Introduction to Critical Reasoning

Phil 110

Instructor Mr. Douglas F. Olena

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9 - 9:50 a.m.
Critical Reasoning

- Text: Becoming A Critical Thinker – Sherry Diestler
- Text: The Trial and Death of Socrates – Plato
Foundations of Arguments

- Structure of arguments
- The Issue
- The Conclusion
- The Reasons
Values and Ethics

- Value Assumptions and Conflicts
- Ethics: an important dimension of values
- Ideal values versus real values
- Ethics in argumentation
- Ethical decision making
Reality Assumptions

- Detecting reality assumptions
- The need to examine assumptions
- Deductive reasoning
- Truth in deductive arguments
- The uses of deductive reasoning
- The premise of contention
Inductive Arguments:
Statistical and Causal Generalizations

- Inductive reasoning
- Statistical evidence and its use
- How research is done
- Using surveys as evidence
- Statistical generalizations
- Reporting of statistical studies
Inductive Arguments:
Statistical and Causal Generalizations

- Causal generalizations
- Hume’s condition for cause and effect
- Technical causation
- Mill’s analysis of cause and effect
- Using difference and similarity to determine cause
Inductive Generalizations: Controlled Studies and Analogies

- Research design
- Criteria for evaluating research findings
- Controversy in research findings
- Use of authority: expert testimony
- Problems with expert testimony
- Reasoning by analogy
Reasoning Errors

- Inadequate reasons as fallacies
- Fallacies that mislead
- What’s my fallacy?
The Power of Language

- Denotation and connotation
- The power of connotation
- Reification: when words take on more power than reality
- Meanings are in people
- Vagueness and ambiguity in language
- Doublespeak, including weasel words
Suggestion in Media

- Suggestion in daily life
- Televised suggestion
- Suggestion in print media
- The power of media to shape information
- Subliminal persuasion
Fair-mindedness

- How we defend our egos
- Conformity and ways to overcome it
- Areas where we have trouble being rational
- Actively listening: developing empathy
- The art of listening well
- Precautions about active listening
Persuasive Speaking

- Being an advocate of ideas: communicating publicly
- The best ways to deal with fear of public speaking
- Audience analysis
- Three elements of a persuasive argument: ethos, logos, pathos