

# Reasoning and Argumentation

## RA 101-14, Syllabus (v4)

### Course Info

**Instructor:** Richard Fry, rfry@siue.edu

**Meeting Time:** M/W, 4:30-5:45P, Peck Hall 0302

**Office Hours:** Monday/Wednesday 3:00-4:00PM, Peck 3210 and by appointment

### Course Description

Nobody likes to be wrong, but how do we avoid it? In this class, we'll look at people's attempts to convince us, focusing not just on what *does* convince us but on what *should* convince us, too. We'll spend most of our time figuring out how to reconstruct other people's reasoning and evaluate their claims. Are the things they've said true, and do they even support the conclusion they want us to draw? We'll find out by figuring out just what's being said and then evaluating it. We'll look at lots of examples, many of which you'll bring in. We'll work together to secure ourselves against being convinced by both hucksters and well-intentioned-but-mistaken individuals. When we're done, we'll also understand how to create convincing arguments of our own, free from any of the problems we've identified.

### Required Texts

Wright, *Critical Thinking: An Introduction to Analytical Reading and Reasoning*, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, 2012, ISBN: 9780199796229

### Course Goals

This course has several goals:

- To improve your ability to engage with others by giving and asking for reasons.
- To improve your analytical reading and writing skills.
- To develop essential life skills such as time management, communication when encountering difficulties, and thoughtful engagement with others.

# Policies

**Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism:** You are expected and required to uphold SIUE's standards of academic honesty in this course. Plagiarism of ideas or words is unacceptable. In effort to uphold this university's high standards, confirmed academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course. Familiarize yourself with what counts as plagiarism and SIUE's policies: <http://www.siu.edu/lovejoylibrary/services/instruction/plagiarism.shtml>, <http://www.siu.edu/policies/3c2.shtml>

**Preparedness and Attendance:** You are responsible for being prepared for class and comporting yourself in an appropriate manner. This includes reading *and bringing* the assigned material, thinking about it so that you can ask questions, arriving on time, and participating in discussion.

**A Safe and Productive Environment:** *You are responsible for helping to foster a safe and productive learning environment.* Some of the topics we will address this semester can provoke powerful emotions, especially for people who have had or are currently having difficult experiences. Be mindful of how the topics under discussion may differently impact members of the class and treat your classmates with respect and courtesy.

**Readings and Laptops:** You are expected to bring the assigned reading to each class meeting. Laptop/tablet use will not be permitted.

**Due Dates:** You are responsible for turning in your work on time. *For written Exercises 1-4, no late work will be accepted.* For other work, each 24 hours or portion thereof that a piece of written work is late will result in a deduction of 3.33%. Missed examinations, unless rescheduled more than 24 hours *before the examination is missed*, will receive a grade of 0%.

**Extensions:** If you need an extension for written work, email me *as soon as possible* with a brief description of your situation and—if I approve an extension—we will work out an appropriate timeframe. Extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.

**Completion of Assignments:** All of the work assigned for this course is essential. If any assignments are not complete before the end of course, *you will receive a failing grade for the course.*

**Grade Appeals:** If you believe the work you submitted deserves a different grade than it received, you may ask *in writing* for reconsideration. Your request must be submitted *within one week*, but no sooner than *two days after* the assignment is returned. Your written request *must explain why* you believe the work deserves a different grade. Please note that *if a change is made*, the new grade may be either higher or lower.

**Changes:** I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus at any time. Changes will be announced in class and a new version of the syllabus posted to Blackboard.

# Assignments and Assessment

## Exercises (21%)

Over the course of the semester, you'll complete four sets of exercises, the best three of which will count toward your final grade. Each of these will be due in class. *No late assignments will be accepted without prior approval.*

## Exam #1 (20%)

In the early part of the semester, you'll take a short exam. This exam will primarily ask you to paraphrase and identify the structure of passages.

## Exam #2 (20%)

Near the end of the semester, you'll take a second exam. This exam will have you finding the argument in a piece of popular media. You'll write up a short summary of what you take the argument to be and propose a criticism of it.

