**Critical Thinking – HUP 102.5368**

**Spring 2017 Semester**

Tuesdays/Thursdays: 8:05—9:35 p.m.

Instructor: Anton Kociolek

Office Hours: By appointment

Email: [akociolek@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:akociolek@gc.cuny.edu)

**Introduction**

In a time of “alternative facts” and “fake news”, how can one decide what is correct and incorrect? How can we establish what is true or not true, when we find competing claims about the truth? How do we make sense of what is happening in the world, when there are so many different versions of current events in the news, on our social media, and in our daily conversations? We live in an era when many feel that it has become harder to trust the government, news media, and each other as reliable sources of information and knowledge—it is more important than ever for us to be aware of critical thinking and what it can do for us. **Critical thinking helps to make clear how it is that we think and communicate about the world.** Not only can critical thinking help us to navigate the claims that other people make, it can also help us to improve our own thinking and communication.

**Course Objectives**

We will explore the foundations of critical thinking together as a class, and over the course of the semester learn how to better:

* understand thought as a process
* identify and evaluate statements, arguments, beliefs, and evidence
* think critically about different types of media
* use critical reasoning to address problems
* think about challenging moral and political issues
* and communicate more effectively in both spoken and written form

While doing so, we will learn to become more aware of our own beliefs about the world, where they come from and why we might have them—with a focus on how power and politics shape the ways that we understand the world, and how critical thinking can serve as a resource to empower people.

**Required Text**

John Chaffee, *Thinking Critically*, Stamford, CT: Wadsworth, 2015, 11th edition

**Course Requirements**

1a. **Grading Policy**: Grade percentage breakdown: 1) Class attendance (**20%**) You will be assigned **1** point for each class session that you attend—we have **24** class sessions, and if you attend every class the extra **4** points will count as **extra credit** towards your total course grade. 2) Homework assignments (**50%**) there are **11** total of these assignments, and each is scored with **5** points, meaning that you only need to do **10** assignments to make **50** points 3) Essays (**20%**) **2** essays, each counts for **10** points; 3) In-class debates (**10%**) **No further extra credit opportunities will be granted**

1b. **Grading Policy**: Grade percentage breakdown: 1) Class attendance (**20%**) You will be assigned **1** point for each class session that you attend—we have **24** class sessions, and if you attend every class the extra **4** points will count as **extra credit** towards your total course grade. 2) Homework assignments (**20%**) there are **11** total of these assignments, and each is graded with **2** points, meaning that you only need to do **10** assignments to make **20** points 3) Essays (**40%**) **2** essays, each counts for **20** points; 3) In-class debates (**20%**) **No further extra credit opportunities will be granted**

2. **Assignments** Each day’s **reading** is noted on the syllabus. Any additional readings not from our text will be provided for you. You will be expected to have done the readings for each day **before**that class meets. **Homework** assignments are due most weeks, and will be submitted as forum entries on our class wordpress site://///////

3. **Essays** There are two short essays due over the course of our semester. These essays will be about 2- 3 pages in length. The first essay will be on a topic submitted to you beforehand, while the second will draw on our in-class debates. All essays must be formatted in Times New Roman 12 point font, double-spaced, and with 1” margins, no exceptions. Essays will be graded on how clearly they present ideas and evidence, and for proper use of grammar and structure. Essays will be submitted as Microsoft Word files on our class wordpress site:

4. **Debates** We will hold in-class debates on the week of May 30th—June 1st. Students will select debate partners, and work in pairs on a topic of their choice. Each partner will be randomly assigned to take either a *pro* or *con* position on their topic, and will expected to work together collaboratively in order to put together the best arguments and evidence both in favor of and against each position. Each group will then debate their positions in front of the class. The arguments and evidence that you use for your debate topic will serve as the basis for you final paper.

