The Art of Thinking  
University of Maryland, College Park  
Summer 2017

Instructor  
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Office hours: Tu/Th 1:00-1:40pm & by appt

Class times  
MTuWThF 10:00am - 1:00pm  
Francis Scott Key Bldg, Room 0117

Course Description
The goal of this course is to make you a sharper, more critical thinker and a more effective reasoner. You will learn to spot errors in other people’s reasoning; equally important, you will be more aware of how your own judgment can go wrong. The skills you learn will be useful across the full range of academic disciplines, and in the world beyond the classroom.

Structure and Expectations
The course is divided into three parts, each one week long. The first deals with logic and introduces some formal principles that can be used to distinguish good reasoning from bad reasoning. The second deals with psychology, and examines important recent research that illuminates common “cognitive biases” that influence our reasoning. Finally, in the third week of the course we will collectively choose four contemporary topics of ethical, social, or political controversy, and critically examine arguments from popular sources on both sides of these controversies in light of what we’ve learned about good and bad reasoning.

In general, each class day will be divided in two parts. The first half will be lecture-based, laying out ideas related to the day’s topic. Then we’ll take a short break, after which the second half of the day will be activity- and discussion-based, putting ideas from the day’s lecture and from previous classes into practice.

Because this is a short, intensive course, it’s very important that you stay on top of reading and other assignments and take careful notes during class. I’ll ask you to take notes on paper rather than your laptop, because this is what the science increasingly seems to recommend.\(^1\) If you have a disability or some other special circumstance that reasonably warrants an exception to this policy, let me know and I’ll of course accommodate. Please also refrain from using other electronic devices (i.e., cell phones) during class.

Readings
The required texts for the course are Patrick Hurley’s *A Concise Introduction to Logic* (12th edition) and Daniel Kahneman’s *Thinking Fast and Slow*. The Hurley text is expensive to buy new but can be rented at a reasonable price from Amazon.com. All other readings will be made available online through ELMS.

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Coursework and Grading

*Homework (40%)*
There will be daily homework assignments for the course (except when replaced by reading assignments). These are described under “Schedule of Topics” below. Assignments will usually be submitted electronically through ELMS and will be due by the end of the day before the next class (meaning usually the day they’re assigned, except for assignments given on Fridays).

*Class participation (30%)*
This portion of the grade reflects active engagement in class discussions and activities. Excellent class participation can also boost your grade at the end of the course if you’re close to a cutoff.

*Quizzes (15%)*
There will be five short quizzes given during the first two weeks of class. On days for which a reading assignment was given, they may consist of a mix of multiple choice and short answer questions related to the reading. Alternatively, they may consist of several short term-identification questions relating to material from earlier classes. In either case, all quizzes will be open-note but closed-book.

*Final exam (15%)*
There will be a short exam given on the final day of class, consisting mainly of short term-identification questions covering material from the first two weeks. The exam will be closed-book and closed-note.

The University grading policy can be found at [http://www.testudo.umd.edu/plusminusimplementation.html](http://www.testudo.umd.edu/plusminusimplementation.html).

*Late Work*
Any late assignments will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. B+ to B) for every 24 hours, rounding up, up to a total of four letter grades (i.e., 40% of the total grade for the assignment). Students are responsible for making sure that assignments are submitted successfully and on time—assignments received late as a result of technical failures that could have been reasonably avoided/detected/corrected will be counted as late.

*Attendance and Absences*
Students are expected to inform the instructor in advance of medically necessary absences, and present a self-signed note documenting the date of the missed class(es) and testifying to the need for the absence. Prolonged absence or illness preventing attendance from class requires written documentation from a health care provider verifying dates of treatment when student was unable to meet academic responsibilities.

Absence due to religious observance will not be penalized, however, it is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor in advance regarding any religious observance absence(s).

The university’s policies on medical and other absences can be found at: [https://faculty.umd.edu/teach/attend_student.html](https://faculty.umd.edu/teach/attend_student.html)
Academic Honesty
The student-administered Honor Code and Honor Pledge prohibit students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents and forging signatures. On every examination, paper or other academic exercise not specifically exempted by the instructor, students must write by hand and sign the following pledge:

\[I\text{ pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination (or assignment).}\]

The full university policy on academic integrity can be found at http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/docs/III-100A.pdf

Students with Disabilities
The University of Maryland is committed to providing appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. Students with a documented disability should inform the instructors within the add-drop period if academic accommodations are needed. To obtain an Accommodation Letter prepared by Disability Support Service (DSS), a division of the University Counseling Center, please call 301-314-7682, e-mail dissup@umd.edu, or visit the Shoemaker Building for more information.

Changes to the Syllabus
This syllabus is subject to change. Students will be notified in advance of important changes that could affect grading, assignments, etc.

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Schedule of Topics

**Week 1: Logical Inference**

HW: Read Hurley §§1.1-1.4. Exercises from Hurley: 1.1 I 1-5; 1.2 III 1, 3, & 5; 1.4 III 1-10; 1.4 V 1-15.

HW: Read Hurley §§6.1-6.4. Exercises from Hurley: 6.1 III 1-10; 6.2 I 1-10; 6.2 II 1-5; 6.3 I 1-5; 6.3 III 2; 6.4 III (first five arguments)

7/12  Thought experiments. Regimentsing informal arguments into premises and conclusion. Informal tests of validity.


7/14  Natural deduction proofs. Practice finding unstated assumptions in informal arguments.

**Week 2: Heuristics and Biases**

7/17  Heuristics and biases in empirical judgment.

7/18  Heuristics and biases in decision-making.

7/19  The power of motivated reasoning.

7/20  Heuristics and biases in moral judgment.
HW: Read Surowiecki (2004), The Wisdom of Crowds, Introduction & Chapter 1

HW: Prepare argument analyses for discussion on Monday

**Week 3: Applications**

7/24  Topic #1 (to be decided 7/22)
HW: Prepare argument analyses for discussion on Tuesday

7/25  Topic #2 (to be decided 7/22)
HW: Prepare argument analyses for discussion on Wednesday

7/26  Topic #3 (to be decided 7/22)
HW: Prepare argument analyses for discussion on Thursday

7/27  Topic #4 (to be decided 7/22)
HW: Study for final exam

7/28  Final exam and course wrap-up