Overview:

This class is divided into three parts—argumentative skills, individual reasoning, and charitable reading. In part one we will focus on responsible thinking, good writing and charitable reading. Then students will learn some basic principles of logic. Next, we will see these skills in action as we assess various theistic arguments. Part one concludes with a discussion of concepts.

In Part two we will turn to the psychological and philosophical aspects of individual reasoning. We begin by asking what it means to have a reason for action or belief. We then discuss the way that cognitive biases and strong desires can influence our understanding of these reasons. Next, we apply these insights to moral reasoning. There we will discuss whether moral reasoning is relevantly different from other kinds of reasoning.

In Part three we will discuss some of the unique challenges we face when we reason together. Particularly, we will address the challenges that we face as leaders and followers. We will discuss the role of testimony and media in shaping our beliefs, some puzzles about collective choice, the way that cognitive bias can lead to collectively better or worse outcomes, and whether power relationships inhibit leaders’ or followers’ ability to reason.

Objectives:

The purpose of this course is to give each student the skills that are necessary to succeed in advanced Jepson classes. Students in this class will develop three skills: charitable reading, critical thinking, and clear writing. First students will learn how to read an argument and identify the best version of its thesis, and then to reconstruct an even better argument for that thesis. Second, students will learn some basic logic that will help them to evaluate and construct arguments of their own. Third, students will learn how to write and revise papers that contain arguments. We will also learn about different ways of reasoning, cognitive biases and failures of individual and collective reasoning, and the unique challenges of reasoning as a leader or a follower.

Grade Rubric:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1: Identifying Arguments</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>January 18</td>
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<td>Assignment 2: Fallacy Detection</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>January 24</td>
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<td>Assignment 3: Reconstructing Arguments</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>February 1</td>
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<td>Assignment 4: Truth Values</td>
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<td>Assignment 5: Validity Checks</td>
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<td>February 7</td>
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| Assignment 6: Thesis and Outline Meeting | --         | Thesis by Feb 21,
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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Meeting by</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 7: Rough Draft</td>
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<td>March 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 8: Reviewer Report</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>March 14</td>
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<td>Assignment 9: Final Essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>March 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 10: Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>April 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>May 3?</td>
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**PART 1: CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS**

**Week 1 - The Basics**
January 15 - For and Against Critical Thinking
*(CK) Good and Bad Reasoning*
*Huemer- Is Critical Thinking Epistemically Responsible?*

**January 17 - Bullshit**
*Frankfurt- On Bullshit*
Assignment 1 Due on January 18 (See Handout)

**Week 2 - Soundness**
January 22- Class Cancelled
January 24- What is a Premise?
*(CK) Fallacious Reasoning—1 (33-56)*
Assignment 2: Exercises 3.1, 9-19

**Week 3 - Spotting Invalid Arguments**
January 29-
*(CK) Fallacious Reasoning—2 (58-77)*
January 31-
*(CK) Fallacious Reasoning—3 (79-108)*

Assignment 3: Due on February 1 (See Handout on Blackboard)

**Week 4 - Logic**
February 5 - Logical Connectives
*Vaughn- Propositional Logic 218-231*
Assignment 4: Do the exercises posted on blackboard.

**February 7 - Checking for Validity**
*Vaughn- Propositional Logic 231-235*
Assignment 5: Do the exercises posted on blackboard.

**Week 5 - Scientific and Theistic Reasoning**
February 12 - Science and Explanation
*NYT- Can Science Prove the Existence of God?*
*The Scientific Method*
*Conee- God 62-78*
February 14- Arguments for the Existence of God  
Connee- God- 78-86

PART TWO: INDIVIDUAL REASONING

Week 6- What Counts as a Reason?  
February 19- Small Reasons  
Schroeder- The Negative Reason Existential Fallacy  
February 21- Reasons and Relativism  
Rachels- Morality and Relativism

Assignment 6: It's time to start your essays! Write your thesis statement in one sentence and write your argument in P-C form (Due February 21). Schedule a time to meet about your topic where we will discuss the outline for your essay (see the sign up on my door). Then, email me your outline after our meeting (by request). If you do not complete these steps then your final essay grade will automatically reduced by one letter grade.

Week 7- How We Reason  
February 26- Cognitive Bias  
Velleman- From Self-Psychology to Moral Philosophy  
February 28- Desires and Willpower  
Holton and Berridge- Addiction Between Autonomy and Choice  
Schulz- The Self in Self-Help

Week 8- Reading, Writing, and Responding to Critics  
March 5- Peer Review  
Flanigan- Three Arguments Against Prescription Requirements  
JME- Reviewer Reports  
March 7- Critics and Responses  
Taylor- The Value of Autonomy and the Right to Self-Medication  
Martin-Commentary on “Three Arguments...”  
Eyal- Reconciling Informed Consent with Prescription Drug Requirements  
Flanigan-Prescription Requirements- A Reply

Week 9- Spring Break  
March 12- Break  
March 14- Break

Assignment 7: Submit a rough draft of your paper to peer review. If you do not complete this step you cannot join the peer review system and you will get a zero for that assignment.

Week 10- Moral Progress
March 19- The Trolley Problem
   *Turning the Trolley*
March 21- Reflective Equilibrium
   *Kelly and McGrath- Is Reflective Equilibrium Enough?*

**PART THREE: REASONING TOGETHER**

Week 11- Speech and Media
March 26- Speech and Silencing
   *Langton- Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts*

March 28- Guest Speaker!

Assignment 8: Submit your reviewer report

Week 12- Political Systems and Judgments
April 2- Instrumentalism in Politics
   *Arneson: Democracy is Not Intrinsically Just*
April 4- Empirical Knowledge and Political Choice
   *Caplan- The Miracle of Aggregation*

Week 13- Institutional Implications of Cognitive Bias
April 9- Consumer Choice
   *Sunstein and Thaler- Libertarian Paternalism is not an Oxymoron*
April 11- Stereotypes and Prejudice
   *Anderson- Fair Opportunity in Education*

Week 14- Reasoning for Leaders and Followers
April 16- The Psychology of Leaders
   *Haslam and Reicher- Beyond the Banality of Evil*
   *Price- Bathsheba Syndrome*
April 18- The Psychology of Followers
   *Huemer- The Psychology of Authority*

Week 15- Conclusions
April 23- Common Sense Anarchy
   *Huemer- What if there is no authority?*

April 25- Review Session
Assignment 9: Final Drafts Due
Assignment 10: Final Exam (Check with the Registrar)