

Critical Thinking

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Course Description

This course aims to a) make students more aware of their own thinking processes; b) help them develop those processes; and c) help them bring those skills to bear on college-level intellectual activity. This involves an emphasis on the skills and strategies of close reading and analysis as well as practice in the recognition, construction and evaluation of arguments. In pursuing these goals, we touch on principles of logic, styles of persuasion and techniques of propaganda. We also consider some methods of thinking outside the box. The course presents a variety of readings, exercises and projects designed to help students develop competence in reflecting on experience, connecting assertions with evidence, engaging the ideas of others and bringing multiple perspectives to bear on complex issues.

Course Learning Goals

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Identify claims and assess their fit with reasons
- Distinguish among different kinds of reasons presented to support claims
- Distinguish between reports, inferences and judgments
- Identify common rhetorical strategies, logical fallacies and propaganda techniques
- Recognize, construct and make evaluative distinctions among different kinds of arguments
- Examine experiences with critical scrutiny
- Discuss the 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

Course Resources

To buy your books, go to <http://www.mbsdirect.net>.

Hint: type DePaul for name of the school.

[Click here for help buying your books](#)

Required textbooks:

Chaffee, John. *Thinking Critically*. 9th ed. Houghton Mifflin, 2009.

Selected articles posted on Electronic Reserve at www.lib.depaul.edu

[Please note: the Chaffee text contains numerous “Thinking Activities” and “Questions for Analysis.” You are not required to write up any of these unless

you are expressly instructed to do so. Any such instructions will appear under “Learning Activities” in the modules that follow.]

Course Competences

In this course, you will develop the following competences:

Competence	Competence Statement and Facets/Criteria
L-5	Can analyze issues and reconcile problems through critical and appreciative thinking.

How Competences will be Addressed in this Course

There are three major writing assignments in the course:

1. a Personal Narrative essay;
2. a detailed Argument Analysis paper;
3. and a quarter-long project called “Play On A Word”

In addition, several modules require that you submit a set of written Exercises and all modules require that you participate in a Discussion Forum.

All Lifelong Learning courses offered by the School for New Learning emphasize overarching skills in three categories: Learning from Experience; Inquiry; and Decision-making. The assignments listed above track with these categories as follows:

- the Personal Narrative emphasizes learning from experience;
- the Argument Analysis paper emphasizes inquiry and decision-making;
- the Exercises and Discussion Forums emphasize inquiry; and
- the Play On A Word project emphasizes all three overarching skills.

Course Structure

This course consists of 10 modules. The estimated time to complete each module is one week.

To view the course schedule, click on the Schedule link on the left-hand navigation bar. This page contains the most recently updated listing of the topics and assignments due for each week of the course.

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Assessment

Assessment of Learning

In assessing work like that described above, your instructor will look for:

- knowledge and comprehension of pertinent concepts, issues and texts;
- a scope of discussion that goes beyond what is covered in the texts; and
- thoughtful engagement with the material, i.e., with questions or conflicts raised or implied by the material.

Evidence of one of these elements equates with a C; evidence of two with a B: and evidence of three with an A. In making such assessments your instructor will strive to

be clear, flexible, forthright and empathetic.

Percentage Distribution of Assessments

Personal Narrative Essay	15%
Argument Analysis Paper	20%
Play On A Word project	20%
Exercises	35%
Discussion	10%

Note: You can gain an extra point for any given online Discussion Forum by providing a particularly strong contribution. Thus, given that there are 10 Discussion Forums, it is possible to gain a total of 10 extra points beyond those outlined above.

General Assessment Criteria for All Writing Assignments

Writing assignments are expected to conform to basic college-level standards of mechanics and presentation. Your instructor will be happy to work with you on these points, on a draft-revision basis, if you so desire. You are also encouraged to consult the Writing Resources page on the SNL website. In particular, the DePaul Writing Center offers help, review and tutoring across the full range of college-level writing assignments.

Course Grading Scale

Critical Thinking is designed as a Pass/Fail course. To receive a Pass grade, you must complete all assignments and receive a total point score of 75 or higher. For SNL courses taken for Pass/Fail, a "Pass" represents a grade of "A" for purposes of financial aid and employer reimbursement.

SNL Grading Policy for Lifelong Learning Courses

In certain SNL courses in the Lifelong Learning Area of the BA curriculum, instructors regularly use the pass/fail grading system. However, SNL also offers students the opportunity in several of these courses to select a "Grading" option where grades A through C- represent passing performance. The faculty member and the individual student together decide which system will best promote the student's learning in that particular course. With no exceptions, a student must obtain permission from the instructor to use the grade option by the beginning of the third week of the quarter. After the third week of the quarter the assessment style agreed upon, whether pass/fail or grading, cannot be changed. The instructor is required to provide the student the specific assessment criteria by which a grade will be determined prior to the student officially selecting this option. Grading criteria shall appear in the syllabus along with pass/fail assessment criteria.

Lifelong learning courses that already employ a grading system such as *Quantitative Reasoning* and *Collaborative Learning* will continue to use this system. The Lifelong learning courses *Learning Assessment Seminar*, *Foundations*, and *Summit Seminar* will continue to employ the pass/fail system exclusively. This policy applies to the other lifelong learning competencies and courses including, *Academic Writing for Adults*, *Critical Thinking*, *Research Seminar*, and *Externship*. The pass/fail policy and procedure of the university found in the student handbook should be followed where a

student wishes to seek this option for a graded course.

