

PH146-15 Reason, Argument and Analysis

26/27

Department

Philosophy

Level

Undergraduate Level 1

Module leader

Lorenzo Serini

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

Multiple

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the ability to reason about arguments in our lives. We rely on this ability to justify our beliefs, challenge the views of others, make informed decisions, and persuade one another. We are more or less constantly confronted with claims, reasons, and efforts to persuade, from everyday conversations and social media to political debates and advertising campaigns. Arguments—both good and bad—shape how we think, how we act, and how we live together. Beyond our personal lives, they determine guilt or innocence in courts of law, drive political debates, influence public opinion, inform policymaking, and advance research in universities. Reasoning and argumentation skills make us critical thinkers and can help us navigate and, potentially, have an impact on a complex world marked by diverse perspectives and deep disagreements. By giving our reasons, we can persuade others or, at least, make our views better understood. By listening and trying to understand others' reasons, we can better understand their views and even be persuaded by them. This exchange of reasons—provided it remains civil—can be a powerful tool for increasing mutual understanding and even fostering cooperation.

The ability to reason about arguments is also central to philosophy. As a philosophy student, you will wrestle with arguments throughout your degree. Indeed, reason, argument, and analysis are key components of the philosophy essays you will write. This module is designed to equip you with

core philosophical skills that will set you on the pathway to thrive in your course—and beyond. Each week, you will engage in a one-hour lecture and a two-hour workshop, in which you will develop and practice reasoning and argumentation skills through exercises, teamwork, and discussion. You will learn how to analyse, evaluate, and construct philosophical arguments with real-world applications. You will also develop and practice research and essay writing skills, including how to utilise the library and other resources in your assignments. Moreover, these are transferable skills that, as mentioned, will prove useful not only in your academic studies but also in everyday life and a wide range of professional contexts. Focusing on the practice and enhancement of these skills, this module embodies the Warwick Values and counts toward the Warwick Award, supporting your personal, academic, and professional growth throughout your degree.

Module aims

Cover the fundamentals of informal logic, especially what arguments are, as well as argument analysis and evaluation

Cultivate students' skills in the analysis, evaluation and construction of arguments in philosophy

Address interesting philosophical issues with real-world application

Identify and evaluate philosophical methodologies and techniques

Cultivate students' skills in research and essay writing

Develop students' ability to engage critically and independently with philosophical works, enabling them to form and articulate their own views and arguments on the topics

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.

Unlike the majority of philosophy modules, this module consists of one-hour lectures and two-hour workshops. This split reflects its emphasis on developing and practicing philosophical skills.

In the first part of the module (weeks 1-3), we will start by thinking about what philosophy is and about its value as a discipline. Having established the central role of argument in philosophy as well as in our lives, we will cover the fundamentals of informal logic (i.e. the study of reasoning and argumentation in everyday natural language). In particular, we will focus on what arguments are and on how to identify, reconstruct, analyse, evaluate and construct them.

In the second part of the module (weeks 4-5, weeks 7-10), we will then consider arguments in the philosophical debate on a variety of topics with 'real-world' applications. These may include euthanasia, abortion, genetic engineering, and climate change, among other topics that are both philosophically interesting and relevant to our lives. In exploring these topics, we will also look at argumentative strategies and methods that are instrumental in learning how to do philosophy.

We will discuss and practice research and essay writing skills, including how to utilise the library and other resources in your assignments (esp. in the workshops in weeks 5 and 10).

Learning outcomes

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

- Identify and reconstruct arguments into standard form and argument maps
- Evaluate arguments
- Close-read and interpret philosophical texts
- Identify, reconstruct and evaluate arguments in philosophical works
- Utilise the library and other research resources in conducting independent research
- Reference appropriately
- Present philosophical arguments and ideas in a clear and concise way
- Demonstrate written communication skills through the completion of assignments
- Demonstrate oral communication skills through active participation in learning sessions and presentations
- Work effectively as part of a group on a joint project

Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

[Specific reading list for the module](#)

Research element

Students are provided with research training (delivered by colleagues from the library) and are required to complete a group research project culminating in a group oral presentation.

Subject specific skills

- Reasoning and argumentation skills (analysis, evaluation, and construction of arguments)
- Researching philosophical topics
- Close-reading and interpretation of philosophical texts
- Understanding and utilising a range of philosophical methods and techniques
- Understanding how to critically evaluate philosophical argument

Transferable skills

- Critical thinking
 - Teamwork
 - Oral presentation skills (presenting complex arguments clearly and concisely)
 - Research skills
 - Time management
 - 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 A7

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Oral Presentation Delivered in groups of 2 or 3 students	20%		No
Literature Review 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.	20%		Yes (extension)
Essay (1500) 1,500 word essay.	60%		Yes (extension)

Assessment group R1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
2500 word essay	100%		Yes (extension)

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.
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Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 2 of UCXA-Q82P Undergraduate Classical Civilisation
- 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 UPHA-L1CA Undergraduate Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
- Year 1 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- Year 1 of UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
- Year 1 of UPHA-VQ52 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics
- Year 1 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics

This module is Unusual option for:

- Year 1 of UPHA-L1CA Undergraduate Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
- Year 1 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics

This module is Core option list A for:

- Year 1 of UPHA-V5L2 Undergraduate Philosophy and Politics

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 1 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 1 of UMAA-G105 Undergraduate Master of Mathematics (with Intercalated Year)
- 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

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 1 of UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 1 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy