

SSH 105: Critical Thinking

Semester: **Fall 2023**
Instructor: **Dr. Liz Jackson**
Office hours: **Tuesdays, 9-10am**
Email: ssh105jackson@torontomu.ca
(always CC your TA!)



got questions?

Office hours: If you have a question for me, the best thing to do is to drop by a Zoom Q&A (Tuesdays 9-10am.) ([Zoom link](#)).

If you have a question:

- Keep in mind the vast majority of student questions are answered on the syllabus (this document), [schedule](#), [FAQ document](#), and/or recent [D2L](#) announcements.
- If you have a question about course content, the best way to get a thorough answer is to drop by a [Q&A session](#), your [TA's office hour](#), or an [SLG session](#).
- Otherwise, email your TA for a quick and personal response.
- **When emailing me, you MUST include/copy your TA on the email.** Please remember that I am teaching almost 1000 students this semester, and so it is not possible for me to have lengthy discussions about course content over email (come to a Zoom Q&A for that!)
- I respond to email on weekdays before 5pm Eastern, and I'm not available to email on weekends. (Example: if you write to me with a question on Friday evening, you won't hear back until Monday.)
- Please be **professional** in your emails.
 - o Start your email with something like: "Dear Dr. Jackson/Professor Jackson"
 - o And then sign your email with something like: "Best/Sincerely, Your Name"

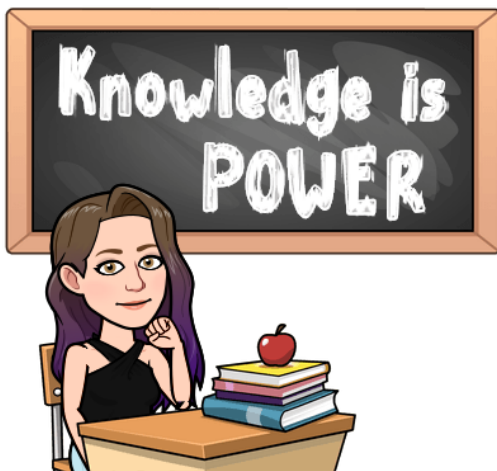
Note: You can call me Dr. Jackson, Professor Jackson, or Dr. Liz Jackson.

GOT QUESTIONS? DO THIS!



how to be rational and find the truth (course description)

Have you ever wondered how to be more rational in your beliefs and reasoning? Or how to find the truth, especially in light of human biases and flawed reasoning? If you answered “yes” to either of these questions, this class is for you!



This course is mostly about two things: **arguments** and **rationality**. We'll cover what an argument is, what makes an argument a good one, and how to determine what argument someone is making. We'll also talk about rationality, including what makes a belief rational, some common errors in human reasoning, and how to avoid making them. This class will have three parts. Here are examples of the questions we will cover.

(Unit 1: Introduction to Critical Thinking) What is an argument? What's the relationship between language and truth? What makes a belief rational?

(Unit 2: Argument Evaluation) What are the different ways we evaluate an argument? What makes an argument a good one?

(Unit 3: Argument Identification & Reconstruction) How do we determine when an argument is being made, and what argument is being made?

SSH105 is a required course for students in several programs at TMU, and only students registered in those programs may take it. If you are not in one of the programs that requires SSH105, you may not receive academic credit for this course.

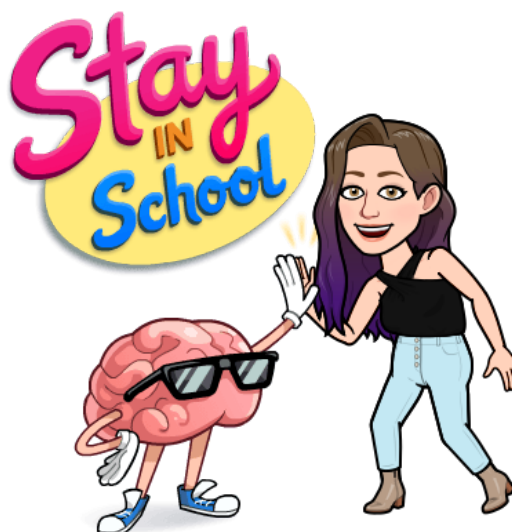
TEXTBOOK: We will be using Feldman's *Reason and Argument*. However, no need to purchase anything; links to all the chapters we're reading are available on the course schedule document.

