Faculty of Business

IBH 2AE3

Critical Thinking

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Dr. Megan Stotts
Email: stottsm@mcmaster.ca
Office: UH 306

Office Hours:
Wednesday 2:00-3:00pm, and by appointment

All students are welcome to stop by unannounced during the instructor or your TA's scheduled office hours. To schedule an appointment to meet with the instructor or your TA at a time other than during their scheduled office hours, be sure to contact the instructor or TA at least 24 hours before the time when you wish to meet.

Course Information

Lectures: Tuesday 10:30-11:20am, Thursday 9:30-10:20am

Please see Mosaic for classroom location, and for information about your tutorial.

Course Dates: 09/08/2026 - 12/10/2026

Units: 3.00

Course Delivery Mode: In Person

Course Description: This course aims to develop students' skills in identifying and evaluating various kinds of reasoning frequently encountered in everyday life. Likely topics covered in the course include typical reasoning patterns, methods for identifying and classifying reasoning when reading, methods for assessing the quality of reasoning, and fallacies or cognitive biases that can negatively impact

reasoning. Lectures (three hours) Prerequisite(s): Registration in Level II of the Integrated Business and Humanities Program Cross-listed: PHILOS 2CT3

Instructor-Specific Course Information

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 friend or 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. Along the way, we will also discuss some contemporary challenges that impact our critical thinking, such as echo chambers and the rise of generative artificial intelligence.

Other Course Information

1. **Readings:** Please be sure to bring the textbook and any other recent readings to class with you each day, unless there is a test that day. The readings can be in either electronic or hard copy form, but they must be easily accessible to you during class.
2. **Extra Credit:** There will be no extra credit or bonus points in this course.
3. **Technology policy:** Cellular phones, tablets, and laptops may be used during class only for the purposes of taking notes or displaying electronic versions of course readings. Use for purposes not related to our class can be distracting for others around you.
4. **Email policy:** The instructor and TAs aim to respond to emails within 24 hours during the work week. Messages sent on Fridays or during the weekend may not receive a reply until Monday.
5. **Student Success Centre:** All students are encouraged to utilize the resources available at the Student Success Centre. These services include one-on-one appointments with writing advisors, workshops focused on academic skills such as notetaking and time management, as well as academic coaching (which could be a good place to start if you're not sure which resources you might most benefit from). They also offer some resources specific to exam preparation and self-care for the end of the term.
6. **Mental health support:** It is common for students to experience mental health difficulties during their time in university, and there are resources available to you

for support. The Student Wellness Centre provides in-person counseling services to students. For 24/7 assistance, students can contact Good2Talk (1-866-925-5454).

Land Acknowledgement:

McMaster University recognizes and acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the "Dish with One Spoon" wampum agreement.

Important Links

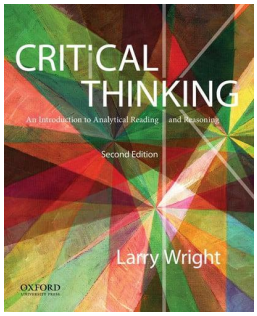
- Mosaic
- Avenue to Learn
- Student Accessibility Services - Accommodations
- McMaster University Library
- eReserves
- Open Education Resources

Course Learning Outcomes

- Learn to identify reasoning in written passages
- Learn a method for schematizing reasoning to reveal its structure
- Improve ability to evaluate the quality of one's own and others' reasoning
- Learn to differentiate and analyze several specific kinds of reasoning: diagnostic reasoning, correlation, testimony, sampling, prediction, and recommendation
- Develop skills to navigate contemporary challenges to critical thinking such as echo chambers and the rise of artificial intelligence

Required Materials and Texts

Please sign in with your MacID here to view your booklist



Critical Thinking An Introduction to Analytical Reading and Reasoning
ISBN: 9780199796229
Authors: Larry Wright
Publisher: Oxford University Press
Publication Date: 2013
Edition: 2

Note: New copies are available only in e-book format. If you choose to purchase a used paper copy of the book, please be sure that you purchase the 2nd edition. Some important content was changed, so having the 1st edition would put you at a significant disadvantage.

Additional required readings will be posted on Avenue to Learn.

Class Format

In Person

Course Evaluation

Homework: 10%

Tests: 72%

Final Exam: 18%

Course Evaluation Details

About the Homework:

A short homework assignment will be due on most days when a reading from our textbook is due (not September 10). The instructions for the assignment will be posted as an announcement on Avenue, one week before the assignment is due. The homework is to be submitted virtually by emailing it to your TA (it can be submitted as a photo or scan, if you write it out by hand). Homework will not be accepted once the lecture at which it was due has begun, because we will go over the answer in class. The homework assignments will consist of one or more exercises from the textbook, and they will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Students who complete the entire assigned exercise(s) will receive 100%, and partial completion will receive 75% or 50%. All homework assignments will be weighted equally. Homework grades will be posted on Avenue.

About the Tests:

There will be four in-person tests over the course of the term (see the course schedule for dates), all weighted equally. In order to write the test, students must arrive within the first 25 minutes of the class period. Students are also requested to remain in the classroom for the first 25 minutes of the test period, even if they have already finished (unless it is an emergency, of course). 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 your TA as soon as possible. Marked tests will be handed back in tutorials.

About the Final Exam:

The final exam will be an in-person exam, scheduled by the Registrar's Office. It will assess the skills we learn after the material covered on our fourth test. It is not technically a cumulative exam, but like all of the other tests, it will rely on skills developed earlier in the term as well as on new skills.

