

**IBH 2AE3
Critical Thinking
Fall 2020 Course Outline**

McMaster University

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Dr. Megan Stotts
Instructor
stottsm@mcmaster.ca
Office: Virtual
Office Hours: TBD

Student TA
TBD
Email: TBD
Office: Virtual
Office Hours: TBD

Course website: Avenue to Learn

SYNCHRONOUS CLASS MEETINGS

Thursdays 10:30–11:20am (with two exceptions: on Oct. 1 and Nov. 19, we will meet 4:30–5:20pm instead)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Reasoning is something we do all the time, and in many cases, effortlessly—we reason about the best way to get to a particular destination, what the cause of a traffic delay might be, or how to explain a family member’s unusual behavior. While our reasoning may often be effortless, it’s surprisingly difficult to articulate what makes good reasoning good, and bad reasoning bad. This course aims to develop students’ ability to identify and evaluate various kinds of reasoning frequently encountered in everyday life, and their ability to articulate their evaluations of that reasoning. It is simultaneously a critical reading course and a critical thinking course: because people tend to be more explicit about their reasoning when they are writing, most of the examples of reasoning we consider will be in written form. Although our primary focus will be to gain an understanding of how good reasoning works, we will also work on identifying some common pitfalls that can lead to bad reasoning and other errors of thought: informal fallacies and cognitive biases.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. When given a passage of writing, identify its structure and which parts of the passage include reasoning and which do not
2. Correctly schematize reasoning found in passages of writing to reveal its structure
3. Evaluate the quality of reasoning in a variety of kinds of arguments
4. Identify errors in reasoning and thinking due to a variety of informal fallacies and cognitive biases

COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

Required:

Larry Wright, *Critical Thinking: An Introduction to Analytical Reading and Reasoning*, 2nd Edition.
ISBN: 978-0199796229

Note: Please be sure that you purchase the correct edition of the textbook. Some important content was changed for the second edition, so having the wrong edition would put you at a significant disadvantage. A used or e-book version is fine.

COURSE OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

There will be no extra credit or bonus points in this course. The scale used by the Registrar's Office will be used to convert number grades to final letter grades. Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Components and Weights

Component	Weight
Exercises	10%
Tests	65%
Reflection	10%
Final Exam	15%

All assignments, tests, and exams will be submitted via Avenue to Learn.

EXERCISES

Students will be asked to submit several exercises via Avenue during self-study each week, due at the start time of that week's Thursday synchronous meeting. A random selection of those exercises will be marked for completion. Students who complete the entire exercise(s) assigned will receive 100%, and partial completion will receive 50%. All marked exercises will be weighted equally.

TESTS

There will be five tests over the course of the term (see the schedule below for dates), all weighted equally. Each test builds on the skills from the previous tests, so if you do poorly on a test, you should attend office hours to receive assistance from the instructor or TA as soon as possible, and definitely well before the next test. The tests will all be administered through Avenue to Learn. Each will be available for 48 hours, but students will have a time limit once they begin.

REFLECTION

Students will be asked to submit a reflection about the ways in which the skills from this class apply to business contexts. Students may choose between a written essay (2–3 pages, typed, double-spaced) or an oral presentation submitted as a video upload (4–6 minutes, with visual aids). The assignment is due Dec. 9 (11:59pm).

FINAL EXAM

The final exam will have the same format and length as the tests, focusing on the skills we learn after the fifth test. While it is not technically a cumulative exam, like all of the other tests, it will rely on skills developed earlier in the term as well.

Policy on Missed Work, Extensions, and Late Penalties: Exercises and Reflection

Extensions on all exercises and the reflection will be granted on a case-by-case basis. A student who needs an extension on one of those assignments should contact the TA via email *before* the assignment is due. If a student requests lengthy or frequent extensions, documentation may be requested in accordance with the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work. When a student submits an MSAF that covers the date on which exercises or the reflection is due, the assignment's deadline will automatically be extended by 48 hours for that student, and longer extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Exercises will not be accepted late in the absence of an extension, and a student who misses one will receive a 0 if that one happens to be chosen to be marked. The reflection will still be accepted late in the absence of an extension, but it will be penalized 5% as soon as the deadline passes, and an additional 5% for every additional day it is late. Once the reflection is 5 days late without an extension, it will no longer be accepted and the student will receive a 0.

Students who are unable to submit exercises or the reflection on time due to unforeseeable technical difficulties will not be subject to late penalties, provided that they attempted to resolve the technical difficulty (see the technology notice, below, for more information) and that they take a screenshot that shows why they were unable to submit on time and

send it (along with their assignment, if it has still not been submitted via Avenue) to the TA via email as soon as possible after the missed deadline.

Policy on Missed Work, Extensions, and Late Penalties: Tests and Final Exam

Extensions will not be given for the tests or final exam, and they will not be accepted late (either outside of the designated 48-hour window, or outside of your shorter window to complete the test or exam once you begin). Missed tests and exams will receive a mark of 0 outside of the conditions described in the following paragraph.

