

Critical Thinking – HUP 102 **Fall 2016 Semester**

Mondays/Tuesdays/Thursdays:
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Course Description

Effective thinking involves close attention to detail, an ability to stand back from situations, and the weighing of pros and cons. The goal of this course is to sharpen your ability to think by learning to think clearly, critically, and effectively. You will learn to apply the scientific method, inductive and deductive logic and specialized reasoning skills to science, ethics, technology, politics, religion and other disciplines. By learning how to identify and question assumptions, you will become a critical and rational thinker who can apply her knowledge to any field of learning. You will practice identifying, evaluating, and correcting problems on a national or global scale or achieving your personal goals in order to hone your reasoning skills and become a critical thinker. Our search for the truth or what is true must begin with learning the process that allows us to question truth, evaluate what is true, analyze why something is true, and conclude that it is true.

Objectives

- Students will learn to analyze arguments through the use of logic and reasoning. In particular, students will develop skills which rely on inductive/deductive reasoning and the scientific method.
- Students will practice understanding, analyzing, and questioning science, technology, and other disciplines through close readings of articles on science and technology.
- Students will learn to identify and assess valid sources of information (primary and secondary).
- Students will learn to question assumptions and learn to evaluate situations from various perspectives through discussions.
- Students will discover how their assumptions influence their own thinking and beliefs.
- Students will develop the ability to solve problems, analyze issues, and make informed decisions in their academic, career and personal lives by using empirical evidence from various sources to support their ideas.
- Students will practice applying the fundamental concepts of critical thinking (inductive/deductive logic and reasoning and the scientific method) to interdisciplinary field and the contemporary world.

Learning Outcomes

You will become proficient in the following areas: reading and analyzing challenging texts,

verbally expressing your thoughts in class discussion, debating philosophical issues with others, presenting various perspectives on difficult issues, articulating why critical thinking is significant, writing assignments that engage complex ideas on a high level, and leading discussion on applying theory to practical issues.

Full and updated course information will be available on **Blackboard**.

Required Text

John Chaffee, *Thinking Critically*, Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2014, 11th edition

There will be additional required readings on ERES or through the library

Course Requirements

1. Students will be evaluated by their performance on the course requirements: Group Presentations 20%; Critical Writing Projects 20%; Tests (2) 30%; Participation 10%; Final Exam 20. Precise topics, nature and due dates will be announced well in advance. All assignments must be completed by the due dates. Late papers will be marked down in grade, unless an extension has been granted in advance by me. Having a lot of other homework is not normally grounds for extension. All assignments must be standard format: typed, Times New Roman, 12 point font, double-spaced, no extra spaces between paragraphs, 1" margins, and stapled. For more information visit the website "Purdue Owl: MLA Formatting and Style Guide."

2. Group Presentations: Students form groups, choose a topic of philosophical interest, research current sources, explain the different arguments surrounding your issue, and creatively apply the findings. Your goal is to present your research, describe the range of competing arguments concerning the topic, and explain why this issue is a worthy of consideration, all within 15-20 minutes. Next, in order to facilitate a class discussion lasting approximately 10 minutes, you must ask 3 comprehensive questions to the class. Each student is expected to respond in a meaningful way. More details in class.

3. Active Participation: Students are required to come to class prepared and ready to learn, participate in class activities, and prepare for pop quizzes at the beginning of class. You will be assessed on your attendance and participation in *each* class. Active participation includes students working in pairs or threes for a short period of time to address a salient question or task.

4. Critical Writing Projects. The paper should demonstrate your grasp of the assigned reading material, a critical evaluation that responds relevantly to the assigned texts, and your ability to apply ideas developed in the reading material to new situations, including your own experience. Your writing must become progressively more sophisticated as you become more adept at thinking critically. Writing done sloppily or hastily will not be accepted as college level work. *Work handed in late is subject to a grade reduction of ten points per class.* Do not email assignments.

5. Final Exams include multiple choice, matching, short answers, and application exercises. I always encourage study groups! No make-ups. In case of emergency you must: 1) have a written excuse, and 2) contact me BEFORE the day of the exam, otherwise you forfeit the possibility of rescheduling.

6. Attendance: Students are expected to attend and be on time for every class. **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.*" Students cannot make-up quizzes, exams or in-class activities, and are responsible for all missed work. Chronic lateness will not be tolerated and will result in the student being marked "absent" regardless of reason(s).

6. Classroom Behavior. Once class has begun, students should remain in the class until it is completed. Leaving class, like arriving late, is disruptive and, unless it is an emergency, displays a lack of respect and consideration for the interests of the other members of the class. If your behavior in class is disruptive (talking, sleeping, reading, cell phone usage, etc.) you will be asked to leave and/or counted absent. Disruptive behavior and disrespect of professor and/or of students will not be tolerated. Disruptive behavior is an action by an individual that unreasonably interferes with, hinders, obstructs, or prevents the right of others to freely participate in its activity, including behavior that may prevent faculty from carrying out his or her 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, dominating class discussion, and challenging the professor.) 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. Resolutions include: 1. Verbally request that the student stop the behavior immediately. 2. Requesting that the student leave the area. 3. Calling the University Police. 4. Consulting with the *Office of Student Conduct Administration* (C-317) about how to proceed with judicial action or to learn what other options may be available to resolve the situation. <http://oedb.org/library/college-basics/88-surefire-tips>.

7. Cell Phones. This class has a zero tolerance technology policy. Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off and out of sight. First Incident: If your cell phone rings, or you use your cell phone (texting, etc.) during class, you are counted absent for the day. Second incident: Your participation grade is lowered a letter grade. Third Incident: Your final course grade is lowered a letter grade.