Students who missed more than one test, where the dates of multiple missed tests were covered by an MSAF (Self-Report) or MSAF (Administrative Report), will write a longer exam, as described in the policies below.

Undergraduate Grading Scale

The grades breakdown for McMaster's 12-Point Grading Scale

Grade	Equivalent Grade Point	Equivalent Percentages
A+	12	90-100
A	11	85-89
A-	10	80-84
B+	9	77-79
B	8	73-76
B-	7	70-72
C+	6	67-69
C	5	63-66
C-	4	60-62
D+	3	57-59
D	2	53-56
D-	1	50-52
F	0	0-49

Course Schedule

Readings are to be completed before class begins on the date on which they appear below. Readings are from our textbook unless otherwise indicated.

September 8: Course Introduction

September 10: Schematizing Reasoning, **Reading due: Chapter 3, pp. 97–99 (skip exercise 3.1), pp. 111–122 (beginning with A Shortcut: Schematizing Directly from a Passage).** Please also just familiarize yourself with the quoted passages of reasoning given as examples on pp. 100-111 (such as Harriet Markman's letter on p. 110).

September 15: Schematizing Reasoning, continued **Reading due: Chapter 3, p. 123–end.** Skip the parts of any exercises that ask you to do a "structured paraphrase."

September 17: Schematizing Reasoning, continued

September 22: Argument Analysis, **Reading due: Chapter 4, pp. 143–168**

September 24: TEST 1

September 29: Argument Analysis, continued

October 1: Argument Analysis, continued, **Reading due: Chapter 4, p. 168–end**

October 6: Argument Analysis, continued

October 8: Diagnostic Arguments, **Reading due: Chapter 5, pp. 206–220**

Reading Week

October 20: TEST 2

October 22: Diagnostic Arguments, continued, **Reading due: Chapter 5, p. 220–end**

October 27: Diagnostic Arguments, continued

October 29: Cause and Correlation, **Reading due: Chapter 6, pp. 259–284**

November 3: Cause and Correlation, continued

November 5: Testimony, **Reading due: Chapter 6, pp. 284–302**

November 10: TEST 3

November 12: Testimony and Expertise, **Readings due: Jason, "Observation, Memory, and Testimony" (excerpt) and Nguyen, "Transparency is Surveillance" (excerpt)**

November 17: Sampling, **Reading due: Chapter 6, pp. 302–314**

November 19: Sampling, continued

November 24: TEST 4

November 26: Prediction, **Reading due: Chapter 7, pp. 331–348**

December 1: Prediction and Recommendation, **Reading due: Chapter 7, p. 349–end**

December 3: Prediction and Recommendation, continued

December 8: Echo Chambers, **Reading due: TBD**

December 10: Echo Chambers, continued

Late Assignments

1. **For the Homework:** Extensions on the homework will be considered on a case-by-case basis. A student who needs an extension should contact their TA via email *before* the assignment is due. If a student requests lengthy or frequent extensions, they may be asked to get an MSAF (Administrative Report) in order to receive the extension. When a student submits an MSAF (Self-Report) that covers the date on

which homework 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.

Homework is due at the very beginning of the lecture on the day it is due, and it will not be accepted late (that is, once class has begun) in the absence of an extension.

1. **For the Tests:** No extensions will be given for the tests, and they cannot be completed late. However, please see the Absences and Missed Work section for information about being excused from tests.
2. **For the Final Exam:** No extensions will be given for the final exam, and it can be completed late only by using the university's deferred exam process.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

1. **Absences:** Regular in-person attendance is expected in this course. Attendance will always be taken at tutorials, and will sometimes be taken at lectures. Each student is allowed two absences before their grade is impacted. After two recorded absences, each additional unexcused absence will result in a 1% penalty to the student's overall grade in the course. Absences after the first two can be excused via MSAF (Self-Report), MSAF (Administrative Report), or contacting your TA to say that you had to be absent for medical reasons (there is no need to provide detail beyond the fact that the reason for your absence was medical) or some other emergency. When an absence is excused, there is no penalty. For extended or frequent excused absences, an MSAF may be required before further absences can be excused.

   Note: If you have not yet been absent two times, please do **not** contact your TA about your absence.

1. **Missed Homework:** Missed homework will receive a grade of 0.
2. **Missed Tests:** If you submit a successful MSAF (Self-Report) or MSAF (Administrative Report) for the date of a test, and you miss the test, you will be excused from that test and the weight of that test will be redistributed evenly across the other tests. If this occurs for more than one test, every 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. A missed test will receive a mark of 0 if there is no MSAF of either kind covering the date of the test.
3. **Missed Final Exams:** Missed final exams will receive a mark of 0.

Course Modification

The instructor serves the right to modify this course outline. Changes will be announced via email or Avenue to Learn.

Generative AI: Use Prohibited

Students are not permitted to use generative AI in this course. In alignment with McMaster academic integrity policy, it "shall be an offence knowingly to … submit academic work for assessment that was purchased or acquired from another source". This includes work created by generative AI tools. Also stated in the policy is the following, "Contract Cheating is the act of "outsourcing of student work to third parties" (Lancaster & Clarke, 2016, p. 639) with or without payment." Using Generative AI tools is a form of contract cheating. Charges of academic dishonesty will be brought forward to the Office of Academic Integrity.

APPROVED ADVISORY STATEMENTS

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.

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

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. Avenue to Learn, 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, 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 orsas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities policy.

Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Policy on Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work.

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, Avenue to Learn and/or McMaster email.