Assessment Criteria for Online Discussion Participation

In the online discussions your responses will be assessed on whether one or more of the following are present:

1. Offering up ideas or resources and inviting a critique of them
2. Asking challenging questions
3. Articulating, explaining and supporting positions on ideas
4. Exploring and supporting issues by adding explanations and examples
5. Reflecting on and re-evaluating personal opinions
6. Offering a critique, challenging, discussing and expanding ideas of others
7. Negotiating interpretations, definitions and meanings
8. Summarizing previous contributions and asking the next question
9. Proposing actions based on ideas that have been developed

The above list was adapted from Gilly Salmon's book *E-Moderating: The key to teaching and learning online*. London: Kogan Page: p.143 (2000).

Online Participation Guidelines for this Course

A significant part of your online learning experience involves learning *with* and *from* your classmates and the instructor in the online discussions and group assignments.

Active participation means sharing information and resources and posting you ideas and critiquing and expanding on the ideas of others in a collegial fashion. This discussion is informal in the sense that it is meant to encourage interested discussion. You are expected to follow accepted standards of English spelling, grammar and usage, although you will not be assessed for these particular characteristics when you are participating in the WebBoard discussions.

These discussions are for you to exchange your reflections with your classmates and instructor about what you are learning. The discussions will be organized into forums around the particular topic you are studying each week.

You may be asked by the instructor to take leadership in a certain group for a certain time of the course. You will receive further instructions from your instructor if this occurs.

You should contribute your responses to the particular assignment for that particular discussion heading which will be posted.

For each Discussion Forum, you are required to make at least one original contribution to each topic and respond to one classmate's contribution.

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Policies

Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and

the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If a instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

Disability Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. For certain learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders, the Productive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) determines the appropriate accommodations. See the instructor for more information or call OSD at 773-325-7290 (phone) or 773-325-7296 (TTY); or call PLuS at 773-325-1677.

Incomplete Grades

The intent of the Incomplete grade is to allow students extra time to complete their final assignments. This need arises because, in the closing weeks of the course, they have an event of significant magnitude that adversely affects their ability to complete the course, e.g. serious illness, death in the family, overseas deployment, or natural disaster.

You must request an incomplete grade in writing two weeks before the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades will be considered only after you have satisfactorily completed at least 75 percent of the coursework, and you have such an unexpected, uncontrollable event that prevents you from completing your course. Do not assume that you will qualify for an incomplete. Students who are failing the course at the point where they request an incomplete will not receive one, nor will they be granted after the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor.

If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the course, you will be required to complete a contract with the instructor, specifying how you will finish

the missing work within the next two quarters (excluding summer). Incompletes not finished by the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) will automatically become an F grade on your transcript.

Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee.

NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification.

Protection of Human Subjects

For more information see: <http://condor.depaul.edu/~irb>

Demonstrating the acquisition of competences in this course can involve “interactions”—interviewing and or observing other people—discussing those interviews or observations with other class members and writing them up in one or more final report(s).

As such, these activities qualify as “research” with “human subjects” and are subject to University and Federal guidelines. Because it takes place in the context of this course, your research is exempt from approval by the School for New Learning’s Local Review Board only under the following conditions:

1. The information you collect is EXCLUSIVELY for the purpose of classroom discussion and will NOT be used after the term is over. If there is any possibility that you will EVER use it in further research or for publication, you must obtain approval from the Local Review Board before you begin.
2. You assess and ensure that no “harm”—physical, mental, or social—does or could result from either your interviews and/or observations or your discussion and/or reports.
3. The privacy and confidentiality of those that you interview or observe must be protected. Unless you receive specific permission, in writing, from the person(s) you interview or observe, please change their names, and make sure that their identity cannot be readily ascertained from the information you provide.
 - a. If you want to use real names and relationships, they must sign an “informed consent” document. For information on creating an “informed consent document” see, for example, www.research.umn.edu/consent/

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Course Expectations

Time Management and Attendance

SNL’s online courses are not self-paced and require a regular time commitment EACH week throughout the quarter.

You are required to log in to your course at least four times a week so that you can participate in the ongoing course discussions.

Online courses are no less time consuming than “face to face” courses. You will have to dedicate some time every day or at least every second day to your studies. A typical four credit hour “face to face” course at SNL involves three hours of classroom meeting per week, plus at least three to six hours of study and homework per week.

This course will require at least the same time commitment, but your learning activities

will be spread out through the week. If you have any problems with your technology, or if you need to improve your reading or writing skills, it may take even longer.

The instructor should be notified if your life events do not allow you to participate in the course and the online discussions for more than one week. This is particularly important when there are group discussions or you are working as part of a team.

If you find yourself getting behind, please contact the instructor immediately.

Your Instructor's Role

Your instructor's role in this course is that of a discussion facilitator and learning advisor. It is not their responsibility to make sure you log in regularly and submit your assignments. As instructor, s/he will read all postings to the general discussion forums on a daily basis but may not choose to respond to each posting. You will receive feedback to assignments.

The instructor may choose to designate "office hours" when s/he will be online and available and will immediately respond to questions. Depending on the instructor, this response may be by e-mail, instant messenger or telephone. Otherwise, you will generally receive a response to emailed or posted queries within 48 hours.

Your Role as a Student

As an online student, you will be taking a proactive approach to your learning. As the course instructor's role is that of a learning guide, your role is that of the leader in your own learning.

You will be managing your own time so that you can complete the readings, activities and assignments for the course, and you will also be expected to take a more active role in peer learning.

Credits

This course was designed and produced by [Insert Author's name here] (the Author) and staff of SNL Online at DePaul University.

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