Lecture 6
Refining Claims

Critical Thinking: The Art of Reasoning

Overview of the course

Problems with Texts

- Can't understand it
- Language not clear
- Reasoning not clear
- Ambiguous
- Can't find conclusion or reasons
- Doesn't make sense
- Too emotionally charged
- Don't know what's going on!

A refined claim

To refine a claim is to reformulate it until the claim is as clear and definite as required for argument analysis and evaluation.

What we would like...

- Clarity
- Precision
- No ambiguity
- Simplified
- Reasonable
- Understanding!

Problems with Texts

1. Declarative

- make an assertion, a proposition, something that can be True or false
- things to watch:
  - Questions
  - Rhetorical questions
  - Short phrases

Raw:
"Do the two leaders really believe that this demeaning behaviour is what the Australian voters want from their leaders?"

Refined:
Leaders know that demeaning behaviour is not what Australian voters want.
Your turn...

2. Simplify

- Simple and compound claims
  - claims should be simple for analysis and evaluation
  - be careful with “and” and “or” claims.

Philosophy subjects are profound and interesting.

Claims:
1. Philosophy subjects are profound
2. Philosophy subjects are interesting.
3. Philosophy subjects are profound and interesting.

Your turn...

3. Literal

- Literal and metaphoric use of language

Examples:
1. Patients must not be bargaining chips.
   Herald Sun 22/4

2. There are still souls who, when allowed, can work miracles. When one does a deed from the heart, it is felt and remembered with a smile and gratitude.
   The Age, letters 27/4

Your turn...
4. Precise

- A claim is precise if only a narrow range of situations would make it true (or false)
- the nature of scientific thinking: Popper
- opposite to vagueness

1. It was freezing this morning
2. Love makes everything alright
3. You should never talk to strangers
4. Everyone agrees that Brunetti coffee is the best.

5. Concise

- A sentence is concise when it contains no superfluous words or phrases.
- get to the point!!!
1. It is very clear to everyone with rational thoughts that so many people are constantly overwhelmed by the need to do too much work

2. Today, Victoria’s state school students will return after their Easter break. At assemblies, many will recite pledges, intoning pride in their country and school. That 50,000 of them will then file off to such spartan rooms is unacceptable.

6. Unambiguous

- One distinct meaning
1. Jesus was the King
2. I believe it was 40 degrees this morning
3. For none of woman borne shall harm Macbeth!
4. I wish I could fly
   - I wish I could leave
   - I wish I could go by airplane
   - I wish I could find freedom
   - I wish I had wings
   - I wish I wasn’t a human being
   - I wish I could get there quickly
   - I wish I didn’t have to wait for a tram.
7. Emotionally measured

- Emotion tone appropriate to argument/issue
- beware of attacking the person (Fallacy)

1. It is absolutely unfathomable that such ridiculous notions could be conceived.

2. This would never be accepted by workers in government offices. State prisons would not countenance such squalor. It is unacceptable, and yet we inflict it daily on the youth of our state.

Herald Sun 19/4 Portables.

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**Example**

_Footy Ferals_ 26apr04

THERE is no room for the type of sickening, uncivilised behaviour displayed by small sections of the football public on the weekend. Football is an Australian institution loved by its passionate and tribal followers.

But police, the AFL and clubs must show zero tolerance to those overstepping the mark – as it was in ugly fashion by spitting spectators who shame the code, their teams and themselves.


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**Your turn...**

Unrefined claim

Refined claim

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**A movie...**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymgfhjQ_sFs
Exercise Refining

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Claim</th>
<th>Refining Required</th>
<th>Refined Claim/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ... should resign</td>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>The Governor General should resign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Jacques flew to Djibouti.</td>
<td>Unambiguous/literal</td>
<td>Jacques traveled to Djibouti by airplane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Australian Army has never let the Australian people down</td>
<td>Precise</td>
<td>The Australian Army has never lost a battle. The Australian Army has always performed well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ... have far more to gain by reducing greenhouse gas emissions than we have to lose.</td>
<td>Concise</td>
<td>We would gain far more than we lose by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ... nuclear rubbish dump next to our crops?</td>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>We do not want nuclear waste dumped near our crops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. ... the temperature is around 30 degrees Celsius today.</td>
<td>Precise</td>
<td>The temperature is around 30 degrees Celsius today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A GST (Goods and Services Tax) is regressive, and it is too burdensome for business.</td>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>A GST is regressive. A GST is too burdensome for business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The company’s heinous subterfuges are destroying the worker’s livelihoods.</td>
<td>Emotionally measured</td>
<td>The company’s dishonest tactics are reducing the workers’ wages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Karl Kruszelnicki lumps all astrologers and astrology into one basket.</td>
<td>Literal</td>
<td>Karl Kruszelnicki treats all astrologers and astrology as if they were the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Elizabeth left because she was embarrassed.</td>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>Elizabeth left. Elizabeth was embarrassed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>