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**PHIL 1500H – Logic and Critical Thinking (Honors)**  
**University of Georgia**  
**Fall Semester 2007**  
**9:30–10:45 TR**

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**Instructor:** Dr. Bryan Baird  
**Office:** 23 Peabody Hall  
**Office Hours:** 1:30–3:00 MW, or by appointment  
**Phone:** 542.2823 (o), 224-0106 (h)  
**Email:** bnbaird@uga.edu

**Required Text:** Bel-Jean packet. Bel-Jean is located downtown on Broad St.  
There will also be several required readings available on WebCT.

**Course Description:** In this course we will focus on the aspect of critical thinking that involves evaluating the reasons you and/or others give to support opinions, beliefs, or decisions. This means we will pay a lot of attention to spotting, analyzing, and evaluating arguments and learning all of the technical and fancy language that goes along with it. And no matter how much skill you might have (or think you have) at reasoning well, there is always room for improvement. With that in mind, the main purpose of this course is to make you better critical thinkers at the end of the semester than you were at the beginning. This course is designed to help you think more critically about what people say, the positions they put forth, and the reasons they give, whether in the context of well-reasoned and well-thought out arguments given on the printed page or the tiny soundbytes you will run across on the television and the internet.

The central thrust of this course will be argument analysis and evaluation. You will learn how to locate arguments, how to analyze them into an exploitable structure, and how to evaluate them according to specific guidelines. Two particular kinds of argument we will be studying are analogical arguments and hypothetical arguments (stressing their use in science). We will spend some time on how to find and avoid logical fallacies and ponder how common these fallacies really are. Finally, we will be dealing with a number of other critical thinking issues such as reliance on expertise, argument classification, bias, and how to handle polls and their data.

**Course Grade Requirements:** Assignments, in-class exams, and a final paper constitute the grade requirements for this course. The percentage of your final grade that for the average of each requirement is in parentheses below.

**Assignments (20%).** You will have an unspecified number of assignments to turn in throughout the semester. Be prepared to turn these assignment in to me at the end of the class period for which they are assigned.

**Exams (60%).** There will be three in-class exams and a final exam. The final exam will NOT be part of your total grade. Instead, the final exam will consist of sections that correspond to the material covered in the in-class exams. You may take any or all of the parts of the final exam. If you choose to take one, the grade you make will take the place of the grade you made for the corresponding in-class exam. The two grades will not be averaged together. If, at the end of the semester, you are happy with your unit exam grades, you do NOT have to take the final exam.

One consequence of this final exam policy is that I will not give make-up exams, except under the following conditions: (1) you have a valid excuse (e.g., note from a doctor or the Health Center, University-related excuse) and (2) you take the exam before I hand them back to the class. If you cannot meet these conditions, the grade you make on the corresponding section of the final exam will count as your grade for the in-class exam.

**Final Paper (20%).** There are two campus groups who hold regular debates: [Demosthenian Literary Society](#) and [Phi Kappa Literary Society](#). For your paper, you will attend a meeting and present to me a written analysis and evaluation of one of the debates.

The following should be included in the analysis section of the paper: the issue being debated, the two sides taken for the issue, and one argument offered by each side. In addition to presenting the arguments in prose form, you may diagram the arguments for clarity. In the evaluation section, you will (1) comment on the acceptability of the premise(s), (2) judge the strength of the inference from the premise(s) to the conclusion, (3) make note of any fallacies committed in the argument, and (4) give your overall judgment on how good the argument is.

**Final Grade:** For your final grade, the grades under each requirement above will be averaged together and then weighted according to the percentage. Final letter grades will conform to a 10-point scale: A (90-100%), B (80-89%), C (70-79%), D (60-69%), F (59% or below).

On your graded work, I will give either a letter grade or a number grade. The following chart shows the possible grades I will give.

A+	100	B+	88	C+	78	D+	68
A	96	B	85	C	75	D	65
A-	93	B-	82	C-	72	D-	62
A-/B+	90	B-/C+	80	C-/D+	70	F	50

Should you get a letter grade on your work, find which number it is equivalent to on the chart and use that number to calculate your grade average.

Other factors, although not averaged along with the grade requirements above, can affect your final average. In almost every case, these factors will be used to decide whether or not to give the next higher (or lower) letter grade in borderline grade cases. Regular participation (= intelligent and relevant input, either in class or on WebCT) could raise your grade. I will often call on you in class to check your preparation/comprehension. Showing that you are consistently prepared for class could raise your grade; showing that you are consistently unprepared for class could lower it. If it should happen that, as a class, you are obviously and consistently unprepared (i.e., you are not reading the material or discussing it in class), I will start giving pop quizzes at the beginning of class on the material to be covered that day. You will get either a plus or a minus on the quizzes (or a "0" if you don't take one—you will not have the opportunity to make them up). More plusses than minuses on quizzes could raise your grade; more minuses than plusses could lower it.

For final *letter* grades submitted to the university, **I will be using the plus-minus system.** I will use the following scale to determine final letter grades. I will not normally round up for the final letter grades. For example, if you earn a number grade of 88.5 in the course, you will get a final letter grade of B+, a 95 will earn you an A, a 76.5 will earn you a C, etc.

### Plus-Minus Letter Grade Scale

A	94 or higher	C+	77 - 79
A-	90 - 93	C	74 - 76
B+	87 - 89	C-	70 - 72
B	83 - 86	D	60 - 69
B-	80 - 82	F	< 59

**Ethical Considerations:** This course involves an ethical dimension in two ways. First, you must abide by the [Academic Honesty Policy](#) of the university. Take special note of the definitions used in Section 4, Parts 1-3 of the Policy. Second, this course is set within an academic environment and you are expected to behave accordingly in the classroom. At least part of what this means for you is that there will be no cell phone ringing, no private conversations, no crossword puzzles, no napping, and no coming in late to class. These activities are distracting both to me and to those around you, and they are just plain rude.

\*The information included in this syllabus is meant as a general guideline and is subject to change at any time during the semester.