

I. COURSE INFORMATION:

Department Information:

Division: Humanities

Department: Philosophy

Course ID PHIL 102

Course Title: Critical Thinking and Writing

Units: 3

Lecture: 3

Prerequisite: ENGL 101

Catalog and Schedule Description: An introduction to critical thinking focusing on argument and evidence and the ability to write coherent argumentative essays. Topics include recognition of the structures of reasoning in natural language, the evaluation of such reasoning (including informal fallacies), the uses and abuses of language, and an investigation of the rhetorical devices common in our culture. Students practice critical thinking by writing substantive arguments and essays.

II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: One

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS:

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- A. Recognize the structures of reasoning in natural language, evaluate reasoning (including both formal and informal fallacies)
- B. Recognize the uses and abuses of language by being aware of the rhetorical devices common in contemporary culture.
- C. Critically read and evaluate selected primary sources relevant to critical thinking (including but not limited to, political rhetoric, ethical arguments, aesthetic reasoning, advertisements, the rhetoric of higher education in America, and the language used to justify American capitalism)
- D. Respond critically, analytically, and/or synthetically in writing to issues dealing with contemporary critical issues (including but not limited to ethical issues, political issues, issues of beauty, and issues of persuasion within social and psychological contexts);
- E. Compose developed, coherent, unified, organized argumentative essays that demonstrate the canons of clear and effective writing;
- F. Apply the ideas and concepts in the tradition of philosophy to contemporary experience by the continual process of thinking critically about questions and issues that matter.

IV. COURSE CONTENT:

- A. What is Critical Thinking
 1. Arguments and misconceptions about arguments
 2. Identifying Issues
 3. Factual vs. nonfactual issues
- B. Critical Thinking and Clear Writing
 1. Clearly states the main point
 2. supports the main point with clearly stated reasons
 3. Uses credible sources and documents them
 4. remains relevant to the main point
 5. considers alternative viewpoints and presents them fairly
 6. withholds judgment when reasons are insufficient
 7. seeks as much precision as the subject permits
 8. clarifies key terms
 9. avoids unnecessary emotional appeals
 10. understands the requirements of writing in and for a diverse society
 11. understands elements of the analytical writing process

- a. Pre-writing, including idea generation and outlining.
 - b. Drafting.
 - c. Revision.
 - d. Editing for coherence and effectiveness.
 - e. Using academic essay form, including introduction with thesis, body, conclusion, to achieve unity and organization.
 - f. Development that balances detail with analytical discussion of its significance.
 - g. Locating, evaluating, and using library sources when necessary to strengthen discussion of works from other time periods and cultures; reflecting that use in appropriate documentation.
- C. Evaluating Informative Claims
 - 1. Background information
 - 2. Assessing specific content
 - 3. Assessing credibility of sources
 - D. Persuasion Through Rhetoric
 - 1. Euphemisms and dysphemisms
 - 2. Stereotypes
 - 3. Innuendo
 - 4. Hyperbole
 - 5. Proof surrogates
 - E. Fallacies
 - 1. Ad hominem
 - 2. appeal to pity
 - 3. begging the question
 - 4. false dilemma
 - 5. slippery slope
 - 6. red herring
 - F. Evaluating Arguments
 - 1. validity, invalidity, strength, cogency
 - 2. arrow diagrams to analyze and evaluate arguments
 - G. Deductive Arguments
 - 1. Categorical claims
 - 2. Categorical syllogisms
 - H. Inductive Arguments
 - 1. analogical argument
 - 2. statistical arguments
 - 3. inductive fallacies
 - I. Moral, Legal, and Aesthetic Reasoning
- V. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:**
- A. Lecture on concept, reading, assignments
 - B. Discussions of readings, lectures, assignments
 - C. Small groups to discuss different aspects of readings or lectures
 - D. Reading of texts, both secondary and primary
 - E. Writing tasks appropriate for the material
 - F. Small group and full class activities to practice analytic and practical skills
 - G. Peer response groups so that students will have the opportunity to compare their analyses of the readings and edit for coherence, unity, development, and organization
 - H. Individual conferences for feedback on writing assignments
 - I. Thorough written and/or oral comments on written assignments
 - J. Demonstrations of the various stages of the writing process
- VI. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:**
- A. Reading:
 - 1. Read Nixon's "Checker's Speech." Be able to summarize the argument,

including identifying reasons and conclusions. Be able to identify the formal fallacy committed in that speech.

2. Read any contemporary speech by a national political figure and identify any and all formal and informal fallacies.
- B. Writing, critical thinking: Identify arguments for and against a major ethical issue (i.e. capital punishment, abortion, animal rights, or "three strikes" laws). After noting the various positions, evaluate the adequacy of each position using the criteria set forth in the class (i.e. "truth" and "validity"). Write a persuasive essay (targeting your classmates as the audience) summarizing your findings. Then write an editorial to the local paper using appropriate rhetorical devices to persuade the people who read the paper that your position is sound or cogent.

VII. EVALUATION:

- A. Methods of evaluation: Each student will be evaluated, in part, on essays and papers written out of class. These essays and papers are primarily analytical in nature. At least half of the student's writing should go through a recursive revision process, which includes commentary by instructor (and perhaps peers). Grading may be comparative within a class or may be based on an absolute standard, but will include how well the writing demonstrates the qualities of unity, development, organization, and coherence, as well as critical thinking skills in analysis. Essay exams and informal in-class writing assignments may be included as a component (but not the major component) element of evaluation.
- B. Frequency of Evaluation: Evaluation will take place periodically throughout the semester with enough frequency to be sufficient to measure student progress and will be sensitive to the various learning styles of students. The minimum evaluation will consist of at least six evaluative instruments designed to have the students demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking through writing (i.e., analytic papers, projects, argumentative essays, portfolios, research papers) chosen by the instructor of record for the class. **The minimum total word count for the writing assignments in the class is 6,000. (This does not include drafts).**

VIII. TYPICAL TEXT(S):

- A. Moore, Brooke Noel and Parker, Richard. Critical Thinking. 7th ed. New York: McGraw Hill Publishing Co., 2004.
- B. Colombo, Gary, ed. Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001.
- C. Barnett, Sylvan and Hugo Adam Bedau, eds. Current Issues and Enduring Questions 6th ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001.
- D. Zinsser, William. On Writing Well. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.

IX. OTHER SUPPLIES REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: None