PHILOSOPHY 210:
REASON IN COMMUNICATION

PETER B. M. VRANAS
MTWR 1:10-3:50, SUMMER 2013

COURSE INFORMATION

1. TEACHING ASSISTANT AND OFFICE HOURS

The Teaching Assistant (TA) for this course, Casey Hart (cthart@wisc.edu), will hold office hours on Mondays through Thursdays, 11:55am-12:55pm, at 5164 Helen C. White Hall. In case you want to meet with me (Peter B. M. Vranas, the lecturer for this course), feel free to make an appointment. My office is at 5171 Helen C. White Hall (phone: 263-3740). You can best reach me by email (vranas@wisc.edu).

2. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

	Grade component (see syllabus for dates)	Weight
1	**Thirteen problem sets.** Each set contains a quiz to be taken in class on the due date.	55%
2	**Three 50-min in-class exams.** These are closed-book and cumulative: they cover all material up to the date on which you take them. (There is no final exam.)	45% (15% each)
Some handouts are on my website: http://mywebspace.wisc.edu/vranas/web/index.htm		100%

3. CLASS PARTICIPATION AND DISCUSSION RULES

Class participation is not graded, because (1) I would like people to speak out of intrinsic motivation and interest in the topics, not to get a higher grade, and (2) I wouldn't like people to be afraid of speaking because saying something less than brilliant might hurt their grade. On the other hand, I would like *everyone* to participate: I believe that each of you has interesting things to say, and I would like to hear them.

The fundamental discussion rule is that we must *treat everyone with the utmost respect*. It's not acceptable to insult or ridicule people or views. Everyone should feel free to voice unpopular opinions, as long as the opinions are expressed respectfully and backed by arguments. *You should feel especially free to disagree with me.*

The fundamental rule of respect has two concrete consequences. (1) Interrupting others is disrespectful: *please raise your hand and wait for your turn* before you speak. (2) Ignoring speakers is disrespectful: *please don't talk among yourselves* while someone is speaking.

4. MAIN COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To help you understand the basic principles of reasoning with *probabilities*.
2. To help you *calculate* probabilities, both in everyday life and in scientific contexts.
3. To help you use probabilistic reasoning to *evaluate arguments*.
4. To help you focus on the distinction between *populations* and *samples*.
5. To help you understand what it is (and how) to *estimate* a quantity probabilistically.
6. To help you formulate questions in terms of *tests of hypotheses*.
7. To help you choose the appropriate statistical test for a given problem.
8. To help you evaluate *causal* and *analogical* arguments.
9. To help you develop valuable skills by emphasizing rigorous thinking, clarity, and precision.

5. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

If you would like special arrangements because (1) you have a disability or (2) you are observing some religious holidays, please let your TA know as soon as possible. Students with disabilities may wish to contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center (http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu).