COURSE SYLLABUS: PHILOSOPHY 110: CRITICAL THINKING

I. LOCATOR INFORMATION:
Semester/Year: Spring 2014
Instructor: Dr. Paul Boaheng
Office Telephone: (910) 672-1761
Office Location: LSB 228

Semester Hours of Credit: 3
E-Mail Address: pboaheng@uncfsu.edu
Alternate Telephone: (910) 672-1573
Office Hours: MWF: 10:00-12:00, 2:00-3:20
and/or by appointment

FSU Policy on Electronic Mail: Fayetteville State University provides to each student, free of charge, an electronic mail account (username@uncfsu.edu) that is easily accessible via the Internet. The university has established FSU email as the primary mode of correspondence between university officials and enrolled students. Inquiries and requests from students pertaining to academic records, grades, bills, financial aid, and other matters of a confidential nature must be submitted via FSU email. Inquiries or requests from personal email accounts are not assured a response. The university maintains open-use computer laboratories throughout the campus that can be used to access electronic mail. Rules and regulations governing the use of FSU email may be found at http://www.uncfsu.edu/PDFs/EmailPolicyFinal.pdf

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Critical Thinking introduces a student to the basic elements of argumentation. It focuses on the analysis, evaluation, and development of claims and arguments as these appear in the sciences, the humanities, the social sciences, the applied sciences, and everyday life. The course will strengthen the student's abilities to analyze, evaluate, and develop claims and arguments.

IV. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
A. Distinguish arguments from other sets of claims that are not inferentially related.
B. Identify the parts of arguments, i.e., conclusion, premise(s) in a variety of examples, in simple arguments (one conclusion).
C. Identify the parts of arguments, i.e., conclusion, premise(s) in a variety of examples, in complex arguments (arguments within arguments.).
D. Identify and use conclusion and premise indicators.
E. Evaluate uses and abuses of language, i.e., emotive language, slants, innuendos, weaslers, etc.
F. Construct argument summaries/evaluations
G. Evaluate statistical data (mean, mode, median) as used in support of conclusions.
H. Recognize and explain common informal fallacies.
I. Distinguish deductive from inductive arguments.
J. Evaluate effectiveness of arguments based on whether they are valid/strong as well as sound/cogent.
K. Identify the following forms and rate each one:
   1. Argument by Elimination
   2. Hypothetical syllogism (valid and invalid forms)
L. Recognize the components of analogical arguments (what is being compared to what).
M. Evaluate the strength of analogical arguments.
N. Recognize the components of enumerative inductions, i.e. sample and population.
O. Evaluate the strength of specific enumerative inductions.
P. Recognize and explain fallacies of inductive generalization such as biased generalization or hasty generalization.
Q. Recognize the components of causal arguments.
R. Identify common fallacies of causal arguments.
S. Determine the credibility of sources of information.
T. Develop original conclusions that are based on evidence and evaluate reasons for contrary points of view.

Blackboard Site: The use of the Blackboard resources will be an essential component of this class. Through the use of Blackboard you will:

1. Obtain up-to-date information about class schedule, upcoming assignments, and university events.
2. Complete on-line quizzes that will enhance your understanding of course materials. Typically, you will have to do reading (usually of a power point presentation) and then complete a quiz about the reading. The quizzes are short and simple, but it is your way of showing that you completed the reading.
COURSE ADMINISTRATION

A. Grading:
   (1) Your final grade will be determined as follows:
   - 10% - Attendance and Participation (3%), Pre-Post-Test (3%) (and SI 4%)
   - 6% - Entrance and Exit Tickets
   - 15% - Homework and Group Work (including “CLA”-type assignments)
   - 21% - Quizzes
   - 10% - Term Paper
   - 8% - CLA Performance Task
   - 30% - Two Main Exams (15% each)
   - 100% - Total

V. COURSE ADMINISTRATION

1) Attendance and Participation, Pre-Post-Test, and SI 10%

A. Attendance and Participation (3%)

Attendance and participation are crucial to success in philosophy courses; therefore, each student is expected to attend classes at all times and on time. In other words, participation is mandatory and includes, though is not limited to, attending class regularly, keeping up with assignments, being a good listener, asking questions, and offering personal insights that may be helpful in better understanding the material at hand. Disrespect for others’ ideas, opinions, or beliefs will not be tolerated, though healthy discussion about certain contentious issues is strongly encouraged. Obviously, you cannot participate in class unless you both do the reading assigned for each day and attend class. If you need to miss classes for medical or personal reasons, inform me by phone, written note, or e-mail message, before class, if at all possible. It will be assumed that any unreported absences are the result of “skipping”. Unaccounted absences may result in loss of grades. Also, note the University’s policy that any student missing 10% of classes will be assigned an interim grade of EA as a warning.

