

Syllabus for PHIL 101 – Logic, Reasoning and Persuasion  
Taught by Justin Kalef, Rutgers University, Fall 2018

**Contact information:** The easiest way to contact me outside of class is by email, at [jkalef@philosophy.rutgers.edu](mailto:jkalef@philosophy.rutgers.edu)

**Office hours:** 1:15 to 2:15, every Tuesday. My office is 546 in the Gateway Building (106 Somerset).

**Text:** There is no required text for this course. Readings will be made available on the Canvas site.

**Topic and purpose of course:** This course aims to provide students with the ability to discuss and reason about controversial issues in a constructive, genuinely respectful, open-minded, and self-critical manner, and to learn to avoid the errors in thought, attitude and discourse that make such reasoning and discussions difficult or impossible.

**Contract and Survey:** It is essential that *all* students who choose to take this course complete the Survey by Friday, September, 14<sup>th</sup>, and initial and sign the Contract no later than Tuesday, September 18<sup>th</sup> (the day of our first quiz, worth 80 points). **ANY STUDENT WHO HAS NOT SIGNED AND INITIALED THE CONTRACT AND TAKEN THE SURVEY BY THE START OF CLASS ON THOSE DATES WILL EARN AN AUTOMATIC GRADE OF 0 FOR THE QUIZ, AND WILL ALSO GET AN AUTOMATIC 0 FOR ALL FURTHER WORK DUE BEFORE THE STUDENT HAS COMPLETED THESE TWO SIMPLE TASKS.** You will find the Contract and Survey on our Canvas website.

**Assessment:** Unlike other courses you may have taken, **this is a course that you can fail even if you attend all the classes and submit all the work.**

Your *preliminary* final grade for the course will be calculated on the basis of a 1000-point scale on the basis of the following work:

Quiz (September 18 <sup>th</sup> ).....	80 points
Team homework (due each Tuesday, starting Sept. 25 <sup>th</sup> ).....	20 x 11 = 220 points
Individual homework (random Tuesdays).....	Average score out of 20 x 11 = 220 points
Midterm exam (Nov. 21 <sup>st</sup> ).....	180 points
Table of arguments (submitted by Dec. 9 <sup>th</sup> , presented Dec. 11 <sup>th</sup> ).....	200 points
Final peer evaluation (done in class on Dec. 11 <sup>th</sup> ).....	100 points

Your preliminary score will then be adjusted in the following two ways, if applicable.

First, if you are on one of the top scoring teams for *in-class*, scored activities, you will receive a bonus as follows: 25 points if you are on the top team, 20 points if you are on the second team, 15 points if you are on the third team, 10 points if you are on the fourth team, and 5 points if you are on the fifth team.

Second, if and only if your score *including* any team bonus is 9 or fewer points above *or* below a cut-off for a letter-grade (see below), I will review your contributions to the online Discussion Forum (on Canvas). In my review, I will consider three factors:

- First, do your contributions involve fair and principled arguments and objections? Are they clearly written? Do they provide clear evidence that you have taken seriously, and ultimately become good at, the practices taught in this course? Do you sometimes present insights that help resolve the issues?
- Second, have you made *many* contributions to the forum? 50 or more contributions is a good number; fewer than 15 is very low.
- Third, have you contributed *regularly* to the Forum? (An avid contributor will be on the Forum every couple of days; an irregular contributor will be one who sometimes goes ten days or more without contributing anything).

On the basis of these three factors, I will assign you an overall Forum grade of good, poor, or fair. If your Forum grade is *good*, then your final letter grade will be on the *upper* side of the cut-off. If your Forum grade is *poor*, then your final letter grade will be on the *lower* side of the cut-off. If your Forum grade is *fair*, then your final letter grade will be unaffected by your work on the Forum.

For instance: if your preliminary score, together with your team bonus, is 893 points, you will receive an A grade if your Forum work is good, but a B+ grade if your Forum work is fair or poor. If your preliminary score, together with your team bonus, is 903 points, you will receive an A grade if your Forum work is good or fair, but a B+ grade if your Forum work is poor. And if your preliminary score, together with your team bonus, is 890, then your work on the Discussions Forum will not be considered at all and you will receive a B+.

