PHIL 1305: Correspondence

Course Sample
Welcome to

PHIL 1305
Philosophy and Critical Thinking

New to the course? Click the Syllabus link at left and review its contents. Then, click the Learning Modules link and begin progressing through the course content.

Returning to the course? Click the Learning Modules link and resume where you left off.

This course has recently been upgraded to improve assignment submission efficiency. Although the course navigation menu has been altered and content pages may appear slightly different, all materials and course requirements are the same.

Additionally, effective January 28, 2014, you will now submit your assignments via the Assignment tool, located in the left-hand navigation menu. (Note: If you have already submitted one or more assignments, there is no need to re-submit. Simply use the Assignment tool for submission from this point forward.)
Lesson 1: The Terrain of Philosophy

"The unexamined life is not worth living." - Socrates

- Objectives and Assignments
- Key Terms
- The Philosopher's Toolbox: Reason
- Arguments
- The Evaluation of Arguments
- The Philosopher's Toolbox: Fallacies
- But Be Careful! Not Everything That Looks Like a Fallacy IS a Fallacy
- One Final Word on Fallacies
- Lesson 1 Self-Assessment
- Assignment 1

Lesson 2: Socrates and the Examined Life

"It is not living that matters, but living rightly." - Socrates

- Objectives and Assignments
- Key Terms
- Notes on Chapter 2 of 'The Philosopher's Way'
- The Philosopher's Toolbox
- Lesson 2 Self-Assessment
- Assignment 2
Lesson One

Though we all reason often, and we often reason well, we all sometimes make errors in reasoning. Not all arguments are good arguments; sometimes evidence is put forward that purports to, but does not really, provide sufficient support for the conclusion.

There are two conditions that must **both** be satisfied if an argument is to be called a good argument:

1. The premises of the argument must be true or justified.
2. The premises must be relevant to and provide genuine support for the conclusion.

If an argument fails to satisfy either one of these conditions, then it is a bad argument—it does not provide adequate evidence for its conclusion. But, if an argument does meet both conditions, then it is called **sound**, and it does give us good reasons to accept its conclusion.

We can illustrate the conditions for good arguments by looking at several examples of bad arguments.

**Example 1.** "All dogs meow, and Spot is a dog; therefore, Spot meows."

This argument is a bad argument because it violates the first condition. It is false that all dogs meow! (Do any?) Never accept an argument based upon false or unsupported information! Can you think of a situation in which you were thwarted from reaching one of your goals because you based your decision on false information or a false belief?

**Example 2.** "We're justified in being cruel to animals today because many people throughout history have been cruel to animals."

Many people throughout history have been cruel to animals, and, so, in this argument, the first condition is satisfied: the premise is true. But the argument is nonetheless a bad argument because the premise provides little, if any, support for the conclusion. The fact that many people in history have been cruel to animals does not automatically guarantee that persons in our society today have a moral right to be cruel to animals. In this example, the second requirement for an argument to be good is not satisfied. (This example falls under one of the fallacy categories explained by Chaffee; can you tell which one?)

There is an entire branch of philosophy devoted to the study of arguments: logic. Logicians are especially interested in the validity of arguments (the second condition of good arguments); they seek to identify the argument forms that will reliably lead us from true premises to true conclusions. Entire courses are devoted to the logic of deductive and inductive arguments, but for our purposes, it is enough that you understand the definitions given by Chaffee. Deductively valid arguments provide "knock down" support for their conclusions—in a deductively valid argument, if the premises are true, then it is impossible for the conclusion to be false. But strong inductive arguments at best provide evidence that their conclusions are probably true. Look for examples of each in your own reasoning.

Deductive argument forms are often used when "troubleshooting":

"If the reason my car didn't start is simply because the battery died, then if I replace the battery, it will start. Dam! I replaced the battery, but it still didn't start. So, it's not just the battery; I wonder what else is wrong!"

And any time you draw a conclusion from a sample, you are engaging in inductive reasoning:

"Tanisha is a great dog trainer. I've seen her work with dozens of problem dogs, and she has been able to help them become obedient, sweet pets. So, I'm pretty sure she's going to be able to help with your dog as well."
Assignment - In progress
Add attachment(s), then choose the appropriate button at the bottom.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Assignment 1</th>
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<td>Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade Scale</td>
<td>Points (max 100.0)</td>
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Instructions
Complete the tasks below and save your answers in a file of the type .doc, .docx, or .rtf. (Note: These are the only file types I will accept. It is your responsibility to ensure that you submit one of these three file types.) Also, please recall, as stated in the syllabus, that you may submit no more than one assignment per week for this course.

Once you have composed your submission, attach it below, and click Submit.

This assignment is worth 5 percent of your final grade.

Part A
Analyze, briefly discuss, and name the fallacy involved in each of the following.

1. “Can you believe that theory the philosopher Descartes argues for? He says that I don’t know whether my body exists! I don’t have to listen to such nonsense: only a crazy person would believe such a thing.”
2. From a movie review of a film surveying the life of Alfred Kinsey, one of the first persons to do a scientific survey/study of adult sexual behavior: “Was Kinsey a liberator or a pervert?”
3. “Oh, no! I got a C on my exam—but I know why. The professor overhead me criticizing him the day before the exam. I’m sure he lowered my grade in retaliation.”
4. “My Honda Accord was an absolute lemon; it had mechanical problems from the moment I bought it. I’m telling you, all Hondas are lemons; don’t ever buy one!”
5. “Well, of course I was speeding, officer. I was just keeping up with all of the other drivers! Everybody speeds.”

Part B
Review the “Thinking Philosophically” insert in your textbook on page 11. Choose the one question that you find most meaningful. In two or three paragraphs, discuss your answer to the question. (Note: I’m looking for your views here; no research is necessary to tackle this question.)

Part C
Think about fallacies as you talk with friends and family, read newspapers, surf the Internet, or watch TV. You should be able to spot some fallacious arguments. Find real-life examples of two of the fallacy categories covered in this lesson. Describe the argument to me, and identify and explain the fallacy that is committed.