The penalties for unexcused absences are as follows:
- 1-5 missed classes no penalty
- 6-10 missed classes final grade lowered by one letter grade
- 11-15 missed classes final grade lowered by 2 letter grades
- 15+ missed classes automatic F grade

B. Pre/post-test (3%)

The purpose of the pretest is to determine each student's baseline knowledge or preparedness for the critical thinking class. The post-test is meant to test what has actually been accomplished in this class.
C. Supplemental Instruction (SI) (4%)

Supplemental Instruction will be provided in this class. The SI leader will be attending all class lectures and holding group study sessions. Although the SI leader will only sit in one section of the course, students from all of my PHIL 110 sections are required to attend SI sessions. By attending a minimum of 5 SI sessions, you will earn 4% in this course. Bonus points will be awarded to those who attend more than 5 sessions. If you have other classes or have to work during the SI leader’s posted hours, you should feel free to make an appointment with me and discuss that with me.

3) Entrance and Exit Tickets (6%)

Entrance tickets are brief writing activities issued to students at the beginning of a class period requiring students to be on task as early into the class period as possible. Entrance or admit tickets may require students to complete activities such as: briefly summarizing concepts studied in a previous class, briefly summarizing the topic to be discussed in class that day and formulating questions they may have about previously covered topic as well as the topic to be discussed that day. Exit Tickets are collected by the instructor at the end of the class period while the instructor stands at the door as students are exiting the classroom. Exit tickets are designed to test students understanding of the topic discussed that day by having students summarize, in their own words, what they have learned. Exit tickets may also give students an opportunity to ask any questions they have about topics covered that day.

4) Homework/Group Work (15%)

We will work together as a cooperative learning community. To this end, the class will be divided into groups, and each group will meet in and outside of the classroom and work together and share ideas in class. In other words, this portion of your grade will be earned by the completion of both in class (including a “CLA”- type assignment) and take home exercises (homework). Assignments will be announced in class, and it is the student’s responsibility to be informed of what these assignments involve.

5) Quizzes (21%)

There will be a total of about eight quizzes administered throughout the course, though only 6 quizzes will count towards the course grade, with each quiz worth 3.5% of your final grade. Quizzes may be composed of short-answer questions, multiple-choice questions, definitions or matching. Some will focus on exercises previously discussed, and some will cover material from the reading assignment or class activity for the day. Quizzes may or may not be announced in advance, and it is the student’s responsibility to be informed of when quizzes will occur and what material will be covered. Some of the quizzes may be delivered via Blackboard. The purpose of the quizzes is to give everyone an incentive to do the assigned readings before the class in which they will be discussed. Students absent with valid excuses (of course, I will determine what constitutes a “valid excuse”) must make arrangements to take a make-up quiz as
expeditiously as possible. Students absent without valid excuses will not be allowed to take make-up tests. No exceptions!!! Any student coming into class more than ten minutes late will not be permitted to take the quiz and will thus receive a zero grade on that quiz. Students will have up to fifteen minutes to finish quizzes; therefore, students are advised to show up on time.

6) Two Essays (18%)

A) CLA Essay/Assignment 8%

Your CLA essay will be written in class. Details about this essay will be given after midterm. Suffice it to say that clarity of expression, good grammar, logical organization, and comprehensive explanation are important aspects of your essays. Also, this assignment will require analysis of given materials and documents to form an argument to support a position on a given issue. You will also be required to evaluate the arguments of others. Therefore, you should make sure you understand the questions you are asked and base your answers to them on the documents you will be provided. Focusing on relevant information and providing support from the documents is crucial. Grades for this essay will be rubric-based.

B) Current Event Essay (Term Paper) 10%

This assignment will require the student to identify a “current issue”, take a stand on the issue, create an argument in defense of his/her position with respect to the issue, and show how the given argument is cogent/sound. More details about this assignment will be given in class, around midterm. Also, we will take sometime during the semester covering the essentials of essay writing. Suffice it to say that clarity of expression, good grammar, logical organization, and comprehensive explanation are important aspects of your essays. Grades for essays will be rubric-based. This assignment will be due no later than Friday, April 11, 2014. For policies regarding late assignments, see below.

7) Two Major Exams (30%)

Two main exams, each worth 15% of your final grade, will be administered for this class, one at midterm, one final exam. The midterm exam will be held on Friday, March 7, 2014 from 12:00 to 12:50 pm. The date for the final exam will be determined later. Both exams will take place in our usual classroom. They are “closed-book” exams: you may not consult any notes or materials. Exams may include “objective” section with standard multiple choice, definitions, matching and short but critical essays. I will hold a review session before each exam. Missed exams cannot be made up (except in extenuating circumstances).

- **EXTRA CREDIT:** I will occasionally give assignments for extra credit. (Up to +4 points on a 100-point grading scale). These cannot be made up. Also, bonus points will be awarded to those students who will have made the most effective use of my office hours (up to +2 points on a 100-point grading scale).