Students who are unable to complete a test or the final exam on time due to unforeseeable technical difficulties must immediately report the difficulty to the TA via email, along with a screenshot that shows why they were unable to complete the test or exam. If a student misses a test and sends an immediate email to the TA that includes an adequate screenshot of technical difficulties that prevented submission of the test, or they have an MSAF or Notification of Absence that covers the date of the missed test, then the weight of that test will be redistributed evenly among the other tests. If this occurs for more than one test, every excused missed test after the first one will have its weight redistributed to the final exam, and that student’s final exam will be longer than the standard exam and will include questions that cover the material from all of the tests they missed *after* their first missed test. If a student misses the final exam and sends an immediate email to the TA that includes an adequate screenshot of technical difficulties that prevented submission of the exam, and the student has not missed any previous tests, the weight of the final exam will be redistributed to the other tests. If the documented technical difficulty occurs during the final exam and the student has already missed one or more tests, an alternate assignment will be provided. (Note: the last two sentences may be overridden by university policy, as the final exam period approaches. An update will be provided if necessary.)

ACTIVITY	DELIVERY	DESCRIPTION	TOOL(S)
Self-study	Asynchronous	Students read chapters from the textbook, watch pre-recorded lectures, and complete exercises at specified points before or during the lectures.	Textbook; Avenue to Learn with embedded videos; Teams, Zoom, or perhaps an online whiteboard for working with other students
Virtual Q&A	Synchronous	Instructor answers students’ questions about course material live for 50 minutes each week. Attendance is highly recommended, but there is no penalty for missing a session.	Zoom, during scheduled class time

OTHER COURSE INFORMATION

1. **Changes to the course outline:** The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this course outline and the course schedule. Any changes by the instructor will be announced via email.
2. **Technology notice:** Students who experience technical difficulties with any McMaster-supported technology (such as Zoom or Avenue to Learn) or just have questions about how to use the technology should consult [McMaster's Technology Resources website](#). Note, in particular, that McMaster offers one-on-one [support for Avenue to Learn](#). If a student encounters issues when streaming video for this class, it may be helpful to close any unnecessary programs or apps on the device being used for streaming, ensure that others are not doing too many high-bandwidth activities on the same WiFi network, connect to the internet with a wired connection rather than WiFi, or move closer to the WiFi source.
3. **Synchronous sessions notice:** Summaries or transcripts from our weekly virtual sessions may be posted on Avenue to Learn. Students' questions and remarks may be included, but they will be anonymized. These documents are not to be shared with people not in this class. Participation in the synchronous sessions will be deemed consent to this procedure.
4. **Student Success Centre statement:** In addition to the support that the instructor and TA provide, all students are encouraged to utilize the resources available via the [Student Success Centre](#). These services include one-on-one appointments with writing advisors who can provide support at any stage of paper writing, workshops focused on academic skills such as notetaking and time management, and academic coaching (which could be a good place to start if you're not sure which resources you might most benefit from!).

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Students who wish to correspond with instructors or TAs directly via email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student. Emails regarding course issues should NOT be sent to the Area Administrative Assistants. All students must receive feedback regarding their progress prior to the final date by which a student may cancel the course without failure by default.

- *For Level 1 and Level 2 courses, this feedback must equal a minimum of 20% of the final grade.*
- *For Level 3 courses and above, this feedback must equal a minimum of 10% of the final grade.*

Instructors may solicit feedback via an informal course review with students by Week #4 to allow time for modifications in curriculum delivery.

REQUESTING RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work” and the link below;

<http://ug.degroote.mcmaster.ca/forms-and-resources/missed-course-work-policy/>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY/PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course.

The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or

interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

RESEARCH USING HUMAN SUBJECTS

All researchers conducting research that involves human participants, their records or their biological material are required to receive approval from one of McMaster's Research Ethics Boards before (a) they can recruit participants and (b) collect or access their data. Failure to comply with relevant policies is a research misconduct matter. Contact these boards for further information about your requirements and the application process.

McMaster Research Ethics Board (General board): <https://reo.mcmaster.ca/>

Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board (Medical board): <http://www.hireb.ca/>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES

Your enrolment in IBH 2AE3 will be considered to be an implicit acknowledgement of the course policies outlined above, or of any other that may be announced during lecture and/or on A2L. **It is your responsibility to read this course outline, to familiarize yourself with the course policies and to act accordingly.**

Lack of awareness of the course policies **cannot be invoked** at any point during this course for failure to meet them. It is your responsibility to ask for clarification on any policies that you do not understand.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**IBH 2AE3: Critical Thinking
Fall 2020 Course Schedule**

Each week's reading and self-study activities are due at the start of that week's Thursday virtual session.

Week	Topic and Assessments	Reading
September 8–11	Introduction to Paraphrasing	Chapter 1
September 14–18	Structured Paraphrases	Chapter 2, pp. 35–60
September 21–25	TEST September 21–22 More Difficult Structured Paraphrases	Chapter 2, p. 61–end
September 28– October 2	Schematizing Reasoning	Chapter 3
October 5–9	TEST October 5–6 Argument Analysis, Part 1	Chapter 4, pp. 143–168
Midterm Recess: October 12–18		
October 19–23	Argument Analysis, Part 2	Chapter 4, p. 168–end
October 26–30	TEST October 26–27 Diagnostic Arguments, Part 1	Chapter 5, pp. 206–220
November 2–6	Diagnostic Arguments, Part 2	Chapter 5, p. 220–end
November 9–13	TEST November 9–10 Cause and Correlation	Chapter 6, pp. 259–284
November 16–20	Sampling, Counting, and Circumstantial Evidence	Chapter 6, p. 302–end
November 23– November 27	TEST November 23–24 Prediction	Chapter 7, pp. 331–348
November 30– December 4	Recommendation	Chapter 7, p. 349–end
December 7–9	Course conclusion REFLECTION DUE December 9 (11:59pm)	No reading