



EUCLID (Euclid University)
Euclid Eurion Consortium Member Universities
All Euclid Schools
Lecture by: David Zarefsky (Northwestern University)
Instructor / Tutor: Assigned Euclid Faculty ([See current assignment list](#))

**COURSE NAME: ARGUMENTATION AND CRITICAL THINKING:
THE STUDY OF EFFECTIVE REASONING**

- ✓ **Credits: 2 US / 3 ECTS**
- ✓ **Code: TPH-499 (revised)**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Student should be aware that Euclid Latin motto means “Let us also hear the other side”. Euclid’s academic philosophy, applied within at schools of the extension, bears the imprint of this ideal. For this reason, 3 credits are assigned to this important course which is considered foundational.

This course is based on a recorded lecture by: Dr. David Zarefsky (Northwestern University) made available by The Teaching Company and a textbook dedicated to Critical Thinking.

At the Center of a Well-Educated Mind

Reasoning, tested by doubt, is argumentation. We do it, hear it, and judge it every day. We do it in our own minds, and we do it with others. What is effective reasoning? And how can it be done persuasively? These questions have been asked for thousands of years—yet some of the best thinking on reasoning and argumentation is very new and represents a break from the past.

This is equally a course in argument and in reasoning. This course teaches how to reason. It teaches how to persuade others that what you think is right. And it teaches how to judge and answer the arguments of others—and how they will judge yours.

The study of argumentation was once one of the seven liberal arts, at the very core of humane learning. In recent centuries, rhetoric has been stripped of its intellectual dimension and come to

mean empty talk; formal logic has edged out discursive reasoning in many philosophy departments. Professor Zarefsky suggests that this has been an error:

"The first thing that we should do is to cast aside the popular stereotype which sees argumentation as a form of quarrelsomeness—a love of bickering for its own sake. In fact, argumentation is something far more important and worthwhile than that.

"It grows out of our nature as human beings. It is the study of how we go about giving effective reasons for our beliefs and actions in an uncertain world where the right belief or action is often far from obvious."

Professor Zarefsky explains that argumentation studies went through a refocusing in the second half of the 20th century. This refocusing helped scholars to recover the fuller meaning of old words like rhetoric and opened new paths of understanding in the process.

Readers Preference Reviews, reviewing Professor Zarefsky's course, writes that:

"'Argumentation' is a course in classical rhetoric. This is not rhetoric the way the word is used commonly today, but a course in how to debate, how to influence others by sound reasoning, how to gain support for your position in a disagreement. As is the standard fare for The Teaching Company, the course is very thorough and well organized. I've read books on debate and argumentation before but none have covered the subject as completely as this course."

Professor Zarefsky's lectures are filled with examples of actual controversies, but his perspective takes us beyond individual disputes so we can see the structure of all disputes. This perspective orients us within any argument, so argumentation can be seen clearly as an exchange, and not just a flurry of words.

In the course of crafting and criticizing arguments, we often forget what argument is *designed to do*. Nietzsche reminds us: "The most fundamental form of human stupidity is forgetting what we were trying to do in the first place."

One of the rewards of this course is that "argument" is "disarmed" when seen in the light of its repeating patterns. Professor Zarefsky's teaching style helps greatly in this regard. He is friendly, warm, articulate, authoritative, and above all, crystal clear.

The lectures make argumentation accessible and familiar to you.

- First, the tools of formal logic, while essential and even definitive for mathematics and programming computers, are inadequate to decide most controversial issues. This course shows more useful approaches.
- Second, arguments can be divided into three parts:
 - a *claim*
 - *evidence*
 - an *inference* linking the evidence to the claim.
- Third, all arguments fall into a handful of distinctive categories, and the same issues are at stake each time one of these distinctive patterns occurs.

- Fourth, there are three kinds of evidence that can be advanced to prove an argument that something is true: objective data, social consensus, and personal credibility. The same tests for truth can be applied to these types of evidence every time.
- Fifth, there are six kinds of "inference" that link evidence to a claim: example, cause, sign, analogy, narrative, and form. How to use and challenge each is explained. Again the limited usefulness of formal logic is exhibited. For example, the "ideal" of deductive reasoning, the syllogism ("All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.") is rarely used in real argument. Why? Largely because it is useless. (As one of our other professors reminds us, "No one has ever died of a syllogism.")

Special Arguments. And Our Freedom.

While they share common patterns, not all arguments are alike because the communities in which they are used have particular conventions for truth. Special attention is given to arguments in technical fields such as law, science, management, ethics, and religion.

Professor Zarefsky devotes lectures to rational controversy as the *sine qua non* of democratic public life, in which issues are discussed and debated not only by experts and officials, but by each of us as citizens.

Far from being bad for civic harmony, says Professor Zarefsky, a healthy "culture of argumentation" is something we should celebrate in an uncertain world where we must strive to make the best decisions we can despite imperfect knowledge.

These lectures offer a comprehensive guide to the learning, the methods, and the spirit of cooperative controversy which make that culture both possible and even essential for the free, self-governing citizens of a democracy.

COURSE TEACHING OBJECTIVES:

To verify, reinforce and increase the student's ability to understand, conceive, analyze and articulate sound argumentation.

COURSE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The student will be able to understand, conceive, analyze and articulate sound arguments. The student should have acquired a critical mind, in the most positive sense of this term.

MAIN TEXT(S):

⇒ *Argumentation: The Study of Effective Reasoning*, 2nd Edition
(24 lectures, 30 minutes/lecture)
Course No. 4294

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS OR RESOURCES:

⇒ *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Professional and Personal Life*
by Richard W. Paul, Linda Elder

⇒ *Critical Thinking with Free Student CD and PowerWeb*
by Brooke Noel Moore, Richard Parker

Political Debates:

☞ www.pbs.org/podcasts/

Religious Debates:

☞ www.aomin.org

PAPER AND FINAL GRADE:

This course requires the presentation of 6-10 page paper featuring the presentation and analysis of one sound argument and one faulty or special argument.

- ✓ 60% of the final grade is based on the paper.
- ✓ 40% of the final grade is based on the final oral exam / closing interview

STANDARD EUCLID GRADING SCALE:

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| ▪ A+ | 4.00 |
| ▪ A | 4.00 |
| ▪ A- | 3.84 |
| ▪ B+ | 3.33 |
| ▪ B | 3.00 |
| ▪ B- | 2.67 |
| ▪ C+ | 2.33 |
| ▪ C | 2.00 |
| ▪ C- | 1.67 |
| ▪ D+ | 1.33 |
| ▪ D | 1.00 |
| ▪ F | 0.00 |