

# Phil 101-06: Reasoning, CEL

Spring 2026

## **Times and Locations:**

When: M,W,F: 11:15 am - 12:05 pm

Where: College Hall 314

## **Instructor info:**

Dr. Charles Lassiter

Office in Robinson 104

**Office hours:** Mondays, 3-5 pm; Fridays, 2:30-4:30; by appointment

**Email:** lassiter@gonzaga.edu

[Suggestion Box](#) (for anonymous comments)

## Course Description

The overarching aim of this community-engaged learning course is to better students' logical and critical thinking skills, namely being able to (1) identify arguments, (2) construct good arguments, (3) analyze others' arguments, and (4) begin thinking about the role of values in reasoning. Since the aim of this course is the betterment of skills, we will have lots of practice, both in and out of class. The yearly question that this course addresses is: how do we pursue knowledge and create understanding? By doing philosophy, you'll learn how philosophers begin making sense of what is sometimes a very confusing world.

This is a community-engaged learning course. The goal is to facilitate interactions with folks from communities around Spokane with whom you wouldn't typically interact. You'll talk with folks and get a sense of what's important to them and what they care about (naturally, through conversation). A main component of the class is looking at values and reasoning, so you're going to expose yourselves to folks with potentially different systems of values.

## Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to

1. recognize and evaluate individual arguments using basic deductive reasoning structures, basic inductive methods, and informal fallacies.
2. read, reconstruct, and evaluate extended arguments in a variety of contexts using these structures and methods.
3. write effective arguments
4. identify and evaluate epistemic or ethical issues concerning reasoning and argumentation that arise from the use of digital technologies such as AI

5. reflect on their growth as careful and reflective reasoners

## Texts

1. Matthew J. Van Cleve, [\*Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking\*](#)
2. Jeffrey Johnson, [\*Inferring and Explaining\*](#)  
....both are open access; just follow the links!
3. Other readings will be linked to through the syllabus

## Grading

| Letter | Number range | Qualitative description                                       |
|--------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| A      | 95-100       | Superior performance. Has mastered all class material.        |
| A-     | 90-94        |                                                               |
| B+     | 87-89        |                                                               |
| B      | 84-86        | Has a very good grasp on the class material                   |
| B-     | 80-83        |                                                               |
| C+     | 77-79        |                                                               |
| C      | 74-76        | Has an adequate grasp on the class material                   |
| C-     | 70-73        |                                                               |
| D      | 66-69        | Has not demonstrated a sufficient grasp of the class material |
| D-     | 60-65        |                                                               |
| F      | <60          | Has not demonstrated any grasp of the class material          |

## Work

1. **Attendance and participation:** Students are allowed to miss **twice** the number of weekly meetings. The grade for excessive absences is "V", which has the same effect as "F" (Fail) and is counted in the GPA. I expect student participation. If you are nervous about talking in class, you'll have plenty of opportunities to talk with your small group. You can also email me or come to office hours as part of participation.
2. **Service hours:** Each student is to complete 20 hours of volunteer service as part of the

course. The CCE will send me how many hours students have logged by the end of the semester and I will use that to assign your grade.

3. **Case studies:** Students will be given argumentative case studies to work on in groups during class. They will present their findings/arguments. Details are [here](#). *Satisfies outcomes 1, 2, & 3.*
4. **Practicing patterns:** Students will be required to practice the argument patterns we'll be introducing. *Satisfies outcomes 1, 2, 3, & 4.*
5. **Tests:** There will be tests on Canvas to check in on your understanding of the course material. *Satisfies outcomes 1 & 2*
6. **Value Sort and Reflection:** You'll go through the list of 36 values and narrow your "Very Important" list to *five*. When you're finished, you can click "Summarize" to get the quick overview. I want you to write a 2 page reflection on this experience. Here are some questions to get you started: was it easy? Do any of your choices surprise you? Why or why not? Do you think others would describe you using those values? Why or why not? *Satisfies outcome 4*
7. **What matters to you:** Students will identify *one* debate that's important to them but about which they aren't sure what to think. As the semester goes on, students will come back to this several times to examine their reasons. See the link in the course schedule for details.  
Students will pick *two* of the arguments to redraft midway through the semester. At the end of the semester, students will pick *one* to revise and resubmit. *Satisfies outcomes 1, 2, 3, & 4*
8. **Journals:** These posts will be reflections on both the content as well as your service. Each student is to make one post in response to the prompt described on the due date in the syllabus. They are to be a *minimum* of 250 words each. *Satisfies outcomes 2 & 3*

**PLEASE NOTE:** If you falsely claim to have completed service in your journals, you will receive an F for the course and will be reported for an academic integrity violation.