- **Caveat:** Students with poor classroom participation, discourteous classroom behavior, or excessive unexcused absences, will not be assigned extra credit assignments. Students should be advised that extra-
credit assignments are not a substitute for the other course requirements, and that in general extra-credit assignments will demand more work for less points than the other course requirements. Please do not ask for extra credit to make your grade higher. Extra Credit is EXTRA, not instead of.

- **Grading Scale**: The grading scale for this course will be:

  100% - 90% = A  
  89% - 80% = B  
  79% - 70% = C  
  69% - 60% = D  
  59% - 0% = F

- **Grading Policy**: Grades in this class will be assigned on an absolute scale. This means that there will be no “curve” or fixed distribution of grades—it is possible for everyone to get an A (best possible case) or for everyone to fail (you get the picture).

**Early Assessment and Extension Grade Contract**

All students will be assessed by the end of week 4. Students whose performance suggests a need for additional work will be required to sign an Extension Grade contract with the appropriate academic support unit. Students who successfully complete an Extension Grade contract will receive extra credit. (Up to +5 points on a 100-point grading scale).

**Some Important Course Regulations and Recommendations:**

**Late Assignments**: “Home” written assignments must be received no later than 4:00 PM on the due date. Papers not submitted during the class period should be delivered to the Department of Government and History General Office. You must get it signed and dated by the Secretary. Late papers will be accepted, without penalty, provided that the student has an officially documented excuse of the kind accepted by the University, such as illness or severe family problems. Extensions will not be given for computer problems, printer breakdowns, busy schedules, other assignments due at the same time, having a job, and so forth. You should plan that contingencies like the above will arise and aim to complete your work well in advance of the deadline. In the interest of preserving a level playing field, for each day that a paper is late, I will deduct 8% from the mark of that paper. As well, because a late paper has had the benefit of more time to work on it, late papers will be graded by higher standards than papers turned in on time. Regarding the quizzes, if it is known in advance that an obligation exists that conflicts with a scheduled quiz, it is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor at least 2 days before the scheduled testing day, who, having produced a valid documented excuse, will then work to arrange an alternate day/time to complete the quiz.

**Class Etiquette**: The instructor will make every effort to maintain a classroom climate that promotes learning for all students. Students must accept their responsibility for maintaining a positive classroom environment by refraining from distracting activities, such as coming to class late or leaving early; using cell phones, beepers or headphones; passing notes or carrying on private conversations; using profanity;
or sleeping in class. Student/teacher relationships, as well as relationships among peers, must be respectful at all times. The instructor will let students know if they behave improperly. If the behavior continues, the student will lose points on his/her daily activities grade. In some cases, the student will be asked to leave the class and the instructor will report the student to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action according to the FSU Code of Student Conduct. It is extremely disruptive of class if people wander in late, pack their things up before the lecture is over. As well, being late to class or leaving early is inconsiderate and discourteous to your professor and the rest of the students. Thus, each student is requested to make every effort to arrive in class on time, and is required to remain in class for the complete period.

**Academic Honesty:** Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and may result in a failing grade for the course and recommendation to the Academic Integrity Board for additional disciplinary action. If you have any questions regarding academic honesty, please consult your student handbook or the FSU undergraduate catalog, or speak with your instructor.

**Inform me of Your Special Learning Needs:** I can provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may negatively affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. But I do not know how to meet these needs if you do not tell me about them. Therefore, if you have a disability or other special learning need, please don’t hesitate to see me by the end of the first week of class to discuss your needs and how best they might be accommodated.

**About Office Hours and Phone Contact:** In general, if you have any problems or want to discuss some material from the lectures, you should try to see me during my posted office hours. If you have other classes during the posted hours, you should feel free to make an appointment with me for another time (email is a good way to do this). I am generally in my office during office hours. Please, leave a message with your phone number if you call and your call is answered by the voice mail system. Note that if I am with a student, I try not to answer the phone to avoid being discourteous to that person. But I’ll call you back as expeditiously as possible.

**Treating Others with Respect:** I always treat all my students with profound love, respect and fairness. Consequently, I expect the same treatment from my students. When you participate, it is crucially important you treat people with opposing views with utmost respect. Be polite and constructive in responding to others: even if you vehemently disagree, *criticize the ideas rather than the person*. Please, refrain from attacking your fellow students in personal terms. Keep in mind that a philosophical argument does not involve raised voices, anger or negative emotions. Rather, it involves *reasoned* argument.

**Cell phones, texting, and other uses of electronic devices:** Any use of these devices for non-classroom related activities is forbidden. That said, I may occasionally ask you to use your cell phone or IPad for an activity relevant to the issue being discussed.