8. Punctuality. *It is your responsibility to be ON TIME and PREPARED for EACH class.* If you cannot meet this requirement, then do not take the class. Rather, enroll in a class where you can successfully meet all the requirements.

9. 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. I expect you to familiarize yourself with The City University of New York’s Policy on Academic Integrity in your *Student Handbook* and the severe consequences of violating it.

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 in each of your papers or assignments BEFORE you turn it in. Making good use of this has the potential to improve your writing and modify your final grade. The Center is in Room E-111, 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/english/writingcenter/schedule.htm>

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			

Schedule of assigned readings

Week 1:

- 1) Defining/clarifying concepts; Asking questions and reading
~ HW: "The Spoils of Happiness" article-- (1) Define 'happiness' as described in the article; (2) How is the concept 'happiness' used in the article?
- 2) Practice asking questions and defining concepts
~ HW: Read Science article from current newspaper. Ask 3 questions about the validity of the study described in the article.
- (3) Inductive/deductive reasoning (Finding our own way to truth)

Week 2:

- (1) Evaluating Internet Sources; Questioning sources and authority
- (2) Influences on my thinking
~ HW: Paper #1: Influences on my thinking--Describe 3 people or things that influence the way that you think and examine why each influences your thinking.
- (3) The Scientific Method (Discovering what actually is true)
~ HW: Choose a scientific theory and evaluate the evidence for and against that theory using the scientific method you learned in class.

Week 3:

- (1) Learning to Think Independently and reducing influences on your thinking
- (2) Different perspectives (Evaluating what is true)
~ HW: Debate topics assigned to groups, begin research
- (3) Assessing sources and evidence; Using Library resources
~ HW: Read "Revenge of the Right Brain", analyze the empirical evidence presented in the article using the scientific method, logic and reasoning that you have learned in class.

Week 4:

- (1) Organizing Ideas and Analyzing issues
~ HW: Research debate topic (find 2 valid sources which support your topic)
- (2) Group work on debate topic
~ HW: "Is Google Making Us Stupid"-- (1) How does technology influence our lives?;
- (2) Identify the main conclusion in the article; (3) Identify 2 arguments in favor of this conclusion. Discuss your finding in terms of the ethics of regulating technology for "our own good".

(3) In-class debates

~ HW: In-Class debates-- Reflect on the debate process (research and oral arguments) and explain what you learned about this process.

Week 5:

(1) Claims: True and False, Subjective and Objective, Vague

(2) Identifying arguments (premises and conclusions) and responding to arguments

~ HW: Practice identifying arguments--choose 3 current event articles in different disciplines and identify the arguments within them. One article must be about personal privacy, one article must be about security (of a person or personal information), and one must be about an ethical issue.

(3) Fallacies; Good and bad arguments (Drawing conclusions about what is true)

~ HW: Describe an example of a fallacy you experience regularly
~ HW: Develop your argument for your research paper topic

Week 6:

(1) Exam #1

(2) Language and Thinking

~ HW: Choose 2 science and technology articles and evaluate the language used. Compare this language to the language in your own discipline. Try to analyze the assumptions underlying the use of specialized or politically correct language in the articles.

(3) Different Perspectives

~ HW: Take the opposite side of the topic you debated earlier in the semester and support this side of the topic.

Week 7:

(1) Using language to reason

~ HW: Read "People Argue Just to Win" and "The Social Side of Reasoning"

(2) Using Critical Thinking skills (inductive/deductive logic and the scientific method) in everyday life and different disciplines

~ Read articles on Global Warming and create an argument to support one side or the other. Then argue against your own perspective.

(3) Questioning evidence, sources, and making up your own mind

~ HW: Create an oral report on how you use these skills in your own discipline.

Week 8:

(1) Solving Problems; What is Truth? Who is right?

~ HW: Paper #4--Choose a current social or technological problem. Use the critical thinking skills you have learned (logic, questions, evaluating sources, and use of language) to assess the problem and find a possible solution.

(2) Perceptions and Inferences (How can I be sure of what is true?)

~ HW: Evaluate the case of the "Faster than Light Neutrinos"

(3) The Root of problems (evidence, perception, blind faith, etc.)

~ HW: Choose an issue from the given list and gather information about the roots of the problem. Evaluate the problem from a scientific perspective and assess the validity of the data. Try to find possible solutions.

Week 9:

(1) Knowledge, Truth, and Beliefs

(2) Questioning knowledge, truth, beliefs

~ HW: Examine something you know or believe to be the true about technology or that you learned in a science class. Begin questioning this truth and try to discover something new about this truth.

(3) Reports, Inferences, Judgments

~ HW: Practice picking out reports, inferences, judgments in current articles on technology and other disciplines

Week 10:

(1) Applying what you've learned: Health studies--Can we believe all the claims about what is good and bad for us?

~ HW: Read article handed out in class and reflect on whether the scientific studies that tell us what is and is not healthy for us are valid studies.

(2) Applying what you've learned: The Hunt for the Higgs Boson--possible or still a dream?

~ HW: Read article handed out in class and reflect on whether spending billions of dollars to find a small, mass giving particle is worthwhile.

(3) Applying what you've learned: Assess research in your own discipline for validity.

Week 11:

(1) Choosing Freely (Making your own decisions about truth)

~ HW: Describe your conception of free will

(2) Limitations on Freedom; clips from "The Diving Bell and the Butterfly"

~ HW: Are physical constraints really limitations on freedom? Explain your reasoning about your answer.

(3) Making informed Decisions and Choices

Week 12:

(1) Review Inductive/deductive logic and the scientific method for the real world

(2) Review steps for problem solving, assessment of sources, and evaluating evidence

(3) Wrap up main ideas of course

Finals Week: Final Research papers due