

Critical Reasoning
COMM 3304

Instructor: Dr. Esther Rumsey

Office: FAB 203 C

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday & Thursday 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

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Required Text: Bassham, Irwin, Nardone, & Wallace, (2013) Critical Thinking: A Student's Introduction, 5th Edition. McGraw Hill Publisher: ISBN: 978-0-07-803831-0

Course Description: “The ability to participate effectively in reasoned discourse leading to critical decision making is required in virtually every aspect of life in a democracy” (Rieke & Sillars, 1997, p. xvii). The goal of this course is to provide the students with the skills necessary to effectively participate in the public arena. This is a course on argumentation and reasoning designed to develop critical thinking skills. We will study arguments of all sorts, learning how to identify and evaluate inductive and deductive reasoning, fallacious reasoning and construction of sound arguments. The purpose of this course is to help you develop your reasoning skills so that you can think about and communicate intelligently on the issues that concern you. Our main focus will be on the nature and use of arguments, with the goal that the student will learn to both criticize the arguments of others and construct valid and convincing arguments of her or his own.

Program Learning Outcomes:

This course is one of the required courses for a major in communication as such it is designed to meet one or more of the program learning outcomes for the major. These learning outcomes include:

The graduating student will demonstrate:

1. competency for appropriate oral communication in public presentations.
2. competency for appropriate use of presentation software – specifically power point.
3. the ability to analyze arguments including identification of the major elements of the argument such as claims, warrants, data and backing
4. competency in appropriate discipline specific written communication.
5. the ability to apply communication theory to the analysis of communication situations.
6. competency in the use of media technology including video, audio and web technologies.
7. general knowledge of communication concepts and terminology

Course Objectives: The specific learning objectives of this course include:

- Learning about the nature of academic and applied debate
- Learning how to state, analyze, and explore a controversy
- Learning how to collect, use and evaluate evidence
- Learning about the structure and types of reasoning
- Learning about fallacies
- Learning how to develop and present the affirmative and negative case
- Learning to analyze and refute arguments

Grading: The grades for this class will be calculated on 1000 point scale. Points will be earned as follows:

Class Discussion	100 points
Application Exercises	150 points
Chapter Quizzes	150 points
Midterm Exam	200 points
Final Exam	200 points
Written Assignments	200 points

Cell Phone and Electronic Devices Policy: In order to fully attend to the class it is important that you turn off and put away all cell phones and other electronic devices like Mp3 players before class begins. If you answer your phone or check or send text messages during class you will be required to explain to the class why the message was critical for you to take during class and the class as a whole will determine if that is an acceptable reason. If the class rules against you, you will receive a zero for the day.

Attendance: To facilitate the interactive quality of the class, attendance is required at all class meetings. If you must miss class for a school-related activity contact the instructor to arrange to make up any missed assignments **prior** to your absence. If you miss class because of illness or family emergency, phone or email the instructor and **attend office hours as soon as you return** to make up any missed work. If you arrive to class late (after role is taken) you will be counted absent for the day. Excessive absences will result in a reduction of your grade.

Class Discussion: Designed to help you apply the concepts covered in class to actual practice. Grade for in class discussions will be based your participation in class discussions. If you are not prepared to discuss the topic for the day or refuse to participate in the discussion you will receive a zero for the day. Obviously, if you are not in class for the day that will also result in a reduction of your discussion grade.

Application Exercises: Your textbook contains application exercises related to most of the concepts covered in each chapter. You will be assigned specific exercises to

complete as part of the course requirement and grading. Application exercises will be submitted through blackboard. Your grade will be based on the percentage of correct answers you submit for these exercises.

Chapter Quizzes: will be a multiple choice and true/false questions drawn from the chapter covered the prior week. Weekly quizzes will be available on Blackboard.

Midterm Exam: will include questions drawn from the application exercises and chapter quizzes from the first half of the semester.

Final Exams: will include questions drawn from the application exercises and chapter quizzes from the full semester.

Written Assignments: You will be asked to apply the concepts covered in class to printed arguments (such as editorials and point/counterpoint articles). Grade will be based on the average of the grade you receive for each written assignment. Written assignments will be both handed out in class and posted to Black Board. Late papers will receive a reduction in grade.

ADA Needs: It is Sul Ross University policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you would like to request such accommodations because of a physical, mental, or learning disability, please contact:

Counseling and Accessibility Services;
Accessibility Services Coordinator
Ferguson Hall Room 112
Phone 432-837-8203
Fax 432-837-8363

1/21/2015	One	Critical Thinking Standards
1/23/2015	One	Benefits & Barriers to critical thinking
1/26/2015	Two	What is an argument
1/28/2015		Identifying premises and conclusions
1/30/2015		What is not an argument
2/2/2015	Three	Deductive Reasoning
2/4/2015		Inductive Reasoning
2/6/2015		Deductive validity and inductive strength
2/9/2015	Four	Using language for precision
2/11/2015		Definitions
2/13/2015		Emotive Language
2/16/2015	Five	Concept of relevance
2/18/2015		Fallacies of Relevance
2/20/2015		Fallacies of Relevance
2/23/2015	Six	Evidence

2/25/2015		Fallacies of insufficient evidence
2/27/2015		Fallacies of insufficient evidence
3/2/2015	Seven	Analyzing Arguments
3/4/2015		Diagramming short arguments
3/6/2015		Summarizing longer arguments
3/9/2015	Eight	Evaluating arguments
3/11/2015		What is a good argument
3/13/2015		refuting arguments

spring
break

3/23/2015	Midterm Exam	
3/25/2015	Nine	Categorical Statements
3/27/2015		Categorical Syllogisms
3/30/2015	Ten	Conjunction and Validity
4/1/2015		Negation and Conjunction
4/3/2015		Disjunction
4/6/2015	Eleven	Inductive Generalizations
4/8/2015		Induction and Analogy
4/10/2015		Induction and causal arguments
4/13/2015	Twelve	Finding Evidence
4/15/2015		Evaluating Evidence
4/17/2015		Using evidence
4/20/2015	Thirteen	Writing successful arguments
4/22/2015		Before you start
4/24/2015		Writing drafts
4/27/2015	Fourteen	Social Media
4/29/2015		News Media
5/1/2015		Advertisements
5/4/2015	Wrap up	
5/6/2015	Wrap up	

Final Exam : Monday May 11, 2015 at 10:15 am