

Change last paper assignment to Silverberg and not Keyes

Add policy on presence and use of electronic devices during exams and the consequences of their presence or use

Critical Thinking -- Syllabus

Fall 2010 PHIL 1166 MWF 11:00-11:50am ADM 303

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Course Summary:

This course is an introduction to critical thinking, thinking that is produced by, governed by and responsive to justifying reasons. We will examine the nature of reasoning in an informal way, through ordinary discourse (talking, reading, and writing) versus the formal way of a symbol system, such as in formal logic. Critical thinking, we will contend, requires a critical mind. So, we will also examine the nature of the critical mind, its structure and workings, the context needed to develop one, and how to develop one. Class format will be mostly lecture. We will work some problems and have some assignments. There will be some guided discussion. Only one of PHIL 1155 and 1166 can meet the Humanities general education requirement.

<u>Expected learning outcome</u>	<u>Means of Assessment</u>
<i>What a successful student should demonstrate:</i>	<i>by successfully completing:</i>
Understand what critical thinking is	Exams and homework
Understand the nature of the critical mind	Exams and homework
Understand why critical thinking is important	Exams, papers, and homework
Understand how we learn to think critically	Exams, papers and homework
Understand impediments to critical thinking	Exams and homework

Requirements and grading:

1) Attendance is required. During class, I may elicit some material from you. So you must keep up with the readings, that day's class, and the ongoing course. Be mentally active and prepared. Class participation can raise your final grade by up to 1/3 of a grade.

2) Homework will include a variety of short assignments. I do not accept late homework assignments; do not turn them in. **TOTAL of homework: 10% of your grade.**

3) A take-home midterm assigned Wednesday, Oct. 6th and due Wednesday, Oct. 13th. **25% of your grade.**

4) A 3-page analytical essay on the reading by Frye on oppression. Tentatively, assigned Friday, Oct. 22nd and due Friday, Oct 29th. Late essays will have their grades lowered. **15% of your grade.**

5) A 5-page analytical essay due Friday, Dec. 3rd. **25% of your grade.**

6) A comprehensive final exam, counting **25% of your grade.** Monday, Dec. 6, 11:30-2:30.

Criteria employed in evaluating written work:

Responsiveness to the Assignment: Writing should meet the assignment's purpose directly & fully.

Content: Writing should reflect an understanding of the subject. It should make good use of the relevant concepts, distinctions, positions, and reasons included in course readings or brought out in lecture or discussion. It should be organized so ideas are arranged logically and clearly. Main points should be backed by substantial and relevant details. Your work should be backed by good reasons. Your claims and reasons should be consistent with each other. Anticipate and respond to any reasonable objections.

Execution: Writing should use precise words and well-constructed sentences that clearly represent the writer's reasoning. It should adhere to conventions of grammar, capitalization, spelling, and usage. Writing style should be appropriate to the academy. Your work should be clearly written, its claims precise, its structure clear, with an explicit overall direction. It should be intelligible to an interested student.

Citations and Documentation: Writers must clearly differentiate their own material from source material. When writers use material that is not their own or not common knowledge, they must document the source of the information using a standardized (i.e., either MLA or APA) method.

Other requirements: on time, typed, paginated, tidy (stapled or bound), standard margins & fonts, and dark print. Failure to meet these will hurt your grade. Your papers should have a cover page with your name, course name and number, date, my name, and a title.

The Catawba College Writing Center offers free, one-on-one consultations to all Catawba students. Tutors have been intensely trained; and while they won't rewrite students' papers for them, they will give students feedback and encouragement at all stages of the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, revising, polishing). You should be prepared to discuss your assignment and to begin making revisions, with the tutor's guidance, during your session. **All** students are encouraged to use the Writing Center which is open afternoons (in ADM 211) and evenings (in the Library, Study Room #5). Walk-ins are welcome, but we honor appointments first. For more information or to make an appointment, call 704-645-4819 or stop by ADM 211.

"A"	Superior mastery	A+ 97-100	A 93-96	A- 90-92
"B"	Good mastery	B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82
"C"	Satisfactory achievement	C+ 77-79	C 73-76	C- 70-72
"D"	Less than satisfactory achievement	D+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62
"F"	Unsatisfactory achievement			

A+ is not a possible final course grade. Grades can and should measure achievement only.

