LGC 100 (S50) — Introduction to Practical Logic

Fall 2005 First Nations University of Canada, Saskatoon Campus

Time / Location:  Tues. 6:00 – 8:45 / Room 107

Instructor:  William Buschert <will.buschert@usask.ca>

Office:  At FNUC, Saskatoon: Room L2, Mezzanine Level
At U of S: TR 9-4 (across Campus Drive from Arts, beside Health Sciences, at the University of Saskatchewan), 966-6955

Office Hours:  At FNUC, Saskatoon: Tues 5:30 – 6:00
At U of S: Wed. and Thurs. 2:30-3:30, or by appointment

Course Web Site:  http://duke.usask.ca/~wjb289/LGC100


Per FNUC’s new policy, this text is available for purchase at Turning the Tide book store, 525 11th Street East (at Broadway), 955-3070.

You should obtain your own copy of the textbook—it will be much more difficult for you to succeed in the course if you do not. For students who absolutely cannot afford the textbook, several copies have been placed on reserve in the Library, but working from the reserve copy is a poor second to having your own, especially when doing homework exercises.

Additional readings and some materials used in class (e.g., overheads) may be made available on the course web site.

Calendar Description

“Introduction to the theory and practice of correct reasoning. Topics covered may include: fallacies in ordinary language, theories of definition, recognition and analysis of arguments, methods of deduction.”  (University of Regina Undergraduate Calendar)

Overview

As its name suggests, this is a course in practical logic. We will be taking the “practical” aspect of practical logic seriously in several respects. For one thing, we will be looking at not only the basics of logical inference and the formal aspects of reasoning (as you might encounter in an introductory course in symbolic logic), but also various topics related to the acceptability of premises and the material aspects of reasoning (as you might encounter in a course entitled “informal logic” or “critical thinking”). This wide focus is deliberate in that the study of logic can be of great practical value, not just in academic problem solving, but also in day to day life. Inferences and arguments arise in all sorts of contexts and this course will provide you with some of the knowledge and skills necessary to identify, evaluate, and construct them. Being able to do
these things is part of what theorists in informal logic sometimes call “logical self-defence.” Attaining some skill in the art of logical self-defence is one of the main goals of the course. In this respect you may find that this is one of the most useful and important courses that you take at university.

But practical logic is also practical in that, like any skill, it involves practice. You cannot learn logic simply by listening to lectures or reading a book. Instead, like learning mathematics or a second language, you can learn logic only by doing it. This is especially true of the more formal topics in elementary categorical and propositional logic that we will encounter toward the middle of the term. Accordingly, I strongly recommend that students complete all of the exercise sets that follow each section in the text. And by ‘completing’ the exercises I mean not simply looking them over or doing them ‘in your head’, but actually writing out answers on paper. Some of these exercises will be taken up in class and/or handed in for grading; some will not (see Course Requirements and Evaluation, below). But you will learn best—and be much better prepared for the exams—if you take every opportunity for practice that you can get.

Learning Objectives

When you have successfully completed this course, you should be able to:

- Identify and distinguish various forms of good and bad reasoning
- Identify and explain basic logical concepts such as validity, soundness, and consistency
- Identify common fallacies in formal arguments and informal reasoning
- Translate, formalize, and evaluate relatively simple arguments in categorical and/or propositional form
- Identify, evaluate, and construct relatively simple inductive and analogical arguments
- Construct good arguments of your own and critically assess those of others

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Your grade in the course will be calculated as follows

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<tr>
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<th>Weight A</th>
<th>Weight B</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textbook Exercises</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>In-class, unannounced</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class Group Exercises</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>In-class, unannounced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam # 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td>October 4, 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam # 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>November 15, 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fallacy Analysis Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Due November 22, 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>100%*</td>
<td>December 13, 2005</td>
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*If Weight A is greater than or equal to the percentage grade that you obtain on the final exam, Weight A will be your final grade for the course. If your percentage grade on the final exam is greater than your total percentage grade under Weight A, your grade on the final exam will be your grade for the course.

