

**Luther College, Department of Philosophy
Philosophy 150
Critical Thinking
Midterm Examination, Summer 2017**

KEY

Please answer all questions in each section. You have 75 minutes to complete the exam. Relax and good luck!

Part I (30%) For each of the following passages determine the likelihood of the presence of self-interested thinking, face-saving or group pressure. If it contains group pressure, determine whether it is an instance of peer pressure or appeal to popularity. (5 marks each)

1. I don't care that you have provided me 10 facts about why I should quit eating food at Wendy's. Why not try to give me 20 more? I like the food and I don't care what anyone else says. That is my right.

High likelihood of Self Interested thinking about, despite the facts, the individual does not change their position or admit that they need to think about their position. The dismissive attitude is due to a feeling of defensiveness.

2. It seems reasonable to believe that having a husband or wife, two cars, a nice house in the suburbs and a well-paying 9-5 job contributes to happiness. It works for me and it seems that it has worked for a lot of people in North America.

Students needed to identify the likelihood of both Group Pressure (appeal to popularity) and Self-Interested thinking. The reasons they give for their stance indicate it is acceptable because it works for so many people. It is also a position supported by the speaker's interest in having it true.

3. The Intelligent Design Theory gives us reason to think that the universe is not an accident but requires a creator. I cannot think of my life being meaningful without a creator.

This example of self interested thinking utilizes the person's interest in having meaning in their lives, despite evidence that might be presented to the contrary. Accepting this theory is not based on evidence but on what works for this person.

4. Most people in Regina are in favor of building a new stadium for sporting and entertainment events. Why are you not in favor of the stadium? Get with the times and have some civic pride. Your negative attitude is not helping community spirit.

This example of appeal to popularity is not to a peer group but a general group, a majority. Someone is blamed for not supporting the new stadium. It is assumed that what is popular is to be accepted. Commanding the person to get with the times and cave into what everyone thinks is clear evidence of a continuation of this pressure.

5. Tariq finds himself surrounded by a group of his peers while drinking at The Owl. Felix, someone Tariq has wanted to impress, claims, "there is nothing wrong with being selfish. Everybody does it and our society seems to be functioning just fine." His closest friend disagrees and asserts that "being selfish makes people narrow minded and boring." Tariq is pressed to decided what side he stands on.

He is not sure, though he believes that being self centred makes people less empathetic. He ends up agreeing with Felix. Felix is quick to invite him to a party that evening.

This case does not exhibit a likelihood of any of these phenomena. We do not see the peer group pressuring Tariq to agree with them. If there is any pressure here it is very slight and has a low likelihood. Pressing someone to decide where they stand is not pressure to accept what the group believes. Agreeing with Felix is not something that we know Tariq decides upon due to any self interest. It appears that he makes up his mind for himself.

6. Jasmine is a member of her high school chess club. She is popular and leads her club in points for victories and stalemates. She, however, does not like competitive chess and believes that outcomes of chess matches are not important. When 3 members of her club learn of a province wide chess tournament, they encourage her to take part. She is, they say, one of the best. The tournament offers several prizes for placing well. Jasmine resists, telling them that she has no time available to compete. She gives other excuses for not competing. Other members of the team come to the aid of the 3 and beg her to compete. The reason is that the school has a real chance of getting good publicity. In the end, Jasmine does not compete.

Jasmine is clearly affected by the pressure that comes from her peer group. Their appeal to Jasmine to compete is based on what is good for the group as a whole. Jasmine does not give into this pressure, however. Just because she does not do so is not good reason to conclude that there is some likelihood of self-interested thinking. There is a slight hint of appeal to popularity implied in the last sentence of the passage.

Part II (20%) For each of the following passages, determine whether an argument is present. Then, identify premise(s) and conclusion(s). Giving reasons for your responses could help you. (4 marks each)

1. If the evil Mr. Burns decides to release his nuclear power plant energy on Springfield, then even the Simpson's house will be obliterated. If the Simpson house is obliterated, then the loyal fans of the Simpson show will burst into tears and cry themselves to sleep. So, if that evil Mr. Burns decides to do this bad thing, then the loyal fans will burst into tears and cry themselves to sleep.

Yes there is an argument. This a H.S. The last claim is the conclusion and the two above it are premises.

2. Squirrels like eating acorns. This is because acorns taste very delightful. Anything that likes eating acorns also like eating nuts. Squirrels must, then, like eating nuts.

Yes an argument is present here. The first claim is the conclusion for the second. It serves as an intermediate conclusion (and hence it is a premise). It is connected to the 3rd statement as a dependent premise. The last statement is the ultimate conclusion.

3. Is it really possible for someone like Donald Trump to become President of the United States of America? There is no doubting he is a popular man, at least to some segments of the American populace. Becoming President requires a lot of integrity and hard work. The current President has told reporters that it has been the hardest job he has ever had and that he is looking forward to new challenges.

This one does not contain an argument. It is a paragraph with questions and information about Donald Trump. There is no reason to think that there is an intent to give reasons to support the possibility or impossibility of Trump becoming the American President.

4. Eat your vegetables you rotten kids! They are loaded with phytochemicals, nutrients, antioxidants and other good things. People who eat their vegetables have better working minds and enjoy better health.

This passage contains an argument. The conclusion is that you kids should eat your vegetables, or that people should eat them. Some students did not properly formulate this conclusion. The other statements independently support this conclusion. If one separates all the ingredients stated in the second statement that would be okay but unnecessary.

5. Arguments in Logic and Critical Thinking are composed of things called premises and conclusions. Each of these is strange, although anyone can learn what they are and begin to think about how certain reasons help support other claims. One should have great confidence that most people can learn to think critically. Thinking critically enhances our mental powers and contributes to our autonomy.

Students might find that there is no argument because no claim is a conclusion for any other. There is no premise-conclusion relationship among or between any of the claims. The first two statements describe what premises and conclusions are.

Part III (40%, 10% each) For each argument, identify the premises and conclusions, diagram the argument and determine whether it is inductive or deductive. Then, assess and measure its degree of strength if it is inductive, assess whether it is valid or not if it is deductive. Proceed to assess whether the argument is cogent or sound. (5 marks for identification of parts and diagram, 5 for correct identification of type and assessment)

1. If Jerry Seinfeld were president of the U.S.A., the U.S.A. would be the laughing stock of the world. But Seinfeld cannot become the president. Another clown is in office. The U.S.A. will then avoid becoming the laughing stock of the world.

This is a conditional syllogism, denying the antecedent, which makes it invalid. It's soundness is unlikely because the first premise may not indicate a true cause-effect relationship where Seinfeld becoming president would make the U.S. the laughing stock of the world. Also, considered carefully the second premise is likely false. He could still become the president!

Premises: "If Jerry . . . the U.S.A. . . . of the world." "Seinfeld cannot become the president." Conclusion is the last statement. The statement "Another clown is in office" is not part of the argument.

2. Either people should like Pokemon Go and play it, or they think it is a waste of time and a form of surveillance. It cannot be a waste of time because it introduces people to new places and gets them moving. Therefore, it is best to like Pokemon Go and play it.

This argument utilizes a disjunctive syllogism and this step is valid but the first premise is false.

Premises: "Either people should . . . or . . . surveillance." "It cannot be a waste of time." "It introduces people to new . . . moving." Conclusion: "It is best to like Pokemon Go and play it."

3. All genuine music lovers appreciate Beethoven's 9th Symphony. All genuine music lovers can walk on water. Therefore, all those who appreciate Beethoven's 9th can walk on water.

This categorical syllogism is neither valid nor sound, although soundness is a bit tough to judge. The first two statements are premises and the last one is the conclusion.

4. If Stewie Griffin were allowed to rule the world, then all children will be allowed to murder their mothers.
We cannot allow Stewie to rule the world. Hence, not all children will be murdered by their mothers.

This conditional syllogism is not valid. It negates the antecedent but it also uses a different consequent in the conclusion (category error).

Premises are the first two statements and the last one is the conclusion. Soundness is tough to judge because these are statements, the premises, about a fictional character.

5. Jesus was either the son of god or a lunatic and liar. It follows he must have been the Son of God.
All you disbelievers are not good at logic.

There is an implied premise here, in this disjunctive syllogism. It is that Jesus was not a lunatic and liar. The first claim is the other premise and the second last claim is the conclusion. The last statement is not part of the argument.

While this is a valid syllogism it is not sound due to the falsity of the first premise.

Part IV (10%) Identify the fault (s) of reasoning or fallacies present in the following passages. This could include subjective relativism, cultural relativism and skepticism along with early fallacies like appeal to popularity, appeal to common practice and appeal to tradition.

1. When one surveys all the world's philosophies, one notices that there is no agreement over what knowledge is. So much disagreement and debate leads us to conclude that not only is philosophy incapable of arriving at truth but that knowledge of anything is impossible, mere wishful thinking.

This one admits of philosophical skepticism.

2. Even if it is true that the United Nations should intervene to stop genocide, human rights violations and other forms of torture of citizens at the hands of their own governments, it is nonetheless true that these nations are sovereign and have a right to conduct their affairs as they see fit. Their right to sovereignty cannot be challenged. Hence, the United Nations has no right to determine what is right for these nations.

This one appeals to cultural or social relativism to make its case against the United Nations. It does not appeal to tradition or to common practice but finding either one might be rewarded.

3. No two people in the world believe exactly the same thing. Everyone is entitled to decide for themselves what truth and reality are. Most of the people in the world know that wars and civil conflicts are the result of people imposing their truths and beliefs on other people.

This one contains subjective relativism. If you had simply said that that would be sufficient. It has an appeal to popularity in the third claim.

4. Who knows how the universe began? There are so many different opinions out there, there is just no agreement about this. Perhaps we should stop wasting our time trying to know things humans just cannot know.

This one admits of skepticism.