

Department of Political Science
St. Cloud State University
POL 191: Introduction to Political and Legal Reasoning
Fall 2014
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Syllabus

Overview

This course is an introduction to critical reasoning, types of argumentation, and the proper use of authorities in argumentation. The context is the American political and legal system. We will examine what makes a strong argument, what makes for a faulty argument, the differences between theoretical, policy, and legal arguments.

Class Objectives/Learning Outcomes

This is a Goal 2 course within the University's Liberal Education Program. That means you will learn to:

- ~Distinguish between discussions that contain reasoning and those that do not.
- ~Distinguish between different types of reasoning.
- ~Analyze arguments, distinguishing premises and conclusions.
- ~Evaluate inductive and deductive reasoning.
- ~Apply basic logical techniques.
- ~Identify and avoid fallacies.

My goals for the course are straightforward: first, I want you to learn the course material. By the end of this course, you should be able to make better arguments to support your points of view. You should also be able to pick apart the weak arguments of others and avoid the common mistakes that people make when debating or defending a position. The best way to learn the material and to prepare for your examinations is to keep current in the readings and to show up for and participate in class. Take notes!

Second, I want you to become better thinkers. Becoming a better thinker requires one to develop not only his or her own opinions and learn how to present them, but also to recognize and acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. We will work on developing your ability to engage in a dialectic, whereby you argue a thesis, and then its antithesis, before coming to a conclusion

about a particular statement or political issue. (Stated in plain English, you will learn to take both sides in an argument and to make a more sophisticated argument.)

Finally, this course includes a major/minor and career preparation component to assist you in planning for your remaining years at St. Cloud State. We will integrate this component into the class.

Books

There is one required book (with bundled online access) for this course. You can purchase/rent it at the bookstore or through Chegg.com, among other places. In addition, I may assign additional readings from handouts or from items that I post on D2L.

Critical Thinking, 11th edition with Connect by Moore and Parker. McGraw Hill, Publisher. The text is bundled with CONNECT online access for this text. **You must purchase the 11th edition and the online access.**

Grading

You must complete all of the assignments to receive a final grade for this course. You must turn them in on time in class and according to the directions. No late work will be accepted, and no makeup exams will be given. I do not accept work via e-mail. There is no final exam. The list of assignments and grading scheme is provided separately.

Grading Notes: (1) Class participation will count heavily should you find yourself “in-between” grades when your final grade is calculated. If you have good class participation and attendance, I reserve the right to bump you to the next highest grade. (2) I reserve the right to make additional assignments as necessary. (3) I also reserve the right to ask for drafts and/or rewrites of your assignments.

Class Policies

1. Attendance is required. You are adults, and old enough to decide for yourself whether you will attend class. That being said, there’s a randomly assigned penalty for failure to show up. You might wish to consider the following: (1) those with regular attendance almost always do best on the tests; (2) regular attendance at classes is the number one predictor of success in college; (3) you might need a letter of recommendation from me some day, and I'd hate to write, "don't know much about this student, as he/she was rarely in class and never said a word." If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what material we covered and to obtain notes from a classmate. You may also attend the other section's class (if any) to make up what you missed.

2. Class participation is required. I will call on students. If you are consistently unprepared, it will affect your final grade. We all recognize that class participation is easy for some and quite difficult for others. Given that fact, and in an attempt to facilitate and maximize student participation, please adhere to basic rules of common courtesy in discussion. Students are expected to conduct themselves as scholars in philosophical pursuit. Everyone will talk and can expect to be listened to. Finally, there is no such thing as a dumb question, period. You should not hesitate to ask questions as a means to participating in the discussion. If you are shy or reluctant, see me so that we might find a way to overcome whatever hesitation you have.

3. Incompletes will be granted only in exceptional, documented circumstances and must be arranged by the last day of classes. **Under University rules, you must have at least 50% of the semester's work completed with a passing grade to receive an incomplete.** You and I will agree to deadlines for completion of the incomplete, but in accordance with University policy, no incomplete can be extended beyond one semester. Any incomplete that is not completed automatically becomes an "F" on the transcript.
4. Cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Both are serious offenses that will result in the strictest applicable punishment, which will include the flunking of the assignment, the course, or both and may involve even more severe penalties imposed by the University. Second chances will not be given. If you have any doubt regarding the propriety of your cooperation with other students or questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please discuss your concerns with me. In general, you should feel free to join study groups and discuss the material with your classmates. You may not, however, collaborate on written assignments or copy or share your assignments. Unless instructed otherwise, each assignment, paper, and exam you do must be your own. In the event that a plagiarism or cheating issue arises, I reserve the right to request your class notes and working drafts of the assignment(s) in question.
5. You are encouraged to visit me during office hours or by appointment. If you do not understand the material, please ask questions in class or in office hours. Do not wait until the day before the test to contact me. We will introduce a number of concepts in this course, and build upon them as the semester progresses. Therefore, it is important that you stay current in the readings and learn the concepts as they come up, not after the fact. Do not play "catch up."
6. The keys to better performance in this class include regular attendance, timely reading of the materials, note-taking, and study groups.
7. I will hand back all work in class. Any work that is left over will be kept in the Political Science Department for one semester—that is, until the end of the next semester following your class. After that, it will be thrown away. If you want your work back, claim it before this deadline.

