This course studies the methods and principles used to distinguish good reasoning from bad, or better from worse. It is a weakness of contemporary culture that ideas are often taken to be matters of opinion only. After all, it is said, nothing can be proven. But it is best to take ideas as matters for rational investigation. Even if an idea is so controversial that we cannot expect agreement, we should nevertheless ask what is most reasonable to believe rather than merely grabbing at whatever seems attractive.

To evaluate an idea therefore, we examine the reasoning behind it. Knowing this, logicians investigate, develop and systematize procedures for determining good and bad reasoning. Truth is discovered by considering the reasons for and against the various alternatives—the correct idea is the one that has the best arguments on its side. Thus students will learn how to recognize, assess and formulate arguments so as to separate truth from falsehood, right from wrong, reasonable from unreasonable.

The semester does not start until August 25, but the Blackboard web site for the course, while not presently available, will be available well before semester start. Registered students will be notified via email when the web site does become available, so keep a lookout for the notification. Meanwhile, some advice is in order. It will be prudent to access the web site (Go to “canyons.edu” and click on the Blackboard tab at the top of the page, then click on the Bb button. Follow the directions to log in, then click on the underlined title of the course, which takes you to the Blackboard Announcements page) as soon as it becomes available, read “Orientation” and then follow the directions in “Getting Started.” Namely, thoroughly explore the site and peruse everything: Information (all files) and Documents (all files). Also, get the text as soon as possible (for those who cannot wait for web site availability it is How to Think About Weird Things, 7th ed., Schick and Vaughn, McGraw Hill) and be reading the first chapter when the semester begins. Get a jump on the class and stay ahead throughout the semester. For now, contact me at Russell.Sanders@canyons.edu, but once the web site becomes available contact the instructor with any questions or concerns via Blackboard Messages.