

Syllabus for Critical Thinking (Psych 3310) Spring 2020, Dr. Lee Gugerty

Class meeting: Tuesday & Thursday 5-6:15 PM in **Brackett Hall room 122**

Professor: Dr. Leo Gugerty, 312-D Brackett Hall, 656-4467, email: gugerty@clemson.edu

Office hours: 2:30-5:30 Wed; also by appointment

Readings:

Books:

- *The Knowledge Illusion: Why We Never Think Alone* by Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach, Publisher: Penguin Random House 2017; Hardcover \$28.00, But Amazon Prime says there is a paperback edition
 - *How To Think Straight About Psychology* by Keith Stanovich, Publisher: Pearson; get the 10th edition, published in 2013, available used in paperback
 - *Thinking Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman, 2011 Publisher: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Paperback
- Selected readings downloadable from the library website or provided by Dr. G on canvas

Learning Outcomes for This Course:

1. Over the past 60 years, psychological **scientists** have learned a lot about the best ways for people to make sure that their **beliefs** and conclusions about the world are accurate. These scientists have also learned a lot about the best ways for people to **make decisions** when they really want those decisions to be effective. You will learn about these accurate and effective ways of arriving at beliefs (a process called **argumentation**) and **making decisions**. You will also learn about the **mistakes** people make when they do not use these more effective reasoning techniques. One of my main goals is to teach you about the effective reasoning techniques that psychological scientists have discovered.
2. However, this is not a pure science course. As we cover these **effective reasoning** techniques, we will discuss many examples of you can apply these techniques in **your everyday life**. By the end of the course, as you are engaging in an argument or making a decision, you should be able to say “I (or another person) just made a reasoning error. I know what the error is and why it’s suboptimal thinking. I also know how to think about this in a better way.”
3. It’s not a coincidence that when psychological scientists studied and then discovered how **individuals** arrive at accurate beliefs and **make effective decisions in their everyday life**, the scientists found that these same useful reasoning techniques were also used by groups of people—**scientists, lawyers, journalists, law-makers, detectives, and historians**. So psychological research about everyday reasoning and the work practices of these different occupations have converged on the same set of reasoning techniques that people can use whenever they want their beliefs to match the world and their decisions to work out well in the world. We will also learn about how **scientists and lawyers and journalists** attempt to engage in effective argumentation and decision making.

Class format:

- **Class periods:** these will consist of lecture, discussion, and group problem-solving exercises requiring your participation. You are expected to complete the assigned reading before each class. I will ask you questions during lecture to help you think about and understand the reading material. I will sometimes ask questions of the whole class and sometimes ask questions of individual students.
- If you use your **electronic devices** to do non-class activities, this may distract other students as well as you. Therefore, I request that you not use any electronic devices for non-class activities during lecture.
- **Preview questions:** Before each class, I will put a set of preview questions on Canvas. These questions tell you what to focus on in the readings. They are like a study guide for the projects and test that will be based on the reading. I recommend that you read the preview questions for each reading before you do the reading and try to answer the questions while you read.
- **IMPORTANT: The goal of this class is for you to learn better ways to find out the truth, not better ways to win arguments.** You will learn about a set of reasoning techniques that can be applied in a wide variety of everyday situations, from personal to scientific to political decisions and beliefs. This

means that sometimes we will be talking about controversial questions that people feel strongly about. The goal of this class is for you to learn **HOW** to discuss these important questions productively. The goal is **NOT** for any class members (including the teacher) to convince anyone that his or her particular take on controversy X is correct.

Communication via email

- I will send out important announcements about class regularly by email. I will do this using your Clemson email address which is based on your Clemson userID. So make sure that that email address is working and that you check it regularly, at least between every class.

<u>Evaluations</u>	<u>% of final grade</u>	<u>topic</u>	<u>due date</u>
Evaluation 1 (individual project)	22	belief bias; signal detection; other topics	2/6 5 PM
Evaluation 2 (individual project)	22	credibility	2/27 5 PM
Evaluation 3 (in-class, closed book/notes test)	22	causal reasoning; argumentation; decision making	3/31 in class
Final evaluation (small group project)	34	to be determined	4/29 3 PM

Grading Scale/Rubric

All evaluations will be graded on a 0-100 scale.

Your **final weighted average** (on 0-100 scale) for the course will be:

$$(0.22 \times \text{eval1}) + (0.22 \times \text{eval2}) + (0.22 \times \text{eval3}) + (0.34 \times \text{finaleval})$$

If your final weighted average is 89.5-100, your course grade is A;

if 79.5-89.5, grade is B; if 69.5-79.5, grade is C; if 59.5-69.5, grade is D; if < 59.5, grade is F.

Attendance:

- Attendance at **ALL classes** is **strongly recommended**. You will be working on group and individual projects for grades. If you don't come to class much, you might end up not being able to contribute to the work of a project.
- If Dr. Gugerty has not arrived by 10 minutes after the start of class, you may assume that that class has been cancelled.

Policy concerning late assignments:

- This applies to all evaluations listed in the evaluations section:
 - If your assignment is 1 day late (i.e., 0 to 24 hours late), 10 points (on a 0-100 scale) will be deducted.
 - If your assignment is 2 days late (i.e., 24 to 48 hours late), 20 points will be deducted.
 - If your assignment is 3 days late, 30 points will be deducted.
 - If your assignment is 4 days late, 50 points will be deducted.
 - If your assignment is 5 days late, 70 points will be deducted.
 - If your assignment is 6 or more days late, 100 points will be deducted → score is 0.
- If you give me an acceptable reason why your evaluation will be late and do it **BEFORE** the evaluation is due, then I will consider adjusting these penalties.

Academic Integrity:

As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson's vision of this institution as a "high seminary of learning." Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form.

Academic Continuity Plan for this Class:

Clemson has developed an academic continuity plan for academic operations. Should University administration officially determine that the physical classroom facility is not available, class will be conducted in a virtual (online) format. The **University issues official disruption notifications** through email/ www/ test notification / social media. When notified, use one of the following links to navigate to Clemson Canvas, where you will find important information about how we will conduct class:

- Primary access link: www.clemson.edu/canvas
- Secondary access link, if needed: <https://clemson.instructure.com/>
- You can also use the Canvas Student App.

If you receive an official disruption notification, you will also receive an **email from Dr. Gugerty** describing the online activities that you should do.