

Instructor: James Shaw
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Office Hours: Thursday 1:30-3:30

INFERENCE & LOGIC

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course centers around two key questions: What is an inference? And, what is logic? Working through a draft manuscript on these topics, we'll explore a view which claims that answers to these questions are intimately related. In particular, it argues that logical puzzles provide invaluable illumination of the character of deductive inference, and that logic is fundamentally a certain constrained study of good deductive inference. Subtopics will (hopefully) include: the normativity of logic, the nature of good reasoning and the role of logic in regulating it, the constraints that logical impossibility may impose on the bounds of cognition, the role of a 'taking' or awareness condition in inference, the threat of Carrollian regress, and the grounds for and against taking Tarskian model theoretic machinery to model logical truth and consequence.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Papers: You have two options.

- (A) Two short papers (9-11 pages, 45% each) **Due: Friday February 28th,
Friday. April 24th**
(B) One long paper (18-22 pages, 90%) **Due: Friday April 24th**

Late papers without an extension will be docked a half grade (A to A-, etc.) per day late.

Participation (10%): Every student taking the course for credit is expected to speak at least once per class.

TEXTS

Readings are here:

www.jshaw.net/courses/inference.html

You will need a user name and password to access some of the readings. You should have received that information on the syllabus handed out the first day of class. If you didn't get it for any reason, just e-mail me.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Starred readings are required. The schedule is subject to change.

IFL = Inference and the Foundations of Logic (ms.)

Jan. 9 **Introduction**

- Jan. 16 **Normativity of Logic: Problems and Stakes**
 *MacFarlane, “In What Sense (if any) is Logic Normative for Thought?”
 Harman, “Logic and Reasoning”
 Field, “What is the Normative Role of Logic?”
 Steinberger, “Consequence and Normative Guidance”
 Russell, “Logic isn’t Normative”
- Jan. 23 **Inference and the Normativity of Logic**
 *Shaw, *IFL* §§ 2, 3.1-3.3
 Shaw, *IFL* §§3.4-3.5
- Jan. 30 **Logic and the Bounds of Thought**
 *Conant, “The Search for Logically Alien Thought”
 Kimhi, *Thinking and Being*, TBD
- Feb. 6 **Reflections on Logic’s Role in Constraining Cognition**
 *Shaw *IFL* §§4.1-4.2
 Shaw, *IFL* §§4.3
- Feb. 13 **The “Taking Condition” on Inference; Puzzles about Inference**
 *Boghossian, “What is Inference?”
 *Carroll, “What the Tortoise Said to Achilles”
 Wright, “Comment on Boghossian ‘What is Inference?’”
 Broome, “Comments on Boghossian”
 Hlobil, “Against Boghossian, Wright, and Broome on Inference”
 Neta, “What is an Inference?”
 Hlobil, “Inference by Attaching Force”
 Padró et al., Slides on the ‘Adoption Problem’
- Feb. 20 **Deductive Inference as Appreciation of Impossibility**
 *Shaw, *IFL* §5
 *Marcus, “Inference as Consciousness of Necessity”
- Feb. 27 **Model Theory, Validity, and Skepticism about Reduction**
 *Etchemendy, “Reflections on Consequence”
 Etchemendy, *The Concept of Logical Consequence*, TBD
 MacFarlane, “What is Modeled by Truth in all Models?”
 Gómez-Torrente, “Are there Model-Theoretic Logical Truths that are not Logically True?”
- Mar. 5 **A Reduction of Logical Consequence?**
 *Shaw, *IFL* §6
 McGee, “Two Problems with Tarski’s Theory of Consequence”
 Sagi, “Models and Logical Consequence”
- Mar. 12 **Validity in Modal Logic with an Actuality Operator I**
 *Zalta, “Logical and Analytic Truths that are not Necessary”
 *Hanson, “Actuality, Necessity, and Logical Truth”
 Russell “Lessons from the Logic of Demonstratives”

- Mar. 19 **Validity in Modal Logic with an Actuality Operator II**
 *Shaw, *IFL* §7
- Mar. 26 **Optional Topics: TBD, E.g.:**
 Logic in the Presence of Ambiguity and Context-Sensitivity (or...)
 What are Logical Constants?
 Readings TBD
- Apr. 2 **Anti-Exceptionalism/Abductivism about Logic I**
 *Hjortland, “Anti-Exceptionalism about Logic”
 Williamson, “Semantic Paradoxes and Abductive Methodology”
 Russell, “The Justification of the Basic Laws of Logic”
- Apr. 9 **Anti-Exceptionalism/Abductivism about Logic II**
 *Hlobil, “The Limits of Abductivism about Logic”
- Apr. 16 **No Class/Catch Up/Optional Topics**