a week in the life of our class

Each week, I will post a **reading** and a **lecture video** in which I present the week's material. **You will be expected to do the reading and watch the lecture video closely and take notes on both.** The material from the weekly quizzes and tests will be taken from the readings and lectures. Keep in mind that you are responsible for the material from the readings, even if I don't cover it in the lecture.

You also have a 1-hour, in-person weekly **tutorial session** led by a Teaching Assistant (TA).

- Tutorial attendance is mandatory. **You will lose 1% on your final grade every time you miss a tutorial without a good excuse.**
- In order to be excused, you *must* fill out an [Academic Consideration Request](#), no exceptions. (See the end of this document for more information.)
- Your TA will hold a weekly office hour; see [here](#).
- It is not possible to switch tutorial groups informally. Any switching must be done by officially changing sections at my.torontomu.ca by Friday, September 15th.



I will hold a weekly **optional** Q&A over Zoom on Tuesdays from 9-10am. These will involve a brief review and then a question and answer session. ([Zoom link](#)).

the stuff you have to do (assignments and grading)

This chart summarizes the assignments in this course. Remember that TMU has a [standardized grading scale for undergraduate courses](#).

assignment	value	format	date
(1) 9 Weekly Quizzes	10 %	online	Weekly (1% each; one freebie)
(2) Test 1	10 %	online	Sep 26, 8-10AM
(3) Test 2	20 %	in person	Nov 1, 6-8PM
(4) Test 3	25 %	in person	Nov 21, 6-8PM
(5) Final Exam	35 %	in person	Dec 6, 3-6PM



There is a weekly **online quiz** (except for test weeks). They'll open Tuesday morning and close the following Monday at 11:59pm, so you have one week to complete them. There are **three tests**; see the course schedule for the dates. The **final exam** will be three hours long. Remember that, in addition to the above, you will lose 1% on your final grade every time you miss a tutorial without a good excuse.

the point of this class (learning outcomes)

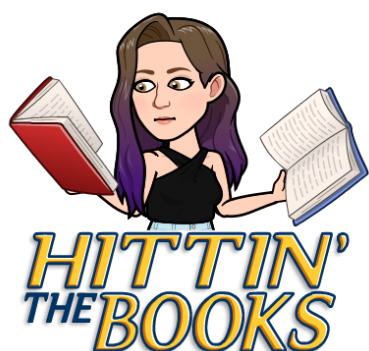
At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Define *argument*, *premises*, *conclusions*, *arguments*, *validity*, and *strong*, *sound*, & *known* arguments.
- Explain what makes a belief *true*, and what makes a belief *rational*.
- Identify when and why an argument is a good argument—including strong, sound, and known arguments—and when and why an argument is a weak argument.
- Identify and reconstruct arguments in standard form from a text, and then evaluate those arguments.

the calendar (class schedule)

A full course schedule, with all dates and links to readings/videos, is [available as a Google sheet](#). Please refer to this sheet, as there are direct links to download readings and to access lectures, and it is frequently updated.

other important deets



Supported Learning Groups (SLGs) are free study and review sessions led by peer leaders. SLG sessions offer additional practice problems, resources and small group discussion to tackle course content. I will share the schedule and Zoom links with you early in the semester.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is representing another's work as your own. This includes usage of generative AI tools for course assignments. To put it simply: **DO NOT**

PLAGIARIZE. Just don't do it. I take plagiarism very seriously. I promise things will work out better if you communicate with me, rather than plagiarizing.

