



Informal Logic: The Art of Argument

Writing Intensive Course¹

(Fall 2020-Spring 2021)

“For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize.”

—Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

“The person who says he knows what he thinks but cannot express it usually does not know what he thinks.”

—Mortimer J. Adler

“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.”

—1 Corinthians 13:1

Course Description

It is natural for us, as humans, to want to know; it is natural for us to desire the truth. And because we naturally desire the truth, because we naturally wonder about the world around us, we ask questions. It is not usually easy to discover the truth. But, when we ask good questions, we move closer and closer to discovering it. According to Aristotle, this habit of questioning is the beginning of philosophy.

Good philosophy engages in discussion that is both rigorous and charitable in the interest of revealing the truth. Philosophy requires a mind that is both open to ideas and at the same time critical of these ideas. One of the primary goals of this course is to learn how to recognize sound and unsound arguments in the language you encounter everyday, in the interest of coming to know, and then advancing, what is true. Everyday, in many forms, competing arguments and claims are offered to you about all sorts of things: everything from the kind of gum you should chew and the music you should listen to what you should aim for in life and what will make you happy. These arguments and ideas come in many different forms, including advertisements, news reels, articles, movies, and daily conversations. This course will help you move through this noisy world of competing claims and arguments as an active, critical thinker, instead of a passive consumer.

Students in this course will learn how to craft accurate statements and identify the flawed arguments found so frequently in editorials, commercials, newspapers, journals and every other media. They will grow in their ability to engage in, and even cultivate, dialogue that is at once rigorous, charitable, and aimed at the discovery of the truth.

¹ Please note: Students enrolled in this course will complete not only the text, but also several one to two page writing assignments and a longer paper at the end of the semester, thus earning this course the distinction of being a writing intensive course. Students who complete this course earn 1 high school course credit.

Instructor: Miss Coleman

Contact: ccoleman.scholeacademy@gmail.com

Class times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-10:45 a.m. (EST)

Class dates: September 8-January 21, with the exception of the holidays listed on the Scholé Academic Calendar

Office hours: TBD, also by appointment

Required Course Texts: *Art of Argument: An Introduction to the Informal Fallacies*

A Note on Work for this Course and Late Work:

Work for this course will include reading assignments, writing assignments, memorization, and preparation for in-class debates. I will post your assignments for the week on Schoology; assignments will be given to you for each of the five days of the week so that you know what to work on each day. It would be a good idea to print this weekly student lesson plan at the beginning of each week and put it into a binder, along with your notes for the course. No additional work will be assigned on the days that we meet for class, but I will include a note about what we will be doing in class that day.

You should strive to complete the assignments on-time because this will allow you to gain the most out of this class. It is your responsibility to have your assignments completed by the time they are due. If for some reason you are unable to complete an assignment by the due-date, please send me an email to let me know and include your plan for completing the work. There is no numeric penalty for turning in an assignment late. Completing the assignments late, however, means that you will fall behind in the course and this will affect both your ability to participate well in class and your ability to master the material.

COURSE MAP

Our class will follow the outline below; the pace will be adjusted as needed. Reflective and analytical writing assignments will be assigned throughout the course of the semester; in addition, in the final quarter, students will have the opportunity to use all the tools they have learned to analyze arguments as they appear in newspapers, advertisements, and other popular media.

Quarter 1

1. What is Logic?
2. Critical Thinking as a Way of Life
3. Formal vs. Informal Logic
4. Fallacies of Relevance: Ad Fontem Arguments
5. Fallacies of Relevance: Appeals to Emotion

Quarter 2

1. Fallacies of Relevance: Appeals to Emotion
2. Fallacies of Relevance: Red Herrings
3. Unit 1 Cumulative Fallacy Test
4. Fallacies of Presumption

Quarter 3

1. Fallacies of Presumption: Fallacies of Induction
2. Unit 2 Cumulative Fallacy Test
3. Fallacies of Clarity
4. Fallacies of Clarity
5. Unit 3 Cumulative Fallacy Test

Quarter 4 – Taking Logic out of the Textbook and into the Real World

1. Teacher-led Source Analysis & Teacher-led Discussion
2. Response Paper #1
3. Teacher-led Source Analysis & Teacher-led Discussion
4. Response Paper #2

