

Critical Reasoning
COMM 3304

Instructor: Dr. Esther Rumsey
Office: FAB 106
Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 2:00 pm – 5:00 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. the ability to analyze arguments including identification of the major elements of the argument such as claims, warrants, data and backing
2. competency in appropriate discipline specific written communication.
3. the ability to apply communication theory to the analysis of communication situations.
4. competency in the use of media technology including video, audio and web technologies.
5. 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 Exercises & Discussion	200 points
Homework Assignments	
Final Exam	200 points
Weekly Quizzes	200 points
Written Assignments	200 points

Cell Phone and Electronic Devices Policy: In order to fully attend to the class it is minimize use of your toys while in class. There are times when we will want to use the smart features to look up information or verify something, but for the most part your phones should be put away during the class period. If your phone usage disturbs my lecture, either by distracting me or distracting the class I will ask you to put it away or leave the class room.

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.

In Class Exercises and Discussion: Designed to help you apply the concepts covered in class to actual practice. Grade for in class exercises will be based on the percentage of exercises you complete and 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 that day.

Homework Assignments: Designed to help you master the skills covered in class and to demonstrate understanding of the course concepts, the homework assignments are drawn on the exercises published in the textbook. You will need a textbook to be able to do the homework assignment. The homework will be submitted through blackboard.

Final Exams: will include questions covering the basic concepts and terms from the book and lecture as well as questions applying critical think skills.

Weekly Quizzes: will be a multiple choice and true/false questions drawn from the chapter covered the prior week. Weekly quizzes will posted on Blackboard and should be completed in the assigned week.

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-Grace Petty
Ferguson Hall Room 112
Phone 432-837-8203
Fax 432-837-8363

1/19/2016	One	What is Critical Thinking
1/21/2016	One	Benefits & Barriers to critical thinking
1/26/2016	Two	What is an argument?
1/28/2016		What is not an argument?
2/2/2016	Three	Deductive Reasoning
2/4/2016		Inductive Reasoning
2/9/2016	Four	Using language for precision
2/11/2016		Emotion and Euphemisms
2/16/2016	Five	Concept of relevance
2/18/2016		Fallacies of Relevance
2/21/2016		Application exercises
2/23/2016	Six	Evidence
2/25/2016		Fallacies of insufficient evidence
3/1/2016	Seven	Analyzing Arguments
3/3/2016		Diagramming & Summarizing
3/8/2016	Eight	Good Arguments
3/10/2016		Refuting Arguments
3/15/2016		Spring
3/17/2016		Break
3/22/2016	Nine	Categorical Statements
3/24/2016		Categorical Syllogisms
3/29/2016	Ten	Conjunction & Negation
3/30/2016		Disjunction & Conditional Statements
4/5/2016	Eleven	Inductive Generalizations
4/7/2016		Induction and Analogy

4/12/2016	Twelve	Finding Evidence
4/14/2016		Evaluating Evidence
4/19/2016	Thirteen	Before you write
4/21/2016		First and Final Drafts
4/26/2016	Fourteen	Social Media
4/28/2014		Media Literacy
5/3/2016		Review & makeup
5/10/2016		8:00 am Final Exam