**Electronics policy:** Electronics may not be used, or taken out, in class barring a special exemption from the policy (for which I will need documentation). Anyone whose phone, computer, or tablet is even *taken out* during class, or is audible during class time, will on the first offense be made to leave class for the remainder of the day. **Anyone violating the policy twice in this course will IMMEDIATELY FAIL THE COURSE.**

**Making up missed work:** There will be *no opportunities* for making up any missed or late homework or submitting your table of arguments after the deadline. Your team, as a whole, must make up for any deficiencies in its individual members.

There will also be *no opportunities* for any extra work for bonus points, other than the

team bonus already mentioned. **This applies to you even if you ask nicely and even if you try to manipulate me with a sob story.**

Students who miss the quiz *and* who present *documentation* (which will be investigated) for a serious, sudden and unavoidable reason for missing it will be permitted to make up the lost points by means of a special research project that will test the same skills.

Students who miss the midterm *and* who present *documentation* (which will be investigated) for a serious, sudden and unavoidable reason for missing it will be permitted to take a makeup version of it *during our final exam day* (there is no final exam for other students). Students who miss the midterm *and* claim that they cannot do the makeup exam during the scheduled final exam day will not be accommodated, and will receive a 0 for the midterm, unless I am instructed by a dean to make a special exception.

**Grade appeals:** Any person or team wishing to appeal a grade on an exam, quiz, homework or table of arguments is welcome to do so -- but *only* if they a) put the appeal in writing, and b) clearly indicate, in writing, what they are willing to *lose* if the appeal is unsuccessful. No appeal will be considered otherwise. If necessary, I will bring in a qualified third party to make a second assessment.

**Preliminary feedback:** I will not give any preliminary feedback (that is, feedback before final evaluation) on the homework or Forum. However, I will meet with each team up to three times to look over the team's table of arguments in advance of submission, if the team requests it.

**Opting out of the random individual homework check:** Each student is permitted to opt out of the random individual homework check on up to two occasions, but only if he or she indicates this to me *before* I have drawn his or her number. Students who will be absent or late may arrange to have their teammates withdraw them from the draw by contacting them before the start of class.

**Conduct during the quiz and midterm:** You may not consult any book or notes or electronic device, or have any electronic device turned on or out of your bag or pocket during a quiz or exam. You may not bring any food or drink to your desk during a quiz or exam. You may only use scrap paper that is supplied to you during a quiz or exam.

You may leave the room at any time, but then you may not return to the room during an exam until the quiz or exam is over. No quiz or exam that has been removed from my sight may be turned in for credit, and no student who has been out of my sight during a quiz or exam may turn in that quiz or exam for credit. Students with a genuine medical condition that makes it impossible for them to stay in the room for the eighty minutes of the midterm may provide me with a Letter of Accommodation documenting this

condition. Those students may take their exams at the Office of Disability Services. They will be given the questions one at a time in a random order, seeing the next question only on completion of the previous question; and will be permitted to leave the exam room only after submitting a final response to the last question they have seen.

No late student may enter the room during a quiz or exam exam after a student has left the room.

Students must not do anything to distract other students during an exam. For example, students must not:

- a) ask any question or make any comment about how to answer a question on the exam;
- b) say anything to to me, during the exam period about anything at all aside from, in very rare cases, **quietly** asking whether something on the exam is an error;
- c) make any unnecessary noise in arriving late or leaving early;
- d) talk immediately outside the doors of the classroom when the exam is still in session;
- e) loudly sniffle or snort throughout an exam; or
- f) remain in the classroom after completing and turning in their exam.

### **Cheating and Plagiarizing:**

**Anyone caught cheating or plagiarizing in any way on any exam, or aiding anyone else in cheating, will receive an automatic F for the course and be referred to the appropriate authorities for further measures to be taken. These further measures may include suspension or expulsion. They will certainly involve a permanent note on your transcript indicating to anyone who reads it that you are a cheat. Don't risk it!**

**Disruptive Behavior:** You are welcome to do as much or as little work as you like in my course, so long as you are mindful of the consequences; but I will not permit any student to disrupt the class environment by distracting me or any students from our work.

In particular, please note that neither of the following disruptive activities is permitted:

- a) Engaging in private conversations during lecture components of the class;
- b) Engaging in discussions unrelated to the course during group work time.

If you cannot adhere to this code of conduct on a particular day, please don't attend class on that day.