**VI. Teaching Strategies:** A variety of teaching strategies are used in the course, including lecture, lecture/discussion, cooperative/collaborative learning groups, and video reviews. An extensive web site supports the course text. The site includes a student study guide with chapter objectives, flash card reviews of key concepts, true/false questions, and multiple-choice questions. The address of the site is [http://www.mhhe.com/bassham4e](http://www.mhhe.com/bassham4e)
VII. Academic Support: Supplemental Instruction: Supplemental Instruction (SI) will be provided in this class. Your Supplemental Instruction Leader is Ms. Jasmin Sessoms. Ms. Sessoms is a student who has successfully completed this course, earning a high grade. She will attend class regularly and then be available for SI sessions each week. By attending a minimum of 5 SI sessions, you will earn 4% in this course. Bonus points will be awarded to those who attend more than 5 sessions. During the SI session, the SI Leader will not do homework or write papers for you, but he will help you strengthen your understanding of course materials by reviewing class notes, answering your questions, conducting practice quizzes, and presenting other similar activities. In the approximately 900 colleges and universities in which SI is used, students who participate in SI consistently earn higher grades than students who do not participate. Your SI Leader will notify you in class of the schedule of sessions each week. SI at FSU is supported by funds from Title III.

VIII. Disabled Student Services: In accordance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ACA) of 1990, if you have a disability or think you have a disability, please contact the Center for Personal Development in the Spaulding Building, Room 155 (1st Floor); 910-672-1203.
IX. Tentative Course Outline and Assignment Schedule: We’ll try to cover the readings in the sequence indicated below, but we may not get to all of them on the exact date.

Jan. 13, 15, 17: Getting Started: Syllabus, Introduction and Course Overview

Chapter 1: Introduction to Critical Thinking
What is Critical Thinking?
Critical Thinking Standards
Pre-test

Jan. 22, 24: Chapter 1: Introduction to Critical Thinking
The Benefits of Critical Thinking
Barriers to Critical Thinking
Characteristics of a Critical Thinker
Jan. 20: MLK. JR: No classes

Jan. 27, 29, 31: Chapter 2: Recognizing Arguments
Identifying Premises and Conclusions
What is not an Argument?

Feb. 3, 5, 7: Chapter 3: Basic Logical Concepts
Deduction and Induction
How Can We Tell Whether an Argument is Deductive or Inductive?
Common Patterns of Deductive Reasoning
Common Patterns of Inductive Reasoning
Deductive Validity
Inductive Strength

Feb. 10, 12, 14: Chapter 3: Basic Logical Concepts, Contd.

Feb. 17, 19, 21: Chapter 4: Language
Finding the Right Words: The Need for Precision
The Importance of Precise Definitions
Emotive Language: Slanting the Truth
Euphemisms and Political Language

Feb. 24, 26, 28: Chapter 5: Logical Fallacies I
The Concept of Relevance
Fallacies of Relevance

March 3, 5, 7: Review / Midterm (Midterm: Friday, March 7, 2014)

March 10, 12, 14 Midterm Break, No Classes
March 17, 19, 21:  Chapter 6: Logical Fallacies II  
Fallacies of Insufficient Evidence

March 24, 26, 28:  Chapter 8: Evaluating Arguments and Truth Claims  
When is an Argument a Good One?  
When is it Reasonable to Accept a Premise?  
Refuting Arguments

March 31, April 2, 4:  MOVIES: THE GREAT DEBATERS

April 7, 9, 11:  Chapter 11: Inductive Reasoning  
Introduction to Induction  
Inductive Generalizations  
Statistical Arguments  
Induction and Analogy  
Induction and Causal Arguments

April 14, 16, 18:  Chapter 14: Thinking Critically About the Media  
The Mass Media  
The News Media  
Getting us to pay Attention: What Really Drives the Media  
Keeping our Interest: The News as Entertainment  
Media Literacy  
Advertising  
Friday, April 18: Spring Holiday: No classes

April 21, 23, 25:  General Discussion  
Complete CLA Performance Task

April 28, 30, 2:  Review and Course Wrap up  
Complete the post-test  
May 2: Last Day of Classes

FINAL EXAM:  TBD

Note: This outline is intended as a guideline only; therefore, the instructor reserves the right to make adjustments to the schedule as deemed necessary for the overall enterprise of the course. Any changes will be communicated as far in advance as feasible, and you are responsible for knowing if and when any changes have been made.

Thanks for taking this class. I look forward to working with you. I love you all dearly.
No classes on the following dates:
- Monday January 20 – MLK Holiday
- Monday March 03 to Friday March 07 – Semester Break
- Friday 18 – Spring Holiday

Examinations
- Final Examination will be held during the final examination time slots scheduled by the University.
- Graduating Seniors will be writing their final examination on Friday May 02
- Graduating Seniors must identify themselves to the instructor no later than April 1
- Students should ensure their availability during the examination week (May 05 to 09)