

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **AP/MODR 1760F SU16 BLEN Reasoning about Morality and Values: Critical Thinking Skills for Everyday Life -- A Role Playing Game, Choose Your Own Adventure Course**

Room 002, Accolade East Building  
Monday & Wednesday – 11:30 am – 2:30 pm  
Beginning on Monday, May 9, 2016

#### **Course Instructor Contact:**

Cael Cohen, PhD  
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#### **Calendar Description:**

This course uses examples drawn from areas of thought where value judgments are made. Different sections will stress different topics in ethics, aesthetics, religion or law. Note: This is an approved LA&PS General Education course: Humanities PRIOR TO FALL 2009: Course credit exclusion: AK/MODR 1760 6.00.

**Prerequisite / Co-requisite:** None

#### **Required Course Text / Readings**

You cannot pass this course without doing the required reading, and you cannot pass the course by only doing the reading and not attending class. You are required to complete the weekly reading before coming to class. You WILL LOSE experience points and reputation points for not doing the reading before class. Required reading is available for purchase from the York University Bookstore. Not every source is needed for each class. Every week, you should check the weekly lecture schedule in the “Course User’s Manual” for the weekly required readings. Readings are also available on 2-hour reserve at Scott Library.

There are 2 required books for this course:

- (1) Custom Book published by Nelson Education. ISBN: 978 0176 77 33 11.
- (2) Gilbert, M. (2014). *Arguing with People*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press. ISBN: 978 1 55481 170 0.

## Expanded Course Description

This is a skills-based, critical thinking course that teaches:

- a collection of critical skills, practices, techniques, attitudes and principles that can be used every day to systematically evaluate your own and others' reasoning about morality and values;
- an approach to ethical disagreements and controversial moral issues using rational standards and mindfulness awareness;
- critical assessment and formulation of ethical beliefs, arguments, and concepts based on relevant, acceptable and sufficient grounds, rather than passive acceptance.

This course will teach you critical thinking skills that can help you:

- Make more thoughtful and reflective decisions.
- Increase your ability to assess situations and act in a way that reflects your reasoned assessment and choices.
- Understand the world more clearly.
- Clarify confusing ideas.
- Analyze reasons and claims.
- Evaluate the quality of claims and arguments.
- Gain a better understanding of who you are by enhancing your autonomy, what you believe, and who you can become.
- Give you more control of your life by grounding your understanding, decisions, and actions on reason rather than merely on a gut feeling, habit or social convention.
- Read for meaning better and systematically assess what you read.
- Think more independently.
- Formulate stronger, more convincing arguments that depend on relevant, sufficient and acceptable reasons.

## Organization of the Course

### **Blended Learning ▪ Gamification ▪ Customizable Learning Experience**

- Each class is approximately 2 hours and 50 minutes in length with a 10-15 minute break.
- Classes consist of mini-lectures, lecture participation assignments, and small group work. Since this course is a double-time, accelerated summer version of a 6.0 credit course taught in 4 months, instead of 8 months, students will have to attend classes and complete various assignments and tasks twice a week. To be clear, there are 2 classes per week. These are labelled in this course outline and the more detailed "Course User's Manual" as, for example, week 1A and week 1B, signifying class session 1

and 2, respectively. Weekly course materials will be posted twice a week before class, as per the “Course User’s Manual” weekly class schedule.

- Mandatory “Moodle” course site: <https://moodle.yorku.ca>.
- Mandatory “Tophat” subscription and use. This course uses a Bring Your Own Device to class technology called “Tophat”: [www.tophat.com](http://www.tophat.com). Tophat allows students to submit their lecture participation assignments and homework using their phones, tablets and laptops. Mandatory weekly lecture exercises and homework to be submitted to Tophat, a web-based application professors use to easily create an interactive, deep learning experience.

This course is taught using what is called “gamification” and a partially customizable learning experience in a unique “Role Playing Game, Choose Your Own Adventure” format.

1. **Blended Learning:** This course is taught using a mandatory “Moodle” course site: <https://moodle.yorku.ca>. York defines blended learning as ‘hybrid’ learning, class time is a combination of face-to-face and online delivery. Face-to-face instruction is replaced by online instruction for one third of the course. In this course, 7 classes are fully online. In other words, as per the weekly lecture schedule in the “Course User’s Manual.” Students are not required to attend in-person in the weeks listed below. Instead, students will be required to complete course work online. To be clear, students do NOT show up in person for the following 7 classes: weeks 3, 7A, 7B, 9B, 11A, 12A and 12B.
2. **Gamification:** Gamification is the application of game-design elements and game principles in non-game contexts; for example, in education, learning and the classroom setting. This course is gamified in 2 ways:
  - (1) The learning in this course involves playing games. Students will play a variety of games almost every week of the course, including tournaments, scavenger hunts, and online video games. Students gain “Experience Points” and “Reputation Points” instead of traditional “participation marks”, and “Skill Points towards “levels of skill” in the game for completing “Side Quests” and “Learning Quests” on their own, independently, and in Guilds or learning teams.
  - (2) This course is designed and delivered in the context of a science fiction, fantasy, role-playing game situated in, or surrounded by, “lore” or background story. The professor is an alien, named Criticare, Leader of a Resistance Alliance, from the planet Propagandus. Students play themselves as Resistance Rebels being trained as members of a Special Operations Unit to save Earth from being taken over by Propagandan aliens and to prevent humans from being brainwashed. The Moodle course site is called “Command Centre.” The basic course information section of the Moodle site is called “Supplies Barracks.” The section of the Moodle site containing the weekly class materials