Technology Policy

This semester I am instituting a technology policy for my courses. It is very simple: All electronic devices are banned from use during class. "All" means "all"—cell phones, laptops, tablets, hand-held devices, and the like. The only exception that I can think of would be if you require some sort of essential medical device for your health. See me if you need an exception.

You may bring your devices to class, but they must be put away and stowed. Violation of this policy will result in a loss of 10 points per violation, and repeated violations could result potentially in failing the class.

Rationale: This class requires careful listening, close attention, and focus. Electronic technology detracts from our ability to do these things. It is distracting and often disruptive to your classmates.

Grading Scheme for POL 191 / Fall 2014

Assignment	Possible Points
Initial Argumentation Paper Assignment	30
Final Argumentation Paper Assignment	30
Major and Career Prep Focus 2 Assignment	20
Tracking Your Electronic Day Assignment	70
Chapter 1 LearnSmart/Homework	20/30
Chapter 2 LearnSmart/Homework	20/30
Chapter 3 LearnSmart/Homework	20/30
Chapter 4 LearnSmart/Homework	20/30
Chapter 5 LearnSmart/Homework	20/30
Chapter 6 LearnSmart/Homework	20/30
Chapter 7 LearnSmart/Homework	20/30
Chapter 8 LearnSmart/Homework	20/30
Chapter 9 LearnSmart/Homework	20/30
Chapter 11 LearnSmart/Homework	20/30
Chapter 12 LearnSmart/Homework	20/30
Test Chapters 1-4	100
Test Chapters 5-8	100
Test Chapters 9, 11-12	100
Total for Assignments: 150 Total for LearnSmart: 220 Total for Homework: 330 Total for Exams: 300	Grand Total: 1000 points

NOTE on TIMELINESS and FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS: Each written assignment, LearnSmart/Homework, and exam in this class has a due date that will be strictly enforced. We will NOT accept late work or give makeup exams. All work must be turned in at class in the format indicated in the instructions. If you fail to follow instructions, your work will be rejected and you will not receive the points. Part of your grade measures your ability to complete quality work in a consistent and timely manner.

NOTE on LOSING POINTS: If we take attendance and you are not present, you will lose 10 points. Attendance will be taken randomly during the semester.

Enforcement of Technology Policy: If I find the technology policy too difficult to enforce on my own, I will begin awarding points to students who report others' use of technology in the classroom. Hopefully this will not be necessary.

Fall 2014: Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Date	Topic and Readings	Assignments
Week One (Aug 25, 27)	Introduction to Critical Thinking; Two Kinds of Reasoning. Read Chapters 1 and 2.	First Argumentation Paper.
Week Two (Sept 1 no class, 3)	Continued.	[Wednesday 9/3: First Argumentation Paper Due.] Presentation on Connect and LearnSmart. Homework for Chapters 1 and 2.
Week Three (Sept 8, 10)	Continued. Clear Thinking and Writing. Read Chapter 3.	Connect LearnSmart for Chapter 3. Homework for Chapter 3.
Week Four (Sept 15, 17)	Continued. Credible Argumentation. Read Chapter 4.	Connect LearnSmart for Chapter 4. Homework for Chapter 4.
Week Five (Sept 22, 24)		Finish and Review for Exam.
Week Six (Sept 29, Oct 1)	Rhetorical Devices. Read Chapter 5.	[Monday 9/29: Exam on Chapters 1-4] Connect LearnSmart for Chapter 5. Homework for Chapter 5.
Week Seven (Oct 6, 8)		
Week Eight (Oct 13, 15)	Fallacies, Fallacies, and More Fallacies. Read Chapter 6.	Connect LearnSmart for Chapter 6. Homework for Chapter 6.
Week Nine (Oct 20, 22)	Fallacies, Fallacies, and More Fallacies. Read Chapters 7.	Connect LearnSmart for Chapter 7. Homework for Chapter 7.
Week Ten (Oct 27, 29)	Fallacies, Fallacies, and More Fallacies. Read Chapter 8.	Connect LearnSmart for Chapter 8. Homework for Chapter 8.
Week Eleven (Nov 3, 5)	Continued.	Finish and Review for Exam.
Week Twelve (Nov 10, 12 no class)		[Monday 11/10: Exam on Chapters 5-8]
Week Thirteen (Nov 17, 19)	Deductive Arguments. Read 9 pages 243 to 255 only.	Connect LearnSmart for Chapter 9. Homework for Chapter 9.

Week Fourteen (Nov 24, 26 no class)	Inductive Arguments. Causality Causal Explanations. Read Chapter 11	Connect LearnSmart for Chapter 11. Homework for Chapter 11.
Week Fifteen (Dec 1, 3)	Moral Arguments. Read Chapter 12 pages 381-400.	Connect LearnSmart for Chapter 12. Homework for Chapter 12.
Week Sixteen (Dec 8, 10)	Continued.	[Monday 12/8: Exam on Chapters 9, 11-12] Wednesday: Review and Conclude
Finals Week (Dec 15-19)	No final exam.	No assignments.