Texts:

- 1) a coursepack at the bookstore
- 2) handouts

Reading, taking notes, and homework:

Read the assigned passages carefully. Some of the material is easy and accessible on your first try. Other assignments are quite taxing and may well require multiple readings. I suggest the following strategy for a difficult reading: read it once quickly simply to get the gist; then read it carefully for details, not worrying about the overall picture; then read it normally, trying to fit the details into the overall picture.

Lectures will sometimes track the readings but may also range far afield. Come to class having done the readings; you will be responsible for all of it. Since lectures can cover material not in the readings, this is another reason to attend each class.

Most students take sketchy notes. Maybe they feel that they cannot both take notes and listen, or maybe they do not grasp the value of taking notes. Learn to write while you listen; it enhances your grasp of what is said. Take as many notes as you can, without missing what is said. Your notes are an invaluable resource for understanding the course. Do not only write key terms and definitions. This course focuses on understanding concepts and ideas, not on memorizing; your notes should reflect that.

Absences and violations:

To help with attendance--and to learn names--I will form a seating chart in the second class. Pick your permanent seat; notify me to change it. I will check attendance from the chart to start class. If late, you might be counted absent; if late enough, you do count as absent. Avoid tardiness. Sleeping and any forms of mental disconnect in class count as an absence. When absent, you are responsible for missed assignments and material; get notes from a classmate. If you still have questions, contact me.

No absences are excused. After 3 penalty-free absences, further absences lower your final grade: 4-5 total absences, minus 1/3 grade; 6-8, minus 2/3 grade; 9-10, minus 1 grade. Missing class immediately before or after a vacation counts double. Over 10 absences for other than an emergency is automatic grounds for an "F" (or an "I" in some cases), regardless of your grades.

Respect the people and ideas in our class. It is illegitimate to attack a person; you may challenge the person's ideas. I don't care if you bring a drink or sport a hat or don rags. I do care that you pay attention (no cell phones or activated pagers/beepers/watches), that you are on time and ready to work, that you bring a positive attitude, and that you contribute positively to class.

Cheating, working with others on individual assignments (unless allowed), and falsifying an emergency to skip class or an assignment, all violate the Honor Code. So does plagiarism, using a writer's ideas (and even words) without giving the writer due credit.

Schedule of Topics

A) What is Critical Thinking?

1. Animal versus human

New powers

Transcendence; Reflective Awareness

Normative nature: not only that we are this way, but that we ought to be

Concreteness of animal psychology: "The Dog Beneath the Skin" pp.156-160

2. Intellect versus intelligence

Early humans uncritically took contents of experiences and thoughts to be real and in the world

Ability to focus on/be aware of the content of an experience or action or thought

Requires abstraction

(Animals can only have an experience or commit an act and be aware through it.)

Narrative power: the contents of our mind must fit together into an integrated world and a self Intellectual activity, thinking, is therefore natural to humans

Narrative power of human mind: "A Matter of Identity" pp.108-115

3. Critical thinking is produced by and responsive to logical reasons (vs. not so)

Justification vs. explanation

Good reasons vs. poor reasons

Ex. Relevance, strength, kind of support

What is (& isn't) critical thinking: "What critical thinking is not" pp.13-16

Premise and conclusion--Arguments: "Ten Helpful Steps" pp.24-33

Worksheet: "Recognizing Arguments" pp.21-23 exercises

4. What we mean by "thinking"

Concepts

Either abstracted from experiences, thoughts, and judgments or else created/formed
Getting concepts correct, clear, and precise

Necessary and sufficient conditions, and counterexamples

Conceptual accounts: "Applying Concepts" pp.321-2, and

"A Model for Conceptual Theories" pp.192-207

Judgments

Judgments are composed of concepts

Believing, knowing, feeling (that), intending, meaning (that), doubting, considering,
perceiving, questioning

Judgments are truth-claims with truth-values

Contingent vs. necessary

Logical features of judgments: "Logical Properties of Sentences" pp.29-31, and

Worksheet: More exercises on necessity and contingency

5. Goal of critical thinking

Become aware of the contents of one's mind, seek their sufficient justification, and accept or
reject those contents on the basis of that justification

Assessment of judgments: they ought to be well-formed and true

Best way of discovering the truth, i.e., being responsible to reality

Activity of a critical thinker: "Prime" pp.15-20

6. Thinking critically requires developing a certain kind of mind, a critical mind

A critical stance or mindset

The ethics of thought: "The Ethics of Belief"

Principles: Become aware of your thoughts. Think and live according to reason.
Reach appropriate degree of acceptance for any commitment.
Be correct in one's commitments. Be responsible to reality.

B) What is a Critical Mind?

