Course Description

Critical Thinking is the foundation of independent thinking, intellectual discourse, and meaningful discussion. The process of critical thinking and reasoning is ongoing, it is a lifetime commitment to curiosity and knowledge.

Effective thinking involves close attention to detail, an ability to stand back from situations, weighing of pros and cons (the positive and negative attributes involved in every situation), and ultimately a willingness to make decisions on the basis of information that has been collected and to take responsibility for those decisions once they have been made. In this way, critical thinking involves how we see the world, how we organize what we see, and how we behave in the world.

This course aims to: (a) make students aware of their own thinking processes; (b) help them develop those processes; and (c) help them bring those processes to bear on college-level intellectual activities. This course will further develop your skills of analysis, persuasion, and argument. Students will practice the recognition, construction and evaluation of arguments. This involves an emphasis on critical thinking skills as well as reading and writing skills.

Each class will be conducted as part lecture and part dialogue. Along with the regular reading assignments, students are expected to read newspapers, magazines and watch other media news programs in order to fully participate in all class discussions. Discussions and dialogue will involve current events and important issues of the day.
The L-5 Competence Statement

Can analyze issues and reconcile problems through critical and appreciative thinking.
1. Analyzes, critiques and evaluates different forms of thinking and reasoned discourse.
2. Constructs well-reasoned arguments in the context of real-life experiences and issues.

Criteria and Specifications

A. Inquiry
Criterion: Can identify claims and assess their fit with reasons.
Specification: Identifies claims (i.e., propositions and thesis statements) and the reasons, which support them.

Criterion: Can distinguish among different kinds of reasons adduced to support claims.
Specifications: Understands the following: basic principles of inductive and deductive reasoning; rudimentary principles of empirical procedure (e.g., scientific method, probability sampling); informal, “everyday” styles of claim-support like anecdote and exemplification. Assesses strengths and weaknesses of the above in relation to specific discursive contexts.

Criterion: Can distinguish between reports, inferences and judgments.
Specifications: Understands that a report is a belief that can be verified factually; an inference is a statement that takes facts into account but which ventures beyond them; and a judgment is an evaluation based on criteria. Sorts out reports, inferences and judgments as these appear in a given discourse.

Criterion: Can identify common rhetorical strategies, propaganda devices and logical fallacies.
Specifications: Understands traditional Western distinction between appeals based on logic, emotion and character. Understands strengths and weaknesses of the above types of appeal, particularly in relation to specific rhetorical purposes (e.g., persuading a given audience; determining the best course of action in a situation). Shows familiarity with common logical fallacies and propaganda devices.

B. Decision-Making
Criterion: Can recognize, construct and make evaluative distinctions among different kinds of arguments.
Specifications: Identifies and generates different kinds of arguments. Compares and contrasts these in terms of usefulness to processes of reasoning and decision-making.

C. Learning from Experience/Self-Assessment
Criterion: Can examine experiences with critical scrutiny.
Specifications: Recounts personal experience in narrative detail. Raises questions about, and/or draws lessons from, such experience through a process of reflective examination.
Criterion: Can discuss the roles played by perception, emotion and belief in shaping views.
Specifications: Understands perception as a process of mediation or “filtering” and the possible impacts of this on reasoning. Shows awareness of ways in which perception influences belief-formation (and vice versa). Identifies unexamined assumptions and/or hidden agendas in discourse.

Criterion: Can recognize problems and limitations inherent in linguistic discourse.
Specification: Shows awareness of factors (such as ambiguity, perspective and social context) which impinge on our use of language as a tool for organizing experience.

Criterion: Can appreciate, engage with, and make use of viewpoints other than one’s own.
Specifications: Shows openness to, respect for, and understanding of, viewpoints other than one’s own. Draws on such viewpoints to test, enhance and/or reframe one’s own beliefs and ideas.

Required Text

**Course Goals & Objectives**
- Examine experiences with critical scrutiny
- Discuss roles played by perception, emotion and belief in shaping views
- Recognize problems and limitations inherent in linguistic discourse
- Appreciate engage with, and make use of viewpoints other than one’s own
- Identify claims and assess their appropriate fit with reasons
- Distinguish among different kinds of reasons used to support claims
- Distinguish between reports, inferences and judgments
- Identify common rhetorical strategies, propaganda devices and logical fallacies
- Recognize, construct, and make evaluative distinctions among different arguments

Class participation is key. This course will not be a lecture series; it will be a dialogue. In order to achieve these goals we all must be prepared for each class and we all must actively participate in each class. Each session will be a progression forward.