5. **Attendance:** Students are expected to attend and be on time for every class. Attendance will be taken 15 minutes after start of class time, and **anyone who is not present when attendance is taken will be marked absent.** Note that students who miss approximately four (5) class hours FOR ANY REASON cannot receive a passing grade in this course unless there is a prior understanding with the instructor. LaGuardia College’s policy (p. 181): “*The maximum number of absences is limited to 15% of the number of class hours [15% of 37 hours is 5 ½ hours]. Note: Absences are counted from the first day of class even if they are a result of late registration or change of program.”* **If there are issues preventing you from attending class and/or making it in to class on time, you must contact the instructor as soon as possible so that we may discuss the issue and find a resolution.**

6**. Classroom Behavior**. We will all be expected to show courteous and respectful behavior to one another. Disrespectful and disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.

**Any student engaging in disruptive behavior will be warned, and failure to comply with such a warning will result in the student being asked to leave class and marked as “absent”**. Disruptive behavior is any action by an individual that unreasonably interferes with, hinders, obstructs, or prevents the right of others to freely participate in the class’s activities, including behavior that may prevent faculty from carrying out their professional responsibilities. Examples include the following: 1. A student who interrupts the educational process in class. (Making remarks out of turn, side talking during a lecture, and dominating class discussion.) 2. A student who physically confronts another person. 3. A student who verbally abuses or threatens another person. 4. A student who physically acts out by destroying or damaging university property. 5. A student who shows signs of alcohol or drug abuse and/or comes to class drunk or high. **There is no eating permitted during class, though beverages are allowed.**

7. **Cell Phones.** Cell phones are **not permitted**during class time. Cell phone usage during class is disruptive and disrespectful to both your fellow classmates and instructor. Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off and out of sight once class starts. **Failure to comply with this policy can result in your grade being lowered.** Laptop and tablet devices are permitted for note taking purposes.

8. **Plagiarism** and other forms of academic misconduct are morally wrong, a violation of College and University Policy. Cheating is defined as giving or receiving assistance or using prohibited material as a test aid. Cases of plagiarism or cheating will result in an automatic “F” or “0” for the assignment and/or class. Plagiarism is defined as taking words, sentences or ideas from another person and submitting it as your own without giving proper credit to that person. If it is found that you have used online sources inappropriately by copy and pasting or ‘borrowing’ in part or in whole from previously written essays, texts, or WebPages, you will be reported to the *Office of Student Conduct* in accordance with LaGuardia's Academic Integrity Policies. It is better to err on the side of caution than to get a zero on the assignment. Simply forgetting to cite a source still counts as plagiarism. For more details, see “Academic Dishonesty” on p. 181 in the Catalog.

**The Writing Center**

Students are expected to avail themselves of the resources available at the Writing Center for help with the content, grammar, and sentence structure of their essays BEFORE they turn them in. Making good use of this has the potential to improve your writing and modify your final grade. The Center is in **Room B-200**, Office hours are Monday –Thursday 9:15am – 3:15pm, 4:30-9:00pm and Friday: 9:15am-2:00pm, 4:30-9:00pm. <http://www.lagcc.cuny.edu/Writing-Center/Schedule/>

**Student Services**

Students with mobility, vision, hearing and other disabilities and who are interested in requesting accommodations and/or supportive services while they are on campus, should phone the Office for Student Services at (718)482-5279 located at M-102 Shenker Hall. For more information, review pages 204-208 in the Catalog.

If you have any other special circumstance such as a religious or military obligation that could affect your participation in this course at any time throughout this semester, it is your responsibility to bring it to your instructor’s attention and review the appropriate documentation and procedures for each circumstance. All requests are confidential. Requests must be made the first week of class. *Students will not be granted services retrospectively.*

**Grading System**

100-93% = A 90-92% = A- 87-89% = B+ 83-86% = B 80-82% = B-

77-79% = C+ 73-76% = C 70-72% = C- 67-69% = D+ 63-66% = D

60-62% = D- 0-59% = F

**All HOMEWORK Assignments Are Due by Sunday 10 pm of That Week**

**Week 1:**

**Tues 03/07**

* Course intro: Requirements and Responsibilities
* Introductions
* Thinking critically:
  + Thinking, communicating, knowledge, and power