1. Model of mind as an active semantic web or field

The mind has a semantic and logical structure

Diagramming: "Fundamentals of Diagramming", pp. 37-50

exercises: Schwartz, pp.28-35

The mind is wholistic, under a transcending and governing "center"

Beyond our judgments: "The Best Thinkers Think-Through Implications", pp.80-1

Implications, assumptions, and presuppositions

Worksheet: Reasoning to assumptions and to presuppositions

2. Inherent mental dynamics (flow)

Ideas generate other ideas

Alternative reasons and conclusions: "Alternatives" pp. 60-1 and

"What Reasonable Conclusions are Possible" pp.190-200

Worksheet: Multiple reasons and conclusions

3. Inherent natural requirements in the mind

What one ought to believe/accept

4. Two modes of reasoning: Emotive reasoning

Grasps (felt) requirements directly, but logical structure only indirectly

What the next thought should be; art; what most reasoning is (must be)

Strengths and weaknesses

5. Two modes of reasoning: Reflective reasoning

Grasps logical structure directly; what logic necessitates; E.g., formal logic, math;

Can go beyond emotive reasoning alone; corrective/confirming power

Logical relationships: "Comparing Statements" pp. 55-6, and

"Scientific Thought Experiments" pp.29-30

Exercises: handout on logical relationships

6. Kinds of reasoning

Deductive

"Good Argument, Deductive Validity, &..." pp.28-47

Non-deductive: plausibility, inductive, abductive, analogy

"Characteristics of Non-Deductive Arguments" pp.46-59, and

"Non-Deductive Support", pp.229-39

"Analogy" pp.193-212

Connections among ideas: "Oppression", by Marilyn Frye, pp.4-10

**Principles: Empower the mind to work by its inner dynamics (vs. having power over it).
Use reflective reasoning to assess emotive. Be consistent in one's commitments.**

C) Why is Critical Thinking Important?

1. Essential both for the individual and for the culture

Decision-making, problem-solving, growth, understanding the world

2. Essential for democratic political system (citizens vs. subjects)

Needed for common good/public welfare

Critical mastery of self and culture: "Let's Get Critical" pp. 7-9, and

"Cultural Slavery or Freedom?" pp.1-6

3. Intellectual character should be shaped by governing values of truth and good

Risk is governed by other values: e.g., self-interest, profit, irrational authority

4. Development of intellectual character should not be left to chance

Does a family and/or community happen to value it and know how to teach it?

5. Our conception of self and world go together

Size, order, intelligibility

Need for formalization in thought: "Science and Commonsense" pp.63-8

6. Liberal education designed to structure and nurture intellectual character

7. Intellectuals: role and misconceptions

Anti-intellectualism: "Ignorance by Degree", and "Biased Against Brains", and

Principles: Think for yourself. Know thyself.

D) How to Become a Critical Thinker?

1. Intellectual character

A critical mind functions with a certain set of intellectual values, habits & principles
These must develop and operate as an integrated set

Questioning: "Ask Questions that Lead to..." pp.124-5, 128-31

Values: "Become a Fair-Minded Thinker" pp. 1-23

2. Use it or lose it

The value of expression

Exercising the mind: "Use it or lose it"

Writing: "Six Benchmark Argument Essays"

3. Garbage in, garbage out

4. Discipline

Modeling: the value of good thinkers

Discipline: "About Discipline", pp. 98-110

5. A community of thinkers

Confirmation through agreement

The critical mind: "Flowers for Algernon" pp.369-86

The learning process: The Experience of Learning to...." pp. 32-4

Principles: Develop intellectual character. Express yourself. Seek & learn from good thinkers.

E) Why We Don't Think Critically

1. Governing one's emotions

No giving in to fear, laziness, apathy, frustration, or insecurity

Impediments: "Impediments to Critical Thinking, pp. 19-29, and

"Overcoming Obstacles" pp.17-29

Controlling emotions: "When Smart is Dumb", "Know Thyself", pp.33-55

2. Falsehoods

Falsehood is inevitable because we are fallible and there are limits to knowledge
Why not accept received truth/wisdom?

Who says what the truth is?

No escape from falsehood, and a history of error

Problems within what we take to be true

Open to manipulation

Not the best way of reaching truth

The wrong path to truth: "The Sixth Palace" pp.65-77

3. Fallacies

Formal vs. Informal

Fallacies: "Other Common Fallacies" pp. 82-88 and

"Love is a Fallacy" pp.97-107

Principles: Govern your emotions responsibly. Find & remove defenses against good thinking.