5. Independent Source Research & Student-led Discussion

6. Final Essay (3 Page Paper)

How to be a Good Learner in this Class:

- ❖ Come prepared to class: come to class on-time, with the material for the day completed, ready to participate in discussion, with all the materials you need on hand (note-taking paper, a pencil, etc.)
- ❖ During class, be present - do not be eating, sleeping, or using your cell-phone
- ❖ Participate in class: ask good questions; share your thoughts; when you are not talking, be attentive to the person who is talking - give them your full attention and take the time to consider their ideas and share your thoughts in response
- ❖ Be respectful of others in the discussion; if you disagree, express your disagreement politely and carefully

- ❖ Strive for mastery of the material

Attendance

If you know that you are going to miss a class, please send me an email to let me know in advance. You will need to take the initiative to complete the material you missed (watch the video of the class and make sure you understand any material that was covered). That said, videos are no substitute for the dynamic back-and-forth of class discussion. Regular attendance is essential for learning the course material.

Contacting Miss Coleman

Please email me with any questions or concerns you have. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours of receiving your email. If there is an issue or concern that requires a lengthier conversation, we can also set up a Zoom meeting instead.

Grade Breakdown and a Note on How to think about Grades in this Class

Our primary goal in this course is to learn how to examine ideas and argue convincingly for ideas which, under examination, prove to be true. At the end of the semester, you will receive a final grade; this is, unfortunately, a necessary thing. It is important not to let the earning of a good grade become your primary goal in this course; if this becomes your main goal, you will rob yourself of the joy of learning the material. The goal is to develop skills in debate and to sharpen your mind and become as adept with each skill as you possibly can. So, when you sit down to analyze the fallacies in an advertisement, for example, do your best to push away the thought that says, 'I need to do well on this assignment so that I can get a good grade in this class'; instead think, 'What do I see in this advertisement? Does it put forth a sound argument?' and 'How is it trying to shape my mind and my desires?' Keep your bar for yourself high; strive to develop a sharp mind and a voice to be reckoned with, not merely to earn a good grade.

To the end of helping you keep your focus on learning and off grade-earning, I will not put letter grades or percentages on all of your assignments. Instead, I will give you concrete feedback on what you did well and what you need to continue working on. If you are concerned about how you are doing in the class, we can have a conversation about that.

***Participation:** 30%

Homework and Response Papers: 30%

Exams: 25%

Final Paper: 15%

*A Note on Participation - Participating actively in class will do much for you in terms of learning the course material. There are many ways to participate actively in class; answering a question that comes up in the course of discussion is just one way to participate. Other ways include asking a good question (sometimes this is a question for clarification, other times this is a more substantial question), responding to a peer's idea by expressing agreement or polite disagreement or building on what they have said. Keep in mind that when you articulate your thoughts and questions you are helping

yourself and those around you learn. If you are struggling to participate, or don't know again, this is something I would be glad to discuss with you.

*Magna Cum Laude: 95%-100% B=89% to 80% Cum Laude: 85%-94% C=79% to 70% Satis: 75-84% D=69% to 60% Non Satis: 74% and below

Academic Integrity

Students are on their honor to abide by Scholé Academy's Learning Philosophy, which assumes the personal cultivation of Student Virtues described in the Student-Parent Handbook. Additionally, plagiarism is a serious and punishable offense. Proper citation of all sources is essential to the academic endeavor. Your work should be your own. Remember to cite any source you are referring to if the information is not common knowledge or is an opinion from any other source. A plagiarized assignment will result in a failing grade.

About the Instructor:



Miss Coleman completed her undergraduate studies in English and Latin at Hillsdale College, where she was awarded a fellowship to study the life and writing of Winston Churchill. She has taught middle school and high school students in subjects ranging from Humane Letters and Scripture to Literature and Life Science. She loves creating an atmosphere where her students can experience wonder and pursue the truth together through Socratic dialogue. She has an active interest in permaculture farming and exploring the ways ecosystems work together to enhance communities. When not teaching, she enjoys playing the violin, running, reading, writing, and cooking.