## Final Paper (30%)

At the end of the semester, you'll write a short (2-3 page) letter. This letter will call on you to deploy the argumentative skills you've developed in this class. You will be graded on how well you present your argument and how well you anticipate and defuse criticisms. This paper will be due during the time scheduled for the final exam.

## Participation/Comportment (9%)

Part of your final grade will be determined by participation. Participation should be understood broadly: be involved and attentive in class. You can get your participation points by making comments or asking questions in class, coming to office hours or emailing me. You'll lose points for looking at your phone, sleeping, failing to bring assigned readings, arriving consistently late, *etc.* Further, it should be noted that it is very hard to participate in class when you are not there.

## Extra Credit

I will post a list of Department of Philosophy events to Blackboard. You may attend up to three of these talks and write up a 100-200 word summary of an argument the speaker made. If your argument summary is acceptable, you will receive +1% to your final grade, up to a total of +3%. (Note that you may only do *two* of these from the SIUE Undergraduate Conference, and if you do two, one must be the keynote.) Paragraphs should be turned in within a week of the event.

## Course Calendar

Date	Material	Content	Ch.	Reading	Assn.
24 Aug	<b>Paraphrase</b>	About Paraphrase	1	—	
26		Preparing to Paraphrase	1	3-30	
31	<b>Reading for Structure</b>	Beginning to Paraphrase	2	35-54	
02 Sept		More on Structure	2	54-70	Exercises #1 due
9		SP and Complex Structure	2	70-86	
14	<b>Reading for Reasoning</b>	Reasoning and Schematics	3	97-110	
16		Diagrams and Charity	3	111-131	Exercises #2 due
21	<b>Review</b>	—	—	—	
23	<b>Exam</b>	—	—	—	Exam #1
28	<b>Argument Analysis</b>	Analysis	4	143-169	
30		Disagreement	4	169-197	
05 Oct		Disagreement & New Info.	4	—	
7	<b>Diagnostic Arguments</b>	Diagnosis	5	206-213	Exercises #3 due
12		Support & Refinement	5	213-247	
14		Ex#4 Practice	6	—	
19	<b>Diagnostic Patterns</b>	Cause vs Correlation	6	259-284	
21		Testimony	6	284-302	
26		Sampling	6	302-318	Exercises #4 due
28	<b>Prediction &amp; Recommendation</b>	Prediction	7	331-349	
02 Nov		Hypotheticals	—	—	
4		Recommendation	7	349-366	
9	<b>Analogy</b>	Analogy	—	—	
11	<b>Fallacies</b>	Construction	8	376-383	
16		Affect	—	—	
18		Critical & Other	8	383-390	
30	<b>Review</b>	—	—	—	
02 Dec	<b>Exam</b>	—	—	—	Exam #2
7	<b>Wrapping Up</b>	The Final Paper	—	<i>tbd.</i>	
9		Final Arguments	—	<i>tbd.</i>	
<b>Final Paper due during time scheduled for Final Exam</b>					

# Resources

## *Academic Resources*

**Disability Support Services:** Student Success Center, Room 1270

<http://www.siue.edu/dss/> and [disabilitysupport@siue.edu](mailto:disabilitysupport@siue.edu)

Provides accommodations to disabled students. DSS also has services which students can use to increase skills in learning, time management, and test-taking.

**Instructional Services:**

<http://www.siue.edu/is/>

Provides instructional support unit for the students, faculty and staff. Helps the underprepared to prepare, the prepared to advance, and the advanced to excel.

**Writing Center:** in the Academic Advancement Center

<http://www.siue.edu/is/writing/>, 618-650-2045

The writing center assists you as you analyze your paper and explore ways to improve it. Our primary concern is to help you become a better writer. To do this, we challenge you to learn more about composition and the conventions of Standard English.

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## *Health and Wellness Resources*

**Counseling Services:** Student Success Center room 0222

<http://www.siue.edu/counseling/>

Provides individual counseling, counseling groups, healthy living workshops, consultations, and referrals. Special attention is paid to the ongoing issues affecting college students.

**Student Health Clinic Services:** Student Success Center room 0222

<http://www.siue.edu/healthservice/clinic/index.shtml>

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