**Thurs 03/09**

* Becoming aware of how we think:
  + Thought as process
  + Decision making and creativity
* **Reading:** 
  + Chaffee pp. 4-15, 20-32

**Homework:**

* Chaffee p. 11 “Thinking Activity 1.1: Analyzing a Goal That You Achieved”
* Chaffee pp. 81—88 “Analyzing Issues”
  + What was your verdict on the Mary Barnett case? Why and how did you come to this conclusion? **Write down some quick notes on this, and come to class prepared to discuss this case.**

**Week 2:**

**Tues 03/14**

* Thinking Critically:
  + Thinking actively, thinking independently, reading critically
* **Reading:** Chaffee pp. 57—79

**Thurs 03/16**

* Thinking Critically:
  + Recognizing perspective, listening, analyzing
  + Problem Solving
* **Reading**:
  + Chaffee pp. 106-125

**Homework:**

* Chaffee pp. 69—70 “Thinking Activity 2.8: Analyzing Different Perspectives”
* Chaffee p. 124 “Thinking Activity 3.2: Analyzing an Unsolved Problem”

**Week 3:**

**Tues 03/21**

* Perceiving and Believing:
  + Sensation, Perception, Belief
* **Reading:** 
  + Chaffee pp. 144—164

**Thurs 03/23**

* Perceiving and Believing:
  + Beliefs: Reports, Judgments, Inferences
  + Cognitive Biases
* **Reading**:
  + Chaffee 164—177
  + “20 cognitive biases that screw up your decisions” Lee, Samantha, and Shana Lebowitz
  + Article: “The Cognitive Bias President Trump Understands Better Than You” Dreyfuss, Emily (Wired)

**Homework:**

* Chaffee p. 164 “Thinking Activity 4.5: Analyzing a False Perception”
* Chaffee p. 177 “Thinking Activity 4.10: Analyzing Judgments”

**Week 4:**

**Tues 03/28**

* Language and Thought:
  + Language, Representation, Concepts and Definition
* **Reading:** 
  + Chaffee pp. 252—259; 267—273; 310-320, 335-336 (Defining Concepts)

**Thurs 03/30**

* Language and Thought:
  + Language in use, language in society
    - The Politics of Language
    - The Language of Politics: Rhetoric, Propaganda, Demagoguery
* **Reading:**
  + Chaffee pp. 278—288
  + Article: “De-stigmatizing Hawaii’s Creole Language” Wong, Alia (The Atlantic)
  + Filene’s Propaganda Techniques
  + Article: “‘How Propaganda Works’ Is a Timely Reminder for a Post-Truth Age” Kakutani, Michiko (The New York Times)

**Homework:**

* Thinking Activity 6.6 “Analyzing Language Uses” p. 283
* Chaffee pp.274—278 “Thinking Passage”. Answer **any 2 questions** from “Questions for Analysis” on p.278

**Week 5:**

**Tues 04/04**

* Constructing Knowledge
  + Knowledge, Belief, Truth
* **Reading:** 
  + Chaffee pp. 198-226

**Thurs 04/06**

* Thinking Critically About Art, Media, and Performance:
  + Form, Genre, Narrative, Audience, Multimedia
* **Reading: To Be Announced**

**Homework: Due Sun 04/09**

* In a brief, reflexive, and critical essay (3 short paragraphs), reflect on a recent performance or piece of cultural production that you experienced in a venue—For example, a movie, an art exhibit, a musical performance (Instructions Forthcoming)

**Week 6:**

**Tues 04/11: Spring Recess—No Class**

**Thurs 04/13: Spring Recess—No Class**

**Essay: Due Thurs 04/20**

* Essay 1: on a topic that will be given to you the week before

**Week 7:**

**Tues 04/18: Spring Recess—No Class**

**Thurs 04/20**

* In-class film: “Dark Days”

**Homework: Due Sun 04/23**

* Critical reflection on the film “Dark Days” (instructions to be given out at the end of class 04/20)