A variety of learning strategies will be employed, including textbook readings, class discussions, informal lectures, individual and group exercises, dialogues and a final paper. The final paper will be a research/opinion paper. The topic is selected by the instructor but the opinions and positions taken are to be determined by each student individually. All opinions are accepted and no subjective criteria are used to scrutinize any opinion. These persuasive papers are graded on how well they incorporate all of the competencies required in Critical Thinking.
Principles from DePaul’s L-5 competency statement, mainly: inquiry, decision-making and learning from experience/assessment, will be discussed and tested. Please see the Syllabus Addenda for the competency statement and definitions of the L-5 Competency criteria.

**Evaluating Student Performance**

In addition to homework, in-class exercises, and class discussions, there are four major pieces of work in the course:

- Research/Opinion Paper
- Personal Narrative Essay
- Class Debate
- Take-home Exercises on Induction, Deduction, and Propaganda Devices
- Play On A Word

In assessing work like that described above, I strive to be clear, flexible, forthright and empathetic.

**Research/Opinion Paper**

Students will demonstrate critical and appreciative thinking while advocating a position on an issue. Critical thinking includes evaluating evidence, and evaluating sources of evidence, to determine if the evidence is trustworthy. Students will think about the issue from different directions of thought and analyze opposing arguments. In preparing the paper, students will generate and compare alternate positions and viewpoints while noting strengths and weaknesses in them, and design a position that answers all reasonable objections. This essay must be original work performed for this class.

**Grading**

It is assumed that students will take Critical Thinking as a Pass/Fail course. If you are enrolled in this class, the grade roster already lists you as taking this course on a Pass/Fail basis. Students may, however, elect to take Critical Thinking, for a letter grade (A, B, C, D, or F).

*If you wish to take this class for a letter grade, you MUST notify me, in writing, of your wish to do so by the start of Week 3 of this quarter. That means that if you wish to take this course, Critical Thinking, and change your grade option from Pass/Fail to a letter grade option, you MUST notify me in writing before June 27, 2017.*

*You should be aware that if you choose the letter grade option, (A, B, C, D, or F), the grade you receive will impact your grade point average in the standard fashion. If you take this course for the traditional Pass/Fail option and receive a Pass grade, there is no impact on your grade point average. Finally, if you take the course for the traditional Pass/Fail option and receive a Fail grade, you do receive negative credit.*
### Class Component | Points/Percentage
---|---
Class discussion, class exercises participation | 35
Personal Narrative essay | 15
Play on a Word | 20
Research/opinion paper | 30

#### 1. Pass/Fail Option
Passing Grade=75 points

#### 2. Letter Grade

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91 - 100</td>
<td>A or Pass with high marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 - 90</td>
<td>B or Pass with good marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 - 80</td>
<td>C or Pass with adequate marks</td>
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<tr>
<td>61 - 70</td>
<td>D or Fail with mostly low marks</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 or lower</td>
<td>F or Fail with overall low marks</td>
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</tbody>
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**Note:** Point totals aside, you must complete all the assignments to get credit for the course. Students are expected to attend all classes. **Missing more than 20% of this class may result in a failing grade.**

*Please see the Syllabus Addendum for more on Pass/Fail and Letter Grades.*

**Notes on Assignments**

Readings from the Chaffee text are assigned for each class session. Additional materials will be made available through the Course Reserve services at DePaul’s libraries. Assigned readings may change as the needs of the class may dictate. In addition, from time to time, other materials may be assigned.

There will be short written assignments and one extended research paper of 7-10 pages. The assigned research/opinion paper must be typewritten and double spaced. If this creates a problem, please see me immediately.

As you will see, there is a first draft of your research/opinion paper due prior to your final paper. This will allow time to edit, correct, and perfect your work in order to submit your best effort. First drafts handed in late will not be discussed at the individual conferences. Final papers not turned in when due will receive a failing grade.