## Assignment weights

Attendance/participation: Pass or fail

Service hours: 10%

Case studies: 10%

Journals: 15%

Tests: 15%

Practicing patterns: 20%

What matters to you (initial, redraft, and final; the value sort reflection also contributes): 30%

# Late Work

**Late work is docked 10% for each day.** Contact me at least a day ahead of time if you know that you will not be able to meet the deadline.

# AI Policy

Students can use AI as part of their research. Here are a few that are excellent for this: chatGPT, Gemini, Claude.ai, [Elicit](#), [Storm](#). I ask that if you use AI as part of your workflow, give credit where due: e.g. in a paper, add a footnote that says you used (for example) chatGPT to find information about such-and-such.

One strategy that I find helpful (and maybe you will too) is to ask an AI model for a summary of a paper or idea we're going to discuss and then to read the text. It's a lot easier to absorb the material and ideas if you have a sense of what's going on. Why read the text after you get the summary? Two reasons: first, the summary gives you the ideas but they're still only a summary. Second, reading the text helps you integrate the new information into your existing knowledge.

Generally, AI is good for answering and solving *short-term* questions and problems, like finding facts about the world, completing a math problem, or writing papers reporting historical events. What AI is *not* good for is solving *long-term* questions and problems, like how to live one's life or what is important for a person. In this class, we'll be addressing both kinds of questions.

# FAQ

Q: Why do you do so much group work?

A: Philosophy is best done with others. When working with others, they can spot gaps in your thinking and you can spot gaps in theirs.

Q: Why do you have us take a personality test?

A: Grouping people up by personality often helps facilitate group work. At least, it's no worse than random assignment.

Q: Why do you do CEL for Reasoning?

A: A few reasons. First, philosophy is foundational to a good life, so I think it's valuable to create opportunities to integrate philosophical thinking into your lives outside the classroom. Second, it's easy to hang out with people who are similar to you. This phenomenon is known as [homophily](#). CEL courses are an opportunity to connect with others who may be unlike you in important ways.

Q: You're....kinda sweaty.

A: Not a question but yeah. It's a side-effect of literally every medication I take.

## Course Schedule

| Date                                                                                                          | Reading/Watching                                                                                                                                                                                          | Topic                                                                                                                                                             | Assignments due (besides reading)                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1/14                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Getting to know one another, intro to CEL, Intro to Phil 101<br><a href="#">Big 5 Personality Test</a><br>(complete and <a href="#">report your scores here</a> ) |                                                        |
| 1/16                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">“How Tom Stoppard Made Us All Philosophers”</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">“Writing is Thinking: Do Students Who Use ChatGPT Learn Less?”</a></li> </ul> | Class norms and expectations                                                                                                                                      |                                                        |
| 1/19                                                                                                          | No Class                                                                                                                                                                                                  | MLK, Jr Day                                                                                                                                                       |                                                        |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Part 1</b><br/><b>Why bother? Understanding as the aim of reasoning</b></p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                        |
| 1/21                                                                                                          | Richard Feynman<br><a href="#">Feynman: Knowin...</a><br><a href="#">Richard Feynman....</a>                                                                                                              | Understanding and background assumptions                                                                                                                          |                                                        |
| 1/23                                                                                                          | Catherine Elgin<br><a href="#">Catherine Elgin on...</a><br>(watch until the 29:30 mark)                                                                                                                  | Exemplification in art and science, representation and understanding                                                                                              | Journal 1: What was a time when you kept asking “why”? |

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| 1/26                                                                                                                                                            | Templeton Religion Trust,<br> Investigating the C...<br>Amy Herman,<br> A lesson on lookin...                                                                                                          | Art and understanding                                  | <a href="#">What matters to you</a> , initial draft                                                             |
| 1/28                                                                                                                                                            | Haley Levitt,<br> Who decides what...<br>Ralph Ammer,<br> How drawing help...<br>Amie McNee,<br> The case for maki... | How art helps understanding and why we should make art |                                                                                                                 |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Part 2</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Getting a handle on things: Narratives, understanding, and reasoning</b></p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                        |                                                                                                                 |
| 1/30                                                                                                                                                            | Schank and Abelson,<br><a href="#">from <i>Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understanding</i></a><br>Sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.6</li> <li>• 2.1, 2.4</li> <li>• 3.1, 3.7</li> </ul> <i>Note that this reading uses an offensive and outdated term for people with dwarfism</i>                                                                      | Scripts, narratives, and understanding                 | Journal 2: What's a work of art (music, painting, literature, dance, etc) that had a significant impact on you? |
| 2/2                                                                                                                                                             | Schank and Abelson,<br><a href="#">from <i>Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understanding</i></a><br>Sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.6</li> <li>• 2.1, 2.4</li> <li>• 3.1, 3.7</li> </ul> <i>Note that this reading uses an offensive and outdated term for people with dwarfism</i>                                                                      | Scripts, narratives, and understanding                 |                                                                                                                 |

