchperson 2 (knows who Moriarty is)
Henchperson 3 (knows who Moriarty is)

Everyone else: Ordinary citizen!

There are **two teams** competing to win: those on the side of 'Justice' (Sherlock, Watson, Lestrade, and all ordinary citizens), and those on the side of 'Crime' (Moriarty and all henchpersons)

HOW TO WIN

Justice wins if and only if Lestrade arrests Moriarty.

Crime wins if any one of the following conditions is met:

- (a) Lestrade arrests Sherlock.
- (b) Moriarty recruits Sherlock.
- (c) Moriarty has recruited four new henchpersons.

HOW TO PLAY

The game is played over a series of rounds. Each round has four phases:

Phase 1. Everyone has their heads down/eyes closed, except when called on, so all of the following communication happens secretly.

- (1) Lestrade *may* make an arrest.
- (2) Moriarty recruits a new henchperson.

Phase 2. Everyone discovers what happened—who (if anyone) was arrested and who was recruited by Moriarty.

Phase 3. Everyone has two minutes to form a theory (write on the provided worksheet): *Who is Moriarty? Who is Sherlock?* (Note that it might be in your best interest to write a good argument for a false conclusion...)

Phase 4. Discussion—exchange theories and evidence, ~five minutes. Learn what others are thinking, try to determine who's hiding their identity...

MOTIVATIONS—what is your character trying to do?

Sherlock is in disguise—they don't want to reveal themselves to Moriarty, or else they might get recruited!

Watson knows who Sherlock is, so Watson has a special duty to deflect any undue suspicion of Sherlock!

Moriarty is in hiding—they want to avoid being found out, or else Lestrade will arrest them! (They also may want to recruit any ordinary citizen who's close to finding them out!)

Henchpersons want to support Moriarty's cause and deflect suspicion from Moriarty!

Ordinary citizens want to help Lestrade discover and arrest Moriarty!

THE GOAL

To form and evaluate theories. You're observing behaviors and inferring to the best explanation: That so-and-so must be lying! That so-and-so must be Moriarty!

A STUDY IN ABDUCTION

Ordinary Citizen's Journal...

Round 1 Theories

Who is Sherlock, and what's your evidence for this?

Who is Moriarty, and what's your evidence for this?

Round 2 Theories

Who is Sherlock, and what's your evidence for this?

Who is Moriarty, and what's your evidence for this?

Round 3 Theories

Who is Sherlock, and what's your evidence for this?

Who is Moriarty, and what's your evidence for this?

Round 4 Theories

Who is Sherlock, and what's your evidence for this?

Who is Moriarty, and what's your evidence for this?

VII. LETTER OF OBSERVATION

Spring Quarter 2023

TEACHING ASSISTANT EVALUATION

Quarter/Year Spring 2023 Student Beth Barker

Instructor Reed Course Number PHIL 210-3

Course Title History of Philosophy: Early Modern

Please comment on the student's performance as a teaching assistant in this class, including such matters as quality of instruction, collegiality, punctuality, preparedness, responsiveness to faculty communications, organization and promise as an instructor.

Beth was an outstanding TA for this course. She was meticulous and prompt in handling all the course details, and her students and I appreciated her student-focused to teaching. She was proactive in bringing potential problems to my attention before they became serious, and this gave us additional time to work with students on addressing them.

Beth's grading was on-time and fair, and she offered many insightful comments to her students.

I attended one of Beth's discussion sections and was very impressed with the rapport she had built with her students. The issue under discussion was Locke's account of personal identity, and Beth provided a very modern take on the question by asking the students how they might track TV characters Rick and Morty through their appearances in different realities. Beth broke the full group into small groups to answer this question, then reconstituted the full class to discuss their initial answers. She then sent them back to small groups to talk about a more sophisticated version of the question, and then she again had them report back to the class as a whole. The students' enthusiasm for the discussion was palpable, both in the small group discussions and in the entire class. Most of the students participated in the full discussion, and the level of discourse was quite sophisticated.

It was a pleasure to work with Beth in this capacity, and I would welcome doing so again.

On the basis of performance as a teaching assistant for this course, seeking reassignment as a TA for my future courses is:

Encouraged