**Week 8:**

**Tues 04/25**

* Reasoning critically:
  + Relating and Organizing Concepts: Comparison, Analogy, Causality
  + Point of View
* **Reading:**
  + Chaffee pp. 350-363; 367-372; 510-515

**Thurs 04/27**

* Constructing arguments
  + Recognizing and Evaluating Arguments
  + Conclusions and Reasons
* **Reading:** 
  + Chaffee pp. 438-443, 447-458, 463-464

**Homework:**

* Chaffee pp. 372-373 “Thinking Activity 8.9: Analyzing Causal Relationships”
* Chaffee pp. 459-463 “Thinking Activity 10.3: Evaluating Arguments”

**Week 9:**

**Tues 05/02**

* Reasoning critically:
  + Science: Empiricism, Experiment, and the Scientific Method
* **Reading:**
  + Chaffee pp. 474-487
  + “The Mistrust of Science” Gawande, Atul (The New Yorker)
  + “Not Up For Debate: The Science Behind Vaccination” Carroll, Aaron E. (The New York Times”
  + “Distinguishing Science and Pseudoscience” Coker, Rory (Quackwatch)

**Thurs 05/04**

* Reasoning critically:
  + Fallacies and reasoning
  + Validity, soundness, cogency
* **Reading:**
  + Chaffee pp. 490-503
  + Additional readings to be announced

**Homework:**

* Chaffee pp. 477-478 “Thinking Activity 11.1 Evaluating Inductive Arguments”
* Chaffee p. 488 “Thinking Activity 11.4: Evaluating Experimental Results”

**Week 10:**

**Tues 05/09**

* Critical Thinking, Politics, Power
  + Conspiracy thinking
* **Readings:** 
  + “The Dangerous Conspiracy Theories About the Zika Virus” Specter, Michael (The New Yorker)
  + “Why Rational People Buy Into Conspiracy Theories” Koerth-Baker, Maggie (The New York Times)
  + “The Logic Behind Conspiracy Theories: Op-Ed” Brotherton, Rob (The Los Angeles Times)
  + “12 Million Reasons to Believe in Lizard People” Osberg, Mollie (Motherboard)

**Thurs 05/11**

* Critical Thinking and Moral Issues
  + Ethics, morality, and justice
* **Reading:**
  + Chaffee pp. 388-417

**Homework:**

* Chaffee pp. 399-400 “Thinking Activity 9.3: Analyzing Moral Dilemmas”
* Chaffee 515-526 “Thinking Passages: Thinking Critically About Authority”
  + Complete “Questions for Analysis” on pp. 525-526

**Week 11:**

**Tues 05/16**

* Evaluating Sources, Critically Engaging with News Media:
  + Thinking critically about evidence, perspective, and interests
  + Knowledge and legitimating authority
* **Reading:** **To Be Announced**
* **In-Class Debate Topics Due Today!**

**Thurs 05/18**

* The News Media and Public Debates
  + Thinking critically about complex social problems
* **Reading:** Chaffee 179—191 “Thinking Passage”; answer **any one** of the 6 questions on pp. 191—192, and bring your answer in for discussion. **If you are called on and do not have an answer to discuss, you will be marked absent from class!! Be Prepared**

**Homework:**

* Read Chafee 178—179 “Thinking Critically About New Media”, and complete **question 1 only** of Thinking Activity 4.11 “Detecting and Analyzing Faulty Perceptions on the Web”

**Week 12:**

**Tues 05/23**

* In-class preparation for debates

**Thurs 05/25**

* In-class preparation for debates

**No Homework: Work on your debate preparations!**

**Week 13:**

**Tues 05/30**

* In-class debates!

**Thurs 06/01**

* In-class debates!

**Homework: Reflection on debates**

**Week 14:**

**Tues 06/06**

* **Final Class**
  + Special Topic
* **Reading: To Be Announced**

**Thurs 06/08**

* **Commencement—No Classes Scheduled**

**Essay 2: Due Sun. 06/11**