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| 2/4                                                                                                        | George Lakoff,<br> Metaphors We Liv...    | Conceptual metaphor theory                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 2/6                                                                                                        | Annalee Newitz, from <a href="#">Stories are weapons, chapters 1, 4 and 5</a>                                              | Narratives and culture in reasoning                                                 | Journal 3: What are some narratives you see in American culture? How/where do you see them in your service?                                                         |
| 2/9                                                                                                        | Heather Douglas,<br> Heather Douglas o... | Value-ladenness of science: the role of values and emotions and scientific thinking | <a href="#">Value sort activity here</a><br><a href="#">Reflection instructions here</a>                                                                            |
| 2/11                                                                                                       | Case study, day 1: AI and art                                                                                              |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 2/13                                                                                                       | Case study, day 2                                                                                                          |                                                                                     | <a href="#">Present case studies</a>                                                                                                                                |
| 2/16                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                            | <b>No class, Presidents' Day</b>                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Part 3</b><br/>Simplify, simplify, simplify: Deduction and reasoning</p> |                                                                                                                            |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 2/18                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                            | Definitions, meaning, and concepts                                                  | <a href="#">Practicing patterns: Metaphors</a>                                                                                                                      |
| 2/20                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                            | Descriptive and normative language; thick and thin concepts                         | Journal 4: Read <a href="#">this snippet</a> from <i>Alice Through the Looking Glass</i> . What do you think about Humpty Dumpty's idea about the meaning of words? |
| 2/23                                                                                                       | Van Cleve, Sections 1.1-1.5                                                                                                | KISS ("Keep it simple, silly!")                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 2/25                                                                                                       | Van Cleve, 1.6-1.9                                                                                                         | Deduction, validity, soundness, some categorical logic                              |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 2/27                                                                                                       | Van Cleve, 2.1-2.3                                                                                                         | Intro to propositional logic: conjunction, negation, conditionals, and disjunction  | Journal 5: Tell me about your service using <a href="#">these questions</a>                                                                                         |

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| 3/2                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                   | Argument diagrams                                 |                                                                                                                                                          |
| 3/4                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                   | Art, simplicity, and arguments                    | <a href="#">What matters to you</a> , redraft                                                                                                            |
| 3/6                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                   | Midterm Test (in class)                           |                                                                                                                                                          |
| 3/9                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>No class, Spring Break</b>                     |                                                                                                                                                          |
| 3/11                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>No class, Spring Break</b>                     |                                                                                                                                                          |
| 3/13                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>No class, Spring Break</b>                     |                                                                                                                                                          |
| 3/16                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                   | Refresher on deduction; conditionals              |                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Part 4</b><br/> <b>Adding to our narratives: Induction and descriptive models</b></p> |                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                   |                                                                                                                                                          |
| 3/18                                                                                                                    | Van Cleve, 3.1<br><a href="#">Crash course on induction and abduction</a>                                                                                         | Introduction to inductive methods, generalization |                                                                                                                                                          |
| 3/20                                                                                                                    | Conditional Prob.;<br><a href="#">StatQuest</a> ,<br>Bayes' theorem:<br><a href="#">Julia Galef</a> ;<br><a href="#">Bayes' theorem applied to prenatal tests</a> | Conditional probability, Bayes' Theorem           | Practicing patterns: <a href="#">Deductive arguments</a>                                                                                                 |
| 3/23                                                                                                                    | Johnson, ch. 5 & 6                                                                                                                                                | Inference to the best explanation                 | Journal 6: Tell me about your service using <a href="#">these questions</a>                                                                              |
| 3/25                                                                                                                    | Van Cleeve, Section 3.4                                                                                                                                           | Causal mechanisms                                 | Practicing patterns: <a href="#">Inference to the best explanation</a>                                                                                   |
| 3/27                                                                                                                    | <a href="#">Case study, day 1</a>                                                                                                                                 |                                                   | Journal 7: What was a time when you had to consider different explanations for someone's actions? How did you figure out which was the best explanation? |
| 3/20                                                                                                                    | Case study, day 2                                                                                                                                                 |                                                   |                                                                                                                                                          |
| 4/1                                                                                                                     | Case study, day 3                                                                                                                                                 |                                                   | <a href="#">Present descriptive case studies</a>                                                                                                         |

