

# Critical Thinking

## *Think Democracy!*

Course Number: HUP 102.1225 (36387)

Email: jonkwan11@gmail.com

Time and Place: MTTh 2:15-3:15 C-414, C-451, C-411 Office Hours: by appointment (after or before class)

Instructor: Jonathan Kwan

Office: C-740

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## 1. Course Description

This course explores the process of thinking critically and guides students in thinking more clearly, insightfully and effectively. Concrete examples from students' experience and contemporary issues help students develop the abilities to solve problems, analyze issues, and make informed decisions in their academic, career and personal lives. Substantive readings, structured writing assignments and ongoing discussions help students develop language skills while fostering sophisticated thinking abilities.

The theme of this course for the semester is democracy. Our working premise is that critical thinking and democracy mutually support and inform one another. On the one hand, members of a political society must think critically in order to sustain the healthy functioning of their democracy and to check abuses of power. On the other hand, democratic values and institutions are crucial for cultivating an environment in which free dialogue and critical thinking can flourish. Over the course of the semester, we will explore the nature and value of democracy and analyze current political debates around inequality, immigration, racism, gun control, mass incarceration, climate justice, implicit bias, and the #MeToo movement. Students will also have an opportunity to engage with the theme of democracy in their research project where they will conduct research at the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives in order to analyze and propose solutions to a problem facing New York City.

## 2. Course Objectives

1. **Reading and Comprehension:** Students will develop the skills to actively and critically read and comprehend a variety of texts understood broadly to include written works, images, artworks, podcasts, videos, etc. Students will learn how to identify main ideas and key terms, raise questions, make inferences, evaluate arguments, and analyze different genres of nonfiction texts.
2. **Writing:** Students will cultivate their writing abilities when it comes to explicating texts, sharing and reflecting on their experiences, evaluating and crafting arguments, and structuring and organizing their thinking. Students will also learn how to conduct research using archival, scholarly, and news sources and how to incorporate that research into an argumentative thesis-driven essay.
3. **Oral Communication:** Students will hone their oral communication abilities including listening respectfully and attentively, dialoguing with interlocutors rigorously and fairly, and expressing their ideas and viewpoints clearly and cogently.
4. **Critical Thinking:** Students will cultivate their critical thinking, which involves a complex of various capacities including thinking creatively, questioning assumptions, making decisions, viewing situations from different perspectives, solving complex problems, reasoning logically, and evaluating arguments.
5. **Democracy:** Students will explore the course's theme of democracy in philosophical readings, contemporary political issues, and problems facing New York City while reflecting on the relationship between critical thinking and democracy itself.

## 3. Materials

1. The textbook is: Chaffee, John. *Thinking Critically*. 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Cengage Learning, 2015/2017.
2. You will need paper and a writing instrument to take notes and complete in-class writing assignments.

- Course materials such as the latest version of the syllabus, readings outside the textbook, assignments, etc. will be available on the course website: [cunyhumanitiesalliance.org/thinkdemocracy](http://cunyhumanitiesalliance.org/thinkdemocracy).
- You will need to have access to **Blackboard** when turning in certain completed assignments, such as the steps of your research project.

#### 4. Course Components and Grading Scale

Course Component	Percentage of Course Grade
Attendance	10%
Participation	10%
Homework	30%
Forum Presentation	10%
Research Project	
Step 1: Topic	5%
Step 2: Field Research	10%
Step 3: Topical Research	5%
Step 4: Extended Outline	10%
Step 5: Finalized Paper	10%

Letter Grade	Percentage
A (4.0)	93-100%
A- (3.7)	90-92%
B+ (3.3)	87-89%
B (3.0)	83-86%
B- (2.7)	80-82%
C+ (2.3)	77-79%
C (2.0)	73-76%
C- (1.7)	70-72%
D+ (1.3)	67-69%
D (1.0)	63-66%
D- (0.7)	60-62%
F (0)	0-59%

##### Attendance

You should attend class regularly and arrive on time. **If you are counted absent for more than six hours of the course, you will be automatically failed by CUNY.** You are late if you arrive after attendance is taken. If you are late, you need to make sure I count you late rather than absent by talking to me after class. Early departures without prior notice and leaving class for more than 5 minutes will count as absences. Absences can be excused if you provide written medical or emergency documentation. If you know of any classes that you will be unable to attend due to special circumstances at any point in the semester, please notify me as soon as possible. Your attendance grade will be calculated according to the following formula, in which your grade cannot exceed 100:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Classes Attended on Time} + \frac{\text{Number of Classes Attended Late}}{2}}{34} \times 100$$

There are 36 total classes; so, two unexcused absences will not affect your grade. Two late arrivals count as one absence.

