

Critical Reasoning
COMM 5305
Spring 2017

Instructor: Dr. Esther Rumsey
Office: FAB 106
Office Hours: MTWR 1:30 – 3:30 and by appointment

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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.

For the graduate student, this course will help prepare you to teach and/or coach speech and debate teams on a high school or undergraduate level. For each chapter, you will be asked to writing a learning reflection paper that discussed how, what we covered in the chapter, relates to academic debate and public speaking contests.

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

- 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
- Learning how to apply the course content to competitive speech events

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

Class Exercises & Discussion	250 points
Final Exam	250 points
Weekly Quizzes	250 points
Written Assignments	250 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.

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.

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 to be covered next. Weekly quizzes will be posted on Black Board on Wednesday each week and must be completed before the beginning of class on Monday.

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. All responses to written assignments will be submitted through Black Board. Late papers will receive a reduction in grade. Additionally, you will be asked to write reflection papers applying the course content to academic speech and debate events.

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 the ADA coordinator for Program Accessibility.

Tentative Semester Schedule

		Chapter	Topic
Tuesday	17-Jan	One	What is Critical Thinking
Thursday	19-Jan	One	Benefits & Barriers to critical thinking
Tuesday	24-Jan	Twelve	Using Information
Thursday	26-Jan		
Tuesday	31-Jan	Thirteen	Using Information
Thursday	2-Feb		
Tuesday	7-Feb	Two	What is an argument?
Thursday	9-Feb		What is not an argument?
Tuesday	14-Feb	Three	Deductive Reasoning
Thursday	16-Feb		Inductive Reasoning
Tuesday	21-Feb	Four	Using language for precision
Thursday	23-Feb		Emotion and Euphemisms
Tuesday	28-Feb	Five	Fallacies of Relevance
Thursday	2-Mar	Six	Fallacies of Insufficient Evidence
	7-Mar	Seven	Analyzing Arguments
	9-Mar		Diagramming & Summarizing
Tuesday	11-Mar		Spring
Thursday	13-Mar		Break
Tuesday	18-Mar		Pending
Thursday	20-Mar		
Tuesday	25-Mar	Eight	Good Arguments
Thursday	27-Mar		Refuting Arguments
Tuesday	1-Apr	Nine	Categorical Statements
Thursday	3-Apr		Categorical Syllogisms

Tuesday	8-Apr	Ten	Conjunction & Negation
Thursday	10-Apr		Disjunction & Conditional Statements
Tuesday	15-Apr	Eleven	Inductive Generalizations
Thursday	17-Apr		Induction and Analogy
Tuesday	22-Apr	Fourteen	Social Media
Thursday	24-Apr		Media Literacy
Tuesday	2-May	Fifteen	Science and Pseudoscience
Thursday	4-May		Dead Day
Monday	8-May		10:15 am Final Exam