

PH146-15 Reason, Argument and Analysis

21/22

Department

Philosophy

Level

Undergraduate Level 1

Module leader

Barnaby Walker

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

PH146 - Reason, Argument and Analysis

Module aims

The aim of this module is to help students to identify, evaluate and criticise arguments in complex texts and help students to develop their own arguments which are well reasoned through a scaffold approach to learning. The module will cover common patterns of good and bad forms of reasoning, philosophical methods and help students to develop argumentative strategies in order to strengthen their ability to form convincing and robust arguments for themselves. These philosophical skills will be developed through applying them to issues in applied ethics (such as abortion, euthanasia, war, climate crisis, genetic engineering).

The module has been designed to help students develop the skills they need to prepare them for their degree and enable them to fulfil their philosophical potential. The skills acquired on this course will serve as a foundation to all other philosophy modules and will help students to take a robust philosophical approach to their studies. The module is designed to help students work independently during the course of their degree, building valuable reading, analysis of argument

and writing skills. The module will also help students to identify the transferable skills at the heart of their study of philosophy. The module will also serve as a foundation to Logic 1 as well as introducing topics in applied moral philosophy.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

We rely on our ability to reason and justify our beliefs in every aspect of our lives. We don't just want to reason well for our own sake but we also want to challenge the attitudes and thinking of others in a positive way. However, human beings are often bad at doing this; we are surrounded by examples of bad reasoning that has the power to infect our ability to think clearly and rationally. For example, the misleading advertisements promising to transform our lives that convince us to buy something we don't need, or the irrelevant personal attacks made during debates that lead us to doubt the concrete evidence presented. Through weekly exercises, you will develop the art of persuasion by practising the necessary skills for good quality philosophical argument. By focusing on key issues in moral philosophy, we will see how these skills are applied to philosophical debate.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Identify and reconstruct arguments into standard form, deploying acquired logical and interpretative skills
- Accurately deploy concepts of argument evaluation
- Understand how to go about close-reading philosophical texts
- Deploy skills of argument identification reconstruction and evaluation to the understanding and assessment of arguments presented in philosophical works
- Fruitfully and efficiently utilise the library and other available research resources, e.g., e-journals, in conducting independent research
- Apply these skills to philosophical arguments in applied ethics
- Present philosophical argument and ideas in a clear and concise way, both orally and in written form, and respond to criticism of philosophical argument
- Employ research, presentation, logical, and interpretative skills gained on the course.
- Work effectively as part of a group on a joint project

Indicative reading list

Core text: Understanding Arguments: An Introduction to Informal Logic (Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin).

We will draw on some of the following in providing examples and as the focus of applying philosophical skills:

Daniels, N. (1979) "Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics", *Journal of Philosophy* 76(5): 256–82.

- DePaul, M. (2005), "Intuitions and Moral Inquiry", in D. Copp (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: ch. 21.
- Galliot, Jai (2012) 'Uninhabited Aerial Vehicles and the Asymmetry Objection: A Response to Strawser'. *Journal of Military Ethics* 11, 1: 58-66.
- Glover, J. (1977) *Causing Death and Saving Lives*. London: Pelican Books: Part I ("Problems and Methods").
- Kagan, S. (2001) "Thinking About Cases", *Social Philosophy and Policy* 18(2): 44–63.
- Kilmister, S. (2008) 'Remote Weaponry: The Ethical Implications'. *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 25, 2: 121-133.
- Philippa Foot (2002). 'Killing and Letting Die', in *Moral Dilemmas: and Other Topics in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon).
- Liao, S. Matthew (2005). The ethics of using genetic engineering for sex selection. *Journal of Medical Ethics* 31 (2):116-118.
- Marquis, Don (1989). Why abortion is immoral. *Journal of Philosophy* 86 (4):183-202
- McMahan, J. (2006), *Killing in War*. (Oxford Scholarship Online) Chapter 1 and 2.
- McMahan, J. and Bradley J. Strawser (eds.) (2013), *Killing By Remote Control: The Ethics of an Unmanned Military*. OUP.
- McMahan, J. (2000) "Moral Intuition", in H. LaFollette (ed.), *Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, ch. 5.
- Moller, D. (2011) "Abortion and Moral Risk", *Philosophy* 86: 425-443.
- Rachels, James (1986). *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. Monograph Collection (Matt - Pseudo)
- Rachels, J (1975) "Active and Passive Euthanasia", in P. Singer and H. Kuhse (eds.), *Bioethics* (Blackwell, 1999), ch. 24. Originally appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine* 292 (1975), pp. 78-80, and widely reprinted.
- Rachels, James (2001). Killing and letting die. In Lawrence C. Becker Mary Becker & Charlotte Becker (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, 2nd Edition. Routledge
- Savulescu, J. and Kahane, G. (2009) "The Moral Obligation to Create Children with the Best Chance of the Best Life", *Bioethics* 23(5): 274-290.
- Sparrow, R. (2011) "A Not-So-New Eugenics", *Hastings Centre Report* 41(1): 32-42.
- Shafer-Landau, Russ (1995). Vagueness, Borderline Cases and Moral Realism. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1):83 - 96.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter (2006). *Moral Skepticisms*. Oxford University Press.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter (1996). Moral Skepticism and Justification. In Walter Sinnott-Armstrong & Mark Timmons (eds.), *Moral Knowledge? New Readings in Moral Epistemology*. Oxford University Press

Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter (1999). Explanation and Justification in Moral Epistemology. The Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy 1:117-127.