##### Participation

Participation includes not simply speaking up in class but rather all aspects to being a prepared, engaged, and respectful member of the class. You should come to class with your textbook and any supplementary readings printed out, having read or completed the assigned texts, and ready to raise questions and engage in classroom discussion. You should also do your best when completing in-class assignments and contributing to group work. Because so much of this course will be interactive and discussion-based, voicing your thoughts and questions is extremely important for everyone's learning beyond just your own. Participation will be assessed at the middle and end of the semester according to a rubric that will be handed out.

##### Homework

Homework includes thinking activities from the textbook and short essays. Each homework is worth 10 points and will be graded on a ✓+ (10 points), ✓ (8.5 points), ✓- (7 points) system. Homework that is not turned in or shows serious lack of effort will be given 0 points. You may turn in homework late with a 2-point deduction only up to a week after it is due. If you ever need an extension for homework for whatever reason and ask for it in advance of its due date, you will be given an extra week to complete it.

## Forum Presentation

You will be invited to present in one of three forums that will take place over the course of the semester and that will cover the topics of immigration, gun control, and the #MeToo movement. You will research one source pertaining to the topic of the forum, present what you learned in front of the class, and participate as a leading member of the discussion. After the forum, you will write a short essay about your thoughts on the topic based on the discussion. Further instructions and a rubric for the forum presentation will be handed out.

## Research Project

For the research project, you will analyze and propose solutions to a problem facing New York City by conducting research on archival, scholarly, and news sources. The research project is composed of five steps that are scaffolded across the length of the semester and includes a tour of the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives. Further instructions and rubrics for the research project will be handed out over the course of the semester.

## CUNY Humanities Alliance Field Trips

Our course is a part of the CUNY Humanities Alliance, which means we have funding to take field trips in NYC that will enhance the learning experience of our course. Field trips may include visits to a *Democracy Now!* broadcast or different museums across the city. These field trips are optional but highly recommended. Attending a field trip will also provide you extra credit (10 points in the homework section of your grade per field trip). You can learn more about the CUNY Humanities Alliance here: [cunyhumanitiesalliance.org](http://cunyhumanitiesalliance.org).

## 5. Course Policies

### Learning Environment

We are all responsible for helping to foster a safe, respectful, inclusive, engaging, and productive learning environment. You should be mindful of how your own participation in the classroom can contribute or be conducive to such a learning environment. We will also work together to explicitly discuss and set norms for respectful, constructive, and inclusive classroom discussion. No discrimination in any form, explicit or subtle—whether on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, mental or physical health, ability, personal characteristics, or the like—will be tolerated in this course. If you feel uncomfortable in any way during the course, please let me know. You are also welcome to email me anonymously regarding your concerns.

Please put away computers, tablets, phones, and other electronic devices during class. There is strong evidence that the in-class use of such devices is distracting and generally not conducive to learning. See the following summary in *The New Yorker*: [www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom](http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom). Sustaining your health during class is encouraged. Feel free to eat during class while doing so quietly and courteously to those around you. If you have any severe food allergies, please inform me.

### Communication

You are *always* welcome to come see me at office hours or to communicate with me by email. I am happy to talk with you about assigned texts, a topic raised in class discussions, any course-related matter, or your other intellectual and life pursuits. I will do my best to respond promptly to emails (usually within 24 hours). Please be professional in email correspondences. If you're unsure how to email your professors, see this guide from *Inside Higher Ed*: [www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/04/16/advice-students-so-they-dont-sound-silly-emails-essay](http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/04/16/advice-students-so-they-dont-sound-silly-emails-essay). Please also check your email and Blackboard consistently for any course updates from me.