All assignments are due at the beginning of class.
Week One, June 13, 2017
Myths and Critical Thinking
Awakening Creativity and Critical Thinking
The Power of Stereotypes
Relationship Between Language and Culture

Assign:  Personal Narrative Essay, due January 28, 2016
         Play on A Word

Week Two, June 20, 2017
Your Lenses
Using Language to Clarify Thinking
Types of Beliefs: Reports, Inferences, and Judgments

Readings:  Chapter 4: Perceiving and Believing, p.143-151; 164-177
           Chapter 6: Language and Thought, p. 251-278

Week Three, June 27, 2017 *
Effective Discussion
Beliefs Based on Indirect Experience
Library Session-Research Techniques for Research/Opinion Paper
* Must request grade option by today

Readings:  Chapter 2: Thinking Critically, p. 64-79,
           Chapter 5: Constructing Knowledge, p. 206-211; 217-226

Assign:    Article

Due:       Personal Narrative Essay

Week Four, July 4, 2017
No class

Week Five, July 11, 2017
Moral Compass and Complexities
Thinking Critically with Oprah

Readings:  Chapter 9: Thinking Critically about Moral Issues

Due:       Article
**Week Six, July 18, 2017**
Constructing Arguments  
Two Opposing Perspectives  
Debate Intro

Readings: Chapter 10: Constructing Arguments p. 440-463
Assign: Debate Research
Due: First Draft Research/Opinion Paper

**Week Seven, July 25, 2017**
Fallacies and Rhetorical Strategies  
Discuss Debate Research  
Debate Teams Prepare Arguments

Readings: Chapter 11: Reasoning Critically
Assign: Take Home Exercises
Due: Debate Research

**Week Eight, August 1, 2017**
Perception v. Reality  
Debate

Readings: Chapter 4: Five Accounts of the Assassination of Malcolm X p. 152-155

**Week Nine, August 8, 2017**
The Voice of Criticism  
Solution Discourse  
First Drafts Returned: Individual Conferences on Research/Opinion Paper

Due: Take Home Exercises

**Week Ten, August 15, 2017**
Empathy and Empowerment  
Review Take Home Exercises  
Play on a Word: The Final Say

Due: Research/Opinion Paper
SYLLABUS ADDENDA

Definition of Letter Grades and Pass/Fail

Each of the major assignments in the course has its own mini-rubric for assigning points. Speaking generally though, the following descriptions apply:

Work assessed as **A or Pass with high marks** is characterized by *thorough and thoughtful engagement* with the material, superior comprehension of key concepts and exceptionally fluent, college-level writing. Work that is “thoughtfully engaged” covers the basics but goes beyond them by a) drawing insightful connections; b) raising incisive questions; and c) making well-supported evaluations, inferences or arguments.

Work assessed as **B or Pass with good marks** is characterized by *thorough engagement* with the material, good comprehension of key concepts and fully fluent, college-level writing. Work that is “thoroughly engaged” covers the basics and applies them aptly and consistently while providing the occasional provocative connection, relevant question or well-supported evaluation.

Work assessed as **C or Pass with adequate marks** is characterized by *engagement* with the material, comprehension of key concepts and mostly fluent, college-level writing. Work that is “engaged” covers the basics and applies them aptly without going beyond them.

Work assessed as **D or Fail with mostly low marks** is characterized by *low engagement* with the material, comprehension of few key concepts and writing that is intermittently fluent. Work that is “lowly engaged” occasionally covers the basics and attempts to apply them with limited success.

Work assessed as **F or Fail with overall low marks** is characterized by *poor engagement* with the material, incomprehension of key concepts and writing that lacks fluency. Work that is “poorly engaged” covers few or no basics and attempts to apply them without success.
See additional information pertaining to the grade designations for undergraduate grades. See Pass/Fail Grading Options.

This course includes and adheres to the college and university policies described in the links below:

- Academic Integrity Policy
- Incomplete Policy
- Course Withdrawal Timelines and Grade/Fee Consequences
- Accommodations Based on the Impact of a Disability
- Protection of Human Research Participants

Course Resources

- University Center for Writing-based Learning
- SNL Writing Guide
- Dean of Students Office

Faculty Biography

Tania Luma received her Juris Doctor from The John Marshall Law School and a bachelor’s degree in Sociology and Broadcast Journalism from the University of Maryland. She specializes in family and juvenile law. Email: tania.luma@gmail.com.