- If you consult a resource in your writing, **cite it**. If you paraphrase a resource in your writing, **cite it**. If you quote a resource in your writing, **cite it**. (I don't care how you cite it—you can describe or link it in a footnote, in parenthesis, or in a bibliography at the end.)
- Failure to cite your sources and/or use of generative AI is a serious matter, and could result in an academic dishonesty charge (and an overall grade reduction). For more information on academic dishonesty, see [TMU's Academic Integrity website](#).

TMU Code of Conduct: TMU's [Student Code of Academic Conduct](#) defines academic misconduct, the processes the University will follow when academic misconduct is suspected, and the consequences that can be imposed if students are found guilty of misconduct. Further information is also available at [Academic Integrity - Toronto Metropolitan University](#). TMU's [Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct](#) covers, among other things, disruption of learning and teaching.

Accessibility: I am committed to providing all students with the resources needed for their success. Please inform me of any way I can assist you to thrive in this course. TMU's [Student Learning Support](#) cluster provides valuable programs and initiatives for academic accommodation, English language support, math support, study skills and transition support, and writing support.

If you wish to secure accommodations like extra time, you must be assessed by the [Academics Accommodations office](#). (Typically, students will bring documentation to that office pertaining to a learning disability or some other disability or situation that justifies a request for extra time.) Their experts then assess this, and make a determination about what kind of accommodation is appropriate.

TMU Mental Health Statement: At TMU, we recognize that things can come up

throughout the term that may interfere with a student's ability to succeed in their coursework. These circumstances are outside of one's control and can have a serious impact on physical and mental well-being. Seeking help can be a challenge, especially in those times of crisis. Below are resources we encourage all TMU community members to access to ensure support is reachable.

Website: [Mental Health and Wellbeing - Toronto Metropolitan University](#)

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please call 911 and go to the nearest hospital emergency room. You can also access these outside resources at anytime:

- **Distress Line:** 24/7 line for if you are in crisis, feeling suicidal or in need of emotional support (phone: 416-408-4357)
- **Good2Talk:** 24/7-hour line for postsecondary students (phone: 1-866-925-5454)
- **Keep.meSAFE:** 24/7 access to confidential support through counselors via [My SSP app](#) or 1-844-451-9700



If non-crisis support is needed, you can access these campus resources:

- **Centre for Student Development and Counseling:** 416-979-5195 or email csdc@torontomu.ca
- **Consent Comes First – Office of Sexual Violence Support and Education:** 416-919-5000 ext 3596 or email osvse@torontomu.ca
- **Medical Centre:** call (416) 979-5070 to book an appointment.

Academic Consideration Requests: If you experience any extenuating circumstance that significantly impacts your ability to fulfill your academic obligations, you may submit an Academic Consideration Request. *Before* doing so, please carefully read [TMU's policy about such requests](#). *After* reading the policy, if you still wish to submit a request, you can do so via [the online portal](#).

- TMU's complete policy concerning alternate arrangements for medical and compassionate reasons may be found [here](#).
- **Medical Considerations:** In order for alternate arrangements to be made on medical grounds, a student must provide, within three working days, (1) a TMU Medical Certificate and (2) an Academic Consideration Form. Both documents must be submitted to the student's program department. They can be found [here](#).
- **Religious Observance:** If a student needs accommodation due to religious observance, they must submit (1) a Request for Accommodation of Student Religious, Aboriginal and Spiritual Observance Form and (2) an Academic Consideration Form, within the first two weeks of classes, or, for a final

examination, within two weeks of the posting of the examination schedule. If the required absence occurs within the first two weeks of classes, or the dates are not known well in advance as they are linked to other conditions, these forms should be submitted with as much lead time as possible in advance of the required absence. Forms must be submitted to the student's program department. They can be found [here](#).

- **Compassionate Considerations:** In order for alternate arrangements to be made on compassionate grounds, the student must deliver, within three working days, an Academic Consideration Form, along with appropriate documentation (if necessary), to the student's program department. This form can be found [here](#).