Critical Thinking Syllabus

Late Start: This class begins on April 4, 2016

DePaul University
School for New Learning
Critical Thinking LL270, Section 905; Monday, Loop 5:45-9:00
Spring Quarter 2016
This is a “late start” class. It consists of 10 class sessions meeting in the spring quarter (Mondays, April 4th to June 10th)

General Information

Instructor: Dr. Rita Thomson
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When I tell people that I teach critical thinking, they always have questions. They have an idea of what critical thinking is, but they are not sure what one would learn in such a class.

Since this is a common reaction, I have developed a short answer to explain what it is I teach. I tell people that the class includes linguistics, logic, the scientific method, learning to uncover cultural assumptions, problem solving, and learning to write a good argument.

If I need to expand, I say that linguistics teaches us how words mean and how they influence how we think. Logic teaches us the traditional methods of inductive and deductive thinking, and logical fallacies. The scientific method teaches us to understand the reasoning method behind scientific advancement. Critical Theory teaches us to uncover unconscious assumptions and power relationships in society. Constructing a good argument allows us to learn the skills of academia, the tools of research and documentation, which are the lingua franca of the academic community.

I can add, that, at one point or another in the class, students usually realize that what they are studying is personally applicable. Students discover that studying how they think and what gets in the way of thinking is powerful. Whether it’s uncovering the manipulation of language and images in commercials or the unconscious assumptions or logical errors in the arguments of your friends, family, or boss, critical thinking empowers the student.

Course Description: Students will learn the analytical reasoning skills necessary for college work. They will learn decision making skills, discussing and writing about ideas in an organized way, and problem solving techniques. They will learn to think critically about subjectivity and belief systems. They will learn different structures of arguments and logical fallacies. They will refine these skills by writing papers which demonstrate these abilities.
**Competencies:** L-5: Can analyze issues and reconcile problems through critical and appreciative thinking.

1. Analyzes, critiques, and evaluates different forms and levels of thinking and reasoned discourse.
2. Constructs well-reasoned arguments in the context of real-life experiences and issues.

Students demonstrate this competence by applying the elements of reasoning and critical thinking. Students will be able to critique as well as construct arguments by analyzing and creating claims, appropriate reasons, and rebuttals. Students will also analyze the audience and address a variety of points of view. Students may demonstrate this competence through the Critical Thinking course or the Writing/Reasoning/Proficiency Exam. SNL will not accept transfer courses as fulfillment of this competence. Students should continue to develop their critical thinking skills throughout the program.

**Attendance:** The class meets only once a week for 10 weeks. It is my experience that students who are absent or chronically late simply do not finish the course. They lose the thread of the course material and they find themselves at sea, unsure of what they have missed, confused about concepts which everyone else seems to know, and unaware of missing assignments. Missing class means missing three hours of work which must be made up, on top of new reading and writing assignments. Because of this, missing even one class is a serious matter. Tardiness is a serious issue for the same reasons.

More than one absence would certainly be grounds for failure. Students must arrive on time and stay until the end of class. Students who arrive late or leave early will find that their attendance is marked accordingly. Assignments are to be turned in on time.


*This edition has been in use for several quarters and thus you might be able to find a used copy. Be sure to buy the 11th edition. Older editions would have much the same material, but some of the readings would be different and all of the page numbers would be different.*

**Learning Experience:** Careful reading of the text, group discussions and class activities, quizzes, analysis and construction of arguments, and papers make up the learning experience.

**Grading and Assessment:**
- All students must be registered and listed on the class roster by the beginning of the second week of the term. Students not on the roster by this time cannot stay in the class under any circumstances. Please contact the SNL Advising Center or the Office of Financial Aid to work out your particular situation.
• Students who need to withdraw from the course must do so by the end of the second week of the quarter. After that point 100% tuition is charged. It is possible to withdraw from a course or competence through the end of the seventh week of the quarter, but there is no tuition refund after the end of the second week.

• It is assumed students will take SNL’s Critical Thinking course on a Pass/Fail basis (i.e., PA or F). If you are enrolled in the course, then the grade roster already lists you as taking the course on the Pass/Fail basis. Most of the courses in SNL’s Lifelong Learning Area are set up this way. However, if you like, you may elect to take Critical Thinking for a letter grade (i.e., A, B, C, D or F) instead. If you are interested in taking the course for a letter grade, you should discuss the matter with your instructor. (You want to choose the option that’s best for you.) If you wish to take the course for a letter grade, you must notify the instructor of your wish to do so by the start of Week 3 of the quarter.