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| 4/3                                                                 | No class, Good Friday                                                                                       |                                                  |                                                                                                 |
| 4/6                                                                 | No class, Easter Monday                                                                                     |                                                  |                                                                                                 |
| <div>Part 5</div> <div>Adding assessments: Norms in reasoning</div> |                                                                                                             |                                                  |                                                                                                 |
| 4/8                                                                 | Van Cleve, Section 3.3                                                                                      | Analogies                                        |                                                                                                 |
| 4/10                                                                | Van Cleve, Section 3.3                                                                                      | Analogies                                        | Journal 8: Do you think life is more like a story or a game?                                    |
| 4/13                                                                |                                                                                                             | Analogies, narratives, and descriptions          | Practicing patterns: <a href="#">Analogies</a>                                                  |
| 4/15                                                                | <a href="#">Intro to value theory</a> , chapters 1 and 10                                                   | Value theory                                     |                                                                                                 |
| 4/17                                                                | <a href="#">Intro to value theory</a> , chapters 1 and 10                                                   | Value theory                                     | Journal 9: Tell me about your service using <a href="#">these questions</a>                     |
| 4/20                                                                |  Kant & Categorical...    | Crash course in moral philosophy: deontology     |                                                                                                 |
| 4/22                                                                |  Utilitarianism: Cras... | Crash course in moral philosophy: utilitarianism |                                                                                                 |
| 4/24                                                                |  Aristotle & Virtue T... | Crash course in moral philosophy: virtue theory  | Journal 10: How does service expand your understanding of yourself, Spokane, other people, etc? |
| <div>Part 6</div> <div>Pulling it all together</div>                |                                                                                                             |                                                  |                                                                                                 |
| 4/27                                                                |                                                                                                             | <a href="#">Final case study. day 1</a>          | Practicing patterns: <a href="#">Normative stories</a>                                          |
| 4/29                                                                |                                                                                                             | Final case study, day 2                          |                                                                                                 |
| 5/1                                                                 |                                                                                                             | Final case study, day 3                          | <a href="#">What matters to you</a> , final                                                     |
| 5/5                                                                 | 1-3 pm                                                                                                      |                                                  | <a href="#">Present final case studies</a>                                                      |

## University Policies

There are a number of important GU policies. Rather than put them all here, below is a table to all the relevant policies. Each of these policies is important. Please read them!

| University and Academic Policy Statements                                            | Associated Links                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Diversity, Equity and Inclusion</b>                                               | <a href="#">Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion</a><br><a href="#">Bias Incident Assessment and Support (BIAS) Team</a>    |
| <b>Harassment, Discrimination And Sexual Misconduct Policies</b>                     | <a href="#">Harassment and Non-Discrimination Policy</a><br><a href="#">Title IX</a>                                             |
| <b>Academic Integrity Policy</b>                                                     | <a href="#">Academic Integrity Policy</a>                                                                                        |
| <b>Students With Disabilities/Medical Conditions and Accessible Documents (EITA)</b> | <a href="#">Disability Access and Resources Office</a><br><a href="#">Electronic Information Technology Accessibility (EITA)</a> |
| <b>Religious Accommodations for Students</b>                                         | <a href="#">Religious Accommodations for Students Policy</a>                                                                     |
| <b>FERPA and Privacy</b>                                                             | <a href="#">FERPA</a>                                                                                                            |
| <b>Class Attendance Policy</b>                                                       | <a href="#">Class Attendance Policy</a><br><a href="#">Amended Class Attendance Policy</a>                                       |
| <b>Notice to Students of COVID-19 Expectations</b>                                   | <a href="#">Student Arrival &amp; Return to Gonzaga Guides</a>                                                                   |
| <b>Notice to Students about Class Recordings (audio, video and photos)</b>           | <a href="#">Zoom sessions might be recorded</a><br><a href="#">Gonzaga University's Student Code of Conduct</a>                  |
| <b>Course Evaluations</b>                                                            | <a href="#">Course Evaluations</a>                                                                                               |