### The Writing Center

The Writing Center is an excellent resource where you can receive free professional tutoring on any aspect of writing including grammar, writing structure, research, drafting, outlining, revision, editing, and more. Students who take advantage of The Writing Center (room: B-200, hours: M-F 9:15-3:15 & 4:30-9:00 Saturday 10:30-3:15, phone: 718-482-5688, website: [www.laguardia.edu/Writing-Center/Home](http://www.laguardia.edu/Writing-Center/Home)) generally improve their overall grade as a result.

## Academic Integrity

Although plagiarism is often framed in terms of the punitive consequences that attach to it, the “Writing at Queens” website from Queens College helpfully explains how citing your sources is fundamentally an expression of academic integrity:

Writing in college really means taking part in a conversation with other scholars, writers, and thinkers. Academic citation is how you demonstrate the relationship between your ideas and those of others. On the other hand, *plagiarism* is the failure to demonstrate that relationship: to your professors, this will look like stealing other people’s ideas. You can gain the authority you need to enter these conversations by learning different ways to engage with sources. Authority is not something you already have, or that you find somewhere, or that you get by passing a class: when you write a college paper you create your own authority. Writer Mark Gaipa emphasizes this point when he argues that “[a]uthority . . . is less a characteristic than a relationship that a writer has with other authors” (419).<sup>1</sup> Gaipa provides a number of suggestions for engaging with sources (see the [comics version here](#)). What he shows is that your authority as a writer comes in large part from the way that you can relate to other writers. The writing assignments you do in your classes will help you practice the different ways of relating to other writers, and this practice is the thing that your professors really want to see in your writing.

You can visit the “Writing at Queens” website for more resources and information about how to use and cite sources in your writing: [writingatqueens.qc.cuny.edu/for-students/what-is-plagiarism](http://writingatqueens.qc.cuny.edu/for-students/what-is-plagiarism).

CUNY’s policy on academic integrity is available here:

[library.laguardia.edu/files/pdf/academicintegritypolicy.pdf](http://library.laguardia.edu/files/pdf/academicintegritypolicy.pdf). Academic dishonesty includes, among other things, plagiarism, cheating, obtaining unfair advantages, falsification of records and official documents, unauthorized collaboration on assignments, and submitting substantial portions of the same paper to more than one course. Disciplinary sanctions for academic dishonesty range from a grade of F on an assignment, to an F in the course, to suspension or expulsion. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, you can set up an appointment with The Writing Center or come talk to me.

## Accessibility and Accommodation

I will strive to make the course as accessible as possible to everyone no matter their learning style or ability. I will also offer accommodations in other ways to students who need or would benefit from them. Please feel free to talk to me at any time during the course so we can discuss the best ways that I can offer accommodations. Additionally, if you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning dis/ability, you may consider contacting the Office for Students with Disabilities (room: M-102, email: [OSD@lagcc.cuny.edu](mailto:OSD@lagcc.cuny.edu), phone: 718-482-5279, website: [www.lagcc.cuny.edu/osd](http://www.lagcc.cuny.edu/osd)) or The Wellness Center (room: C-249, email: [WellnessCenter@lagcc.cuny.edu](mailto:WellnessCenter@lagcc.cuny.edu), phone: 718-482-5471, website: [www.laguardia.edu/WellnessCenter](http://www.laguardia.edu/WellnessCenter)) for additional resources, advocacy, and help. If there are any other special circumstances (such as religious or military obligations) that could impact your participation in this course at any time throughout the semester, please let me know so we can work together to find the best ways to address your needs. All communication with me regarding personal circumstances, accommodations, and dis/abilities will be confidential.

I may alter the syllabus as the course progresses and will make an updated syllabus available if this happens.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Gaipa, “Breaking into the Conversation: How Students Can Acquire Authority for Their Writing,” *Pedagogy* 4.3 (2004): 419-437.