• You should be aware that if you choose the letter grade option in this course, then the grade you receive (whether A, B, C, D or F) will impact your grade point average in the standard weighted fashion. On the other hand, if you take the course on the Pass/Fail basis and you receive a Pass grade, then there is no impact on your grade point average. Finally, if you take the course in the Pass/Fail basis and receive a Fail grade, then you receive negative credit.

• Incompletes are given only under special circumstances and must be arranged for in advance. Incompletes are an option that the university allows for students who have been successfully completing the course until progress is interrupted by serious problems, such as illness, family, or work issues. Both the professor and the student must agree to a written plan for completing course work. See the university policy for deadlines and restrictions on incompletes.

Criteria for Assessment:
Evidence Students will submit: Students will submit four papers and nine quizzes. They will participate in the class as evidence of their learning.

• Since each papers develops an important critical thinking skill, the student must complete all of the papers to pass.

• Since each quizz develops important critical thinking skills the student must complete nine quizzes to pass the course. Because quizzes are discussed in class and thus cannot be taken late, two make-up quizzes will be available.

• Students must also participate in the group work during class. There are numerous discussions, in-class writing assignments, and group projects which develop the concepts of critical thinking. It is expected that students will pay attention in class. To that end, all electronic devices can only be used for class purposes.

Assignments:

• Reading assignments in Thinking Critically provide a lot of information about the process of critical thinking. Specific page numbers for each week’s assignments are listed on D2L.
Quizzes are posted weekly on D2L and must be completed and submitted by noon on the Sunday before class so as to be available for discussion in class. This allows the instructor time to prepare the quizzes for class discussion.

Each of the four papers allow students to demonstrate their mastery of a set of concepts. Students must complete all four papers. Three of the papers are approximately 2 pages in length. A longer argument paper, based on research, is approximately 6 pages in length. Instructions for the papers will be given in class and posted on D2L. Papers will be submitted through D2L and they will be screened for plagiarism through TurnItIn. Papers that do not receive a grade of “C” can be revised to improve the grade. Plagiarized papers cannot be revised and are grounds for failure in the course.

Additional short in-class writing assignments, group discussions, analysis of arguments, and group projects must be completed in class.

We will use letter grades during the course of the quarter, both for convenience and because I find that students are not usually satisfied by pass/fail grades for individual assignments. At the end of the quarter, you will, of course, receive either a pass/fail grade or a letter grade, depending on the choice you have made. If you have chosen to receive a letter grade, papers count for 60% of the class grade while the other 40% is based on quizzes and in-class activities. You must complete all 4 papers and 9 quizzes to pass.

Writing Help: For help with organizing your ideas, grammar, citing sources, avoiding plagiarism, sample SNL assignments, and much more, see the Writing Guide for SNL Students at http://snl.depaul.edu/writing/index.html. For on-campus and online tutoring, see the DePaul University Writing Center at http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/. The Writing Centers’ syllabus supplement is available at http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/html/fac/supplements.html.

Biographical Sketch: Dr. Rita Thomson has a Ph.D. in literature from Loyola University with a specialty in women’s literature and psychoanalytical criticism. She teaches Critical Thinking at DePaul University. Previously, she taught at Truman College.

Class Schedule:
Specific page numbers for the reading assignments, quizzes, and other materials will be listed on the class D2L site.

Week 1: Monday, April 4
Introduction to the course
What is critical thinking?
Introduction of the research project
Introduction of first paper, the deconstruction of a commercial

Week 2: Monday, April 11
Introduction to problem solving (this project is completed later in the course as paper three)
Perceiving: Can you believe your eyes? (Chaffee, Chapter 4)
How words work: newspaper accounts of the assassination of Malcolm X

Week 3: Monday, April 18
Construction of knowledge: Who can you believe? (Chaffee, Chapter 5)
Thinking Critically (Chaffee, Chapter 2)
**Paper One: Deconstruction of a Commercial due**
**Discussion of Mary Barnett Case**

Week 4: Monday, April 25
How Words Mean: Language and Thought (Chaffee, Chapter 6)

Week 5: Monday, May 2
How Words Mean: Concepts (Chaffee, Chapter 7)
Discussion of research paper assignment
Organizing knowledge (Chaffee, Chapter 8)
**Paper Two: Argument paper analyzing the Casey Anthony Case due**

Week 6: Monday, May 9
Research techniques
Logic (Chaffee, Chapter 10)

Week 7: Monday, May 16
Scientific Method and Logical Fallacies (Chaffee- Chapter 11)
**Paper Three: “Problem Solving: Changing Habits” paper due**

Week 8: Monday, May 23
Discussion of research and documentation techniques

Week 9: Monday, May 30
Memorial Day Holiday

Week 10: Monday, June 6
When a problem has a moral dimension (Chaffee, Chapter 9)
**Paper Four: Research paper due**
In-class video on Critical Thinking
Discussion of research paper