(such as Powerpoint slides, videos, supporting lecture materials, and so on) is called the “Training Hub.” Small learning groups in the course are called “Guild Platoons.” The private, dedicated discussion rooms for learning groups on the Moodle site are called “Guild Platoon Halls.” See the following video presentation for more information:

[http://carlin.uit.yorku.ca/faculty/relay/2015-16Year/cmcohen/APMODR1760E/Tour\\_of\\_the\\_SU16\\_Course\\_-\\_20160404\\_224349\\_5.html](http://carlin.uit.yorku.ca/faculty/relay/2015-16Year/cmcohen/APMODR1760E/Tour_of_the_SU16_Course_-_20160404_224349_5.html). Also email the professor

[cmcohen@yorku.ca] for a copy of the comprehensive “Course User’s Manual” that outlines in much detail the role playing game structure of this course, or, alternatively, download a copy of this manual from the Moodle course site.

3. **Customizable Learning Experience** is delivered through a Choose Your Own Adventure format: Students can customize their learning experience by structuring the course around moral topics and issues that interest them. At the beginning of each of the 4 modules of the course, students will choose one moral topic and one issue concerning their chosen moral topic of interest to explore from a provided list, or choose one not on the list. Students also chose one affective (attitudinal or emotional) disposition or habit that they wish to improve or cultivate from a provided list in each module. Students will tailor assignment topics to their chosen moral topics and issues that interest them.

### **Course Learning Objectives**

This is a 4-module course with the following learning objectives:

Module 1: Arguments ▪ Level 1 of Role Playing Game ▪ Weeks 1A-7B ▪ Apprentice Critical Thinker → Teaches the fundamental skills and analytical techniques involved in argument analysis, including: clarifying meaning; identifying, portraying and assessing non-deductive arguments; and identifying and neutralizing different kinds of fallacies.

Module 2: Concepts ▪ Level 2 of Role Playing Game ▪ Weeks 8A-9B ▪ Adept Critical Thinker → Learn to identify, analyze and assess concepts in ordinary contexts. Use the techniques of reasoning by cases, similarities and differences, and conjectures and refutations to analyze cases and develop criteria for the meaning of concepts.

Module 3: Passage Analysis ▪ Level 3 of Role Playing Game ▪ Weeks 10A-11A ▪ Expert Critical Thinker ▪ Analyze and assess extended arguments within a written passage by applying the skills learned in Levels 1 and 2.

Module 4: Argumentation ▪ Level 4 of Role Playing Game ▪ Weeks 11B-12B ▪ Master Critical Thinker ▪ Module 4 examines and explores the dynamic process

of verbal argumentation with others, including: constructing and presenting arguments, and challenging and responding to those challenges in an ongoing dialogue. Some core patterns that help define the key features of an ideal argumentation encounter are examined.

### **Technology Needed to Do Complete This Course**

- Subscription to Top Hat. <https://tophat.com/>.
  - 888-663-5491. (See above for more information.)
- Cell phone, tablet, laptop or computer.
- Twitter account.
- York Moodle account.
- Ability to access the internet.

### **Weighting of Course: Cumulative Skills Based**

All assignments, homework and lecture participation assignments are submitted electronically to the Moodle course site.

**Module 1 Cumulative Skills Take-Home Test → 15% of final mark** or 15 Skill Points towards levelling up in role playing game. **Due before Monday, June 29. Submit online to Moodle course site.** Tests the application of skills learned in module 1 of course, includes: identifying topics, positions and issues; neutralizing prejudicial and emotive language; putting arguments into standard argument form; assessing the four most common kinds of non-deductive arguments; neutralizing informal logical fallacies. Completed independently, without collaboration with others. Questions posted on June 22, 9:00 am, to the Moodle course site. Assignment involves looking up some content online for answering the questions. Review class and practice test with answers will be provided week before due date.

**Module 2 Conceptual Analysis Assignment → 10% of final mark** or 10 Skill Points towards levelling up in role playing game. **Final copy of assignment submitted online to Moodle course site before Monday, July 18.** Tests the application of skills learned in module 2. Completed in groups. Group mark assigned, including peer review component to mark. To be completed in pre-assigned groups during weeks 8A to 9B, June 27 to July 6. Students choose their own assignment topics.