## 6. Course Schedule

Class	Date	Readings and Assignments
1 M	March 5	Introduction
2 T	March 6	<a href="#">John Dewey – “Democracy”</a>
3 Th	March 8	<a href="#">Paolo Freire – “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”</a>
4 M	March 12	Ch. 1: Thinking (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 2-19; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 2-19; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 2-20) <b>Thinking Activity 1.2 Due</b>
5 T	March 13	Ch. 1: Thinking (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 20-46; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 20-51; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 20-49)
6 Th	March 15	<b>Essay 1: Democracy and Critical Thinking Due</b>
7 M	March 19	Research Project Overview
8 T	March 20	<b>Meet at Room E-238 for LaGuardia and Wagner Archives Tour</b>
9 Th	March 22	<b>Research Project Step 1: Topic Due at Noon</b>
10 M	March 26	Ch. 2: Thinking Critically (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 48-72; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 52-76; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 50-74) <b>Thinking Activity 2.2 OR 2.9 Due</b>
11 T	March 27	Ch. 2: Thinking Critically (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 73-97; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 76-103; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 74-95)
12 Th	March 29	<a href="#">The Stone’s Interview with Elizabeth Anderson – “What’s Wrong with Inequality?”</a> <a href="#">Video: “Wealth Inequality in America”</a> <b>Essay 2: Equality Due</b>
	March 30 – April 8	NO CLASS – Spring Recess
13 M	April 9	Forum 1: Immigration <a href="#">Podcast: “José Mendoza on Immigration” by The UnMute Podcast</a>
14 T	April 10	Forum 1: Immigration
15 Th	April 12	<b>Research Step 2: Field Research Due at Noon</b>
16 M	April 16	Ch. 3: Solving Problems (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 98-121; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 104-127; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 96-119) <b>Thinking Activity 3.2 Due</b>
17 T	April 17	Ch. 3: Solving Problems (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 124-136; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 128-141; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 120-129)
18 Th	April 19	<a href="#">George Yancy – “Dear White America”</a> <b>Essay 3: Racism Due</b>
19 M	April 23	Ch. 4: Perceiving and Believing (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 138-159; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 142-163; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 131-151) <b>Thinking Activity 4.2 OR 4.4 Due</b>
20 T	April 24	Ch. 4: Perceiving and Believing (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 160-177; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 164-195; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 152-175)
21 Th	April 26	<b>Research Project Step 3: Topical Research Due at Noon</b>
22 M	April 30	Forum 2: Gun Control Ch. 4: Perceiving and Believing (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 178-193; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 179-195)

23 T	May 1	Forum 2: Gun Control <a href="#">Podcast: “The Gun Debate” by FiveThirtyEight</a>
24 Th	May 3	<a href="#">Ta-Nehisi Coates – “The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration”</a> (Read chapters II, IV, V, and IX; feel free to read the rest as well) <a href="#">Video: “Mass Incarceration, Visualized” by The Atlantic</a>
25 M	May 7	Ch. 5: Constructing Knowledge (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 194-219; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 196-221; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 176-201) <b>Thinking Activity 5.5 Due</b>
26 T	May 8	Ch. 5: Constructing Knowledge (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 220-240; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 222-234; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 202-215)
27 Th	May 10	<b>Research Project Step 4: Extended Outline Due at Noon</b>
28 M	May 14	Ch. 5: Constructing Knowledge (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: pgs. 241-255; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 234-249) <a href="#">Kyle Whyte – “Why the Native American Pipeline Resistance in North Dakota is About Climate Justice”</a> <b>Essay 4: Climate Change and Climate Justice Due</b>
29 T	May 15	Ch.10: Constructing Arguments (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 420-443; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 436-463; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 414-441) <b>Thinking Activity 10.1 Due</b>
30 Th	May 17	Ch. 10: Constructing Arguments (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 444-458)
31 M	May 21	Ch. 11: Reasoning Critically (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 460-491; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 472-503; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 454-486) <b>Thinking Activity 11.6 Due</b>
32 T	May 22	Ch. 11: Reasoning Critically (12 <sup>th</sup> ed: 498-517; 11 <sup>th</sup> ed: 510-529; 10 <sup>th</sup> ed: 492-509)
33 Th	May 24	<a href="#">Rebecca Solnit – “Men Explain Things to Me”</a> <a href="#">Podcast: “Jennifer Saul on Implicit Bias” by Philosophy Bites</a> <b>Essay 5: Implicit Bias Due</b>
	May 28	NO CLASS – Memorial Day
34 T	May 29	Forum 3: #MeToo Movement <a href="#">The Nation – “6 Perspectives on the Future of #MeToo”</a>
35 Th	May 31	Forum 3: #MeToo Movement
36 M	June 4	Conclusion <b>Research Project Step 5: Finalized Research Paper Due</b>

## 7. Course Map