Violators will be warned the first time and will lose a letter grade on every subsequent occasion.

## **Schedule:**

**Tuesday, September 4<sup>th</sup>:** Introduction to the course: electronics and learning, my story, the purpose of the course, the structure of the course and its work

**Friday, September 7<sup>th</sup>:** Dialectic and its alternatives; our illusions and overconfidence, and their dangers

**Tuesday, September 11<sup>th</sup>:** Opinions and arguments; the components and status of arguments

**Friday, September 14<sup>th</sup>:** A game and its moral. Can dialectic really work when the emotional stakes are high?

**\*SURVEY DUE TODAY\***

**Tuesday, September 18<sup>th</sup>:** **\*QUIZ ON EVERYTHING COVERED SO FAR, INCLUDING THE SYLLABUS\***; arguing with a brick, and some dishonest attempts to prevent fair inquiry and dialectic

**Friday, September 21<sup>st</sup>:** Some further dishonest tricks; fallacies, introduced; persuading the naïve by mere assertion or repetition; the bait-and-switch

**Tuesday, September 25<sup>th</sup>:** **\* HOMEWORK 1 DUE \***  
Garbled, sloppy language and its harms; loaded, pompous, and extreme language

**Friday, September 28<sup>th</sup>:** Poisoning the well; equivocation and merely verbal disputes.

**Tuesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>:** **\* HOMEWORK 2 DUE \***  
The *ad hominem* fallacy: what it is and what it isn't. The inverse *ad hominem*

**Friday, October 5<sup>th</sup>:** The psychological *ad hominem*; guilt by association; the genetic fallacy

**Tuesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>:** **\* HOMEWORK 3 DUE \***  
The red herring fallacy, and more specific fallacies of irrelevance: *argumentum ad misericordium* and wishful thinking

**Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup>:** **\* FIRST ROUND OF PEER REVIEWS DUE \***  
The straw man and Rapaport's principles; all and some

**Tuesday, October 16<sup>th</sup>:** **\* HOMEWORK 4 DUE \***  
Falsifiability; falsification-evasion (the 'no true Scotsman' fallacy)

**Friday, October 19<sup>th</sup>:** Begging the question; complex question

**Tuesday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>:** \* **HOMEWORK 5 DUE** \*  
The burden of proof, arguments from ignorance, and Ockham's razor

**Friday, October 26<sup>th</sup>:** Subjectivism, relativism, 'lived experience', and the parable of the blind men, explored

**Tuesday, October 30<sup>th</sup>:** \* **HOMEWORK 6 DUE** \*  
Hypotheticals, counterfactuals, and analogies

**Friday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>:** \* **ALL TEAMS MUST DECIDE ON ISSUES BY TODAY\***  
Inconsistency and hypocrisy. Tables of arguments

**Tuesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>:** \* **HOMEWORK 7 DUE** \*  
Cherry picking and appeals to authority; appeals to tradition or popular opinion

**Friday, November 9<sup>th</sup>:** Pronouncements of faith; confident assertions (and the *ad baculum*); special pleading

**Tuesday, November 13<sup>th</sup>:** \* **HOMEWORK 8 DUE** \*  
False alternatives, slippery slope, and golden mean.

**Friday, November 16<sup>th</sup>:** Confusing ought and is; the Gish gallop

**Wednesday, November 21<sup>st</sup>:** \* **MIDTERM EXAM** \*

**Tuesday, November 27<sup>th</sup>:** \* **HOMEWORK 9 DUE** \*  
Looking at empirical claims and statistics: some useful principles.

**Friday, November 30<sup>th</sup>:** Anecdotal evidence, eyewitness testimony, and other sources of mirages. The *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy.

**Tuesday, December 4<sup>th</sup>:** \* **HOMEWORK 10 DUE** \*  
Reverse arguing day.

**Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup>:** Cultish thinking, depluralization, and empathy gaps. Stopping the investigation too early.

**\* ALL TABLES AND OTHER MATERIALS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY  
DECEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup> \***

**Tuesday, December 11<sup>th</sup>:** \* **HOMEWORK 11 DUE** \*  
\* **PRESENTATIONS AND FINAL EVALUATIONS\***

**Scheduled final exam day in our regular lecture hall:**  
MAKEUP EXAM PERIOD