**Module 3 Passage Analysis Assignment → 15% of final mark** or 15 Skill Points towards levelling up in role playing game. **Due before Monday, June 29. Submit online to Moodle course site.** Draws on skills learned in module 1 and 2. Tests the application of a 4-step passage analysis process taught in module 3.

Complete all 4 steps taught in class for a passage that the student chooses themselves, and with instructor's permission. Completed independently, without collaboration with others. Questions posted on June 22, 9:00 am, to the Moodle course site.

**Module 4 Assessing the Dynamics of Verbal Argumentation Assignment → 10% of final mark** or 10 Skill Points towards levelling up in role playing game. **Final copy of assignment submitted online to Moodle course site before July 27.** Completed in groups. Group mark assigned, including peer review component to mark. To be completed in pre-assigned groups during weeks 11B to 12B, July 20 to July 25. Students choose their own assignment topics. Students answer 7 questions about a video containing a verbal process of argumentation.

**Weekly homework → 10% of final mark.** Assigned in modules 1, 2 and 3. No homework in module 4. Called "Side Quests" in the role playing game.

**Participation → 40% of final mark.**

The participation marks are earned by playing weekly games and completing weekly tasks that are relevant to the role playing game structure.

- **20% for gaining Experience Points.** Experience Points are a kind of participation mark that you can gain by completing weekly lecture participation tasks and assignments throughout this course. Experience points are measurement units that correspond to critical thinking (CT) Cognitive Skills and Sub-Skills and the Affective Dispositions of Critical Thinking. (See lists in "Course User's Manual.") The amount of Experience Points gained in each module of the course is converted into a mark out of a percent of student's final mark, as follows:
  - **Module 1 = Level 1 of the game:** Arguments – Apprentice Level Critical Thinker = weeks 1A – 7B. Number of Experience Points gained out of possible total 497 points converted into a mark out of 10%.
  - **Module 2 = Level 2 of the game:** Concepts – Adept Critical Thinker = weeks 8A – 9B. Number of Experience Points gained out of possible 130 points converted into a mark out of 4%.
  - **Module 3 = Level 3 of the game:** Text Passage Analysis – Expert Critical Thinker = weeks 10A – 11A. Number of Experience Points gained out of possible 52 points converted into a mark out 4%.
  - **Module 4 = Level 4 of the game:** Verbal Argumentation – Master Critical Thinker = weeks 11B – 12B. Number of Experience Points out of possible 22 points converted to a mark out of 2%
  
- **20% for gaining Reputation Points.** are a second kind of participation mark you can gain through being involved in this course. Reputation

Points reflect your amount of involvement in the course, or Special Operations in the role playing game, the degree to which you are involved in saving the world in the game. The more you participate, the more you gain a reputation as a critical thinker, a reputation for being someone who cares about saving the world from mind control. The amount of Reputation Points gained in each module of the course is converted into a mark out of a percent of student's final mark, as follows:

- **Module 1 = Level 1 of the game:** Arguments – Apprentice Level Critical Thinker = weeks 1A – 7B. Number of Reputation Points gained out of possible total 198 points converted into a mark out of 10%.
- **Module 2 = Level 2 of the game:** Concepts – Adept Critical Thinker = weeks 8A – 9B. Number of Reputation Points gained out of possible 44 points converted into a mark out of 4%.
- **Module 3 = Level 3 of the game:** Text Passage Analysis – Expert Critical Thinker = weeks 10A – 11A. Number of Reputation Points gained out of possible 42 points converted into a mark out 4%.
- **Module 4 = Level 4 of the game:** Verbal Argumentation – Master Critical Thinker = weeks 11B – 12B. Number of Reputation Points out of possible 31 points converted to a mark out of 2%

**There are 5 Reputation Standings that you can earn:**

- **Neutral.** If you gain 0 to 59% of all possible Reputation Points at a given level of the game, then you will earn a Neutral Reputation status due to lack of involvement in the training and Special Operations.
- **Friendly.** If you gain 60 to 69% of all possible Reputation Points at a given level of the game, then you will earn a Friendly Reputation status due to very little involvement in the training and Special Operations.
- **Honored.** If you gain between 70 to 79% of all possible Reputation Points at a given level of the game, then you will earn an Honored Reputation status due to much involvement in the training and Special Operations. Reaching the status of Honored Reputation earns your name a place on the Reputation Leaderboard.
- **Revered.** If you gain 80 to 89% of all possible Reputation Points at a given level of the game and earn a Revered Reputation status, then your name will be added to the Reputation Leaderboard and you win the ability to be exempt from having to do some of the training that other Resistance Rebels will need to complete. For example, if you have a Revered Reputation, then you can skip Phase 1 of the Level 1 Individual Learning Quest and jump to Phase 2, but still earn the same Skill Points.

**Weekly Class Schedule:** See the “Course User’s Manual” for weekly lecture topics, readings, games, Side Quests, tasks and so on.