Strawser, Bradley (2010), 'Moral Predators: The Duty to Employ Uninhabited Aerial Vehicles'. Journal of Military Ethics 9, 4: 342-368.

Thomson, Judith Jarvis (1971). A defense of abortion. Philosophy and Public Affairs 1 (1):47-66

Thomson, J. J. (1985) "The Trolley Problem", Yale Law Journal 94(6): 1395-1415.

Velleman, D.J. (1999). 'A Right of Self-Termination?', Ethics (109, 3), pp.606-628.

Velleman, D.J. (1992). 'Against the right to die', Journal of Medicine and Philosophy (17:6), pp.665-681.

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Research element

Students are provided with research training (delivered by colleagues from the library) and are required to complete a short literature review on a potential essay topic.

International

We consider topics in applied ethics that are of global concern e.g. climate crisis and ethics of war.

Subject specific skills

- Researching philosophical topics
- Understanding a range of philosophical tools and methods, e.g. standard form, argument maps, argument by analogy, narratives
- Understanding the ways in which philosophers use the variety of tools and methods in applied ethics
- Close-reading of philosophical texts
- Understanding how to critically evaluate philosophical argument (including concepts of validity and soundness)

Transferable skills

- Work effectively in a group
 - Effective oral presentation skills (presenting complex arguments clearly and concisely)
 - Using research tools and referencing accurately
 - Analysing and evaluating complex arguments
 - Summarising complex texts
 - Understanding the value of philosophy for other domains
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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	8 sessions of 2 hours (11%)
Private study	125 hours (83%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A3

Assessment component	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Oral Presentation Delivered in pairs	20%		No
Reassessment component is the same			
Literature Review	20%		Yes (extension)

Weighting

Study time

Eligible for self-certification

Locate sources on a topic of choice (providing accurate bibliographical information and sample references), and provide a brief explanation for the inclusion of each source. Students will be assessed for key skills in researching and referencing sources.

Reassessment component is the same

Assessment component

Written Assignment (3000 words) 60%

Yes (extension)

Students will be put in pairs to write two 1,500 word essays which argue for contrasting points of view on a question in applied ethics. Although each student will take responsibility for one of the essays, it is understood that they will discuss their essays together and, if appropriate, respond to one another's arguments. The essays will be marked individually.

Reassessment component is the same

Feedback on assessment

- Formative: Students will have the opportunity to get feedback on a draft version of their presentation and on plans of their essays. They will also receive feedback on one draft literature review entry.
- Summative: Written feedback will be provided on the presentation, literature review, and essays.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy

This module is Core optional for:

- UCXA-Q82P Undergraduate Classical Civilisation
 - Year 1 of Q82P Classical Civilisation (Part-Time)
 - Year 2 of Q82P Classical Civilisation (Part-Time)
- Year 1 of UIPA-V5L8 Undergraduate Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development

- Year 1 of UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
- Year 1 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- Year 1 of USTA-G300 Undergraduate Master of Mathematics, Operational Research, Statistics and Economics
- Year 1 of USTA-G1G3 Undergraduate Mathematics and Statistics (BSc MMathStat)
- Year 1 of USTA-GG14 Undergraduate Mathematics and Statistics (BSc)
- Year 1 of USTA-Y602 Undergraduate Mathematics, Operational Research, Statistics and Economics
- Year 1 of UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
- Year 1 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 1 of UMAA-G100 Undergraduate Mathematics (BSc)
- UMAA-G103 Undergraduate Mathematics (MMath)
 - Year 1 of G100 Mathematics
 - Year 1 of G103 Mathematics (MMath)
- Year 1 of UMAA-G106 Undergraduate Mathematics (MMath) with Study in Europe
- Year 1 of UMAA-G1NC Undergraduate Mathematics and Business Studies
- Year 1 of UMAA-G1N2 Undergraduate Mathematics and Business Studies (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 1 of UMAA-GL11 Undergraduate Mathematics and Economics
- Year 1 of UECA-GL12 Undergraduate Mathematics and Economics (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 1 of UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 1 of UMAA-G101 Undergraduate Mathematics with Intercalated Year