This policy is in place because, in my experience, some students initially find topics in categorical and propositional logic to be quite challenging, but come to recognize that they get easier with practice. In other words, if you don’t do as well as you would like on Exam #2 and/or on the later textbook and in-class exercises, you will have an opportunity to make good on the final. This policy should not be understood as invitation to neglect other course requirements, however.
**Textbook Exercises:** Once or twice during the term, at the instructor’s discretion, you will be asked to hand in answers to the textbook exercises for the previous class. Answers to those questions for which no answers are provided in the textbook will be graded and returned to you the following week. You do not need to write out answers for questions answered in the back of the textbook—these are identified with an asterisk (*).

**Group Exercises:** Once or twice during the term, at the instructor’s discretion, the class will be divided into groups and given a set of exercise questions. Working collectively, each group will produce one set of answers for each question. Each group’s answers will be graded and the grade assigned to each group’s answers will be recorded for each member of the group.

**Exam #1:** A 50 minute in-class examination covering chapters 1 through 6 in the Govier text and consisting of matching, multiple choice, and short answer questions.

**Exam #2:** A 50 minute in-class examination covering chapters 7 through 9 in the Govier text and consisting of matching, multiple choice, and short answer questions.

**Fallacy Assignment:** A short written assignment (2-3 pages) critically analysing fallacious reasoning that the student has identified in, e.g., newspaper articles, advertisements, or political pamphlets. Further instructions for this assignment will be handed out in class early in the term.

**Final Exam:** A three hour exam covering the entire course, but with extra emphasis on topics covered from Exam # 1 onward. The exam will consist of matching, multiple choice, and short answer exercise questions of the sort found in the textbook.

Obviously, the grades in the chart above add up to 100%. You should not conclude from this, however, that other things, such as attendance and participation in class, do not matter. Some material discussed in class will supply details not covered in the readings, details that you may find very helpful when writing the exams and/or the analysis assignment. Moreover, active participation in class can’t help but improve your understanding of the material and my impression of you as a student.

*In the event that any changes to the course schedule, content, or due dates become necessary, such changes will decided on in class in consultation with those students who are present. Students who are absent when such decisions are made are nonetheless bound by those decisions. Students should check the course web site from time to time for updates.*

**Policy on Late Assignments and Missed Exams**

Assignments must be handed in in class on the day that they are due. If, for whatever reason, you cannot hand in your assignment at that time, an assignment date-stamped at the third floor reception desk by 4:30 PM the next day will be deemed to have arrived on time. Thereafter it will be deemed late. Late assignments will not be accepted and will be assigned a grade of 0. If you miss any one in-class group exercise or any one occasion on which textbook exercises are collected (see above), your grade for the group exercises and/or textbook exercises will be calculated from those that you do complete (i.e., you can be absent from one group exercise or
one collection of textbook exercises without penalty). Missed exams will result in a grade of 0. Exceptions to these rules will be considered only in cases of serious personal distress (e.g., illness) that are supported with appropriate documentation (e.g., a doctor’s note).

**Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism**

Academic misconduct includes cheating or any form of dishonest or deceptive conduct by which an individual or group of individuals uses unauthorized aids or assistance or methods in the completion of academic work. Plagiarism is a specific form of academic misconduct which includes any occasion on which you present someone else’s thinking, writing or data as your own. Whether or not it is done intentionally, such conduct is a form of dishonesty in so far as it ends up either deceiving me and/or conferring an unfair advantage over other students. So don’t do it.

Also, be advised that I do follow up on cases of suspected academic misconduct. All such cases will be referred to the Dean; serious cases may subsequently be referred to the Council Discipline Committee.

The University policy on Student Behaviour and Academic Misconduct can be found in section 5.14 of the University of Regina Undergraduate Calendar:

http://www.uregina.ca/gencal/ugcal2005/ugcal2005-06.html#P2900_162313

I suggest that you read this, paying special attention to the list of available penalties.

**Students with Disabilities**

If you require any special accommodations due to a disability, please let me know as early as possible in the term so that we can make appropriate arrangements.