

# Philosophy 125

# Critical Thinking

Cuyamaca College  
Section: 9977  
Room: F-710  
Semester: Spring 2011

Day: T/Th  
Time: 8:00-9:15am  
Instructor: Bruce McGraw  
Email: brca@cox.net

**I. Course Description:** This is an introduction to critical thinking with an emphasis on analyzing and constructing both inductive and deductive arguments. Critical reasoning will be applied to a variety of situations such as making sound decisions, evaluating claims and assertions, avoiding fallacious reasoning, etc.

This course is entirely and exclusively concerned with the development of potential capacities that all of you have, even though you have not developed them, capacities in that part of your mind known as “your intellect.” Most people don’t develop their intellect and therefore use it very ineffectively and often mainly to rationalize or justify their infantile or egocentric drives. One way to put this point is to say that most people are not in charge of their ideas and thinking. Most of their ideas have come into their minds without their having thought about them. They unconsciously pick up what the people around them think. They unconsciously pick up what is on television or in the movies. They unconsciously absorb ideas from the family they were raised in. They are the products, through and through, of forces they did not choose. They reflect those forces without understanding them. They are like puppets who don’t know that they have strings that are being pulled.

To become a critical thinker is to reverse that process, by learning to practice skills that enable one to start to take charge of the ideas that run one’s life. It is to think consciously and deliberately and skillfully in ways that transform oneself. It is to begin to remake one’s own mind. It is to run for the first time one’s inner workings and to understand the “system” one is running. It is to develop a mind that is analogous to the body of a person that is physically fit. It is like an excellent dancer who can perform any dance that can be choreographed. It is like a puppet that discovers the strings, and figures out how to gain control of the way they are pulled

Whenever you are doing a task in or for the class, ask yourself, would an independent observer watching you closely conclude that you were engaged in “taking charge of your mind, of your ideas, of your thinking” or would such a person conclude that you were “merely going through the motions of formally doing an assignment”, or trying to get by with some rote memorized formula or procedure?

## **II. Course Objectives:** Student will be able to:

1. Recognize components of arguments, types of arguments and validity and soundness of arguments
2. Distinguish correct from fallacious forms of reasoning
3. Analyze and critique both inductive and deductive arguments
4. Learn to recognize propaganda and efforts at manipulation
5. Learn to think consciously and deliberately and skillfully in ways that transform oneself
6. Learn to apply critical thinking to all areas of life to improve and enhance it

**III. Text:** THINK: Critical Thinking and Logical Skills for Everyday Life, by Judith A. Boss McGraw-Hill, 2010.

## **IV. Methods of Instruction:**

1. Lecture
2. Class Discussion
3. Small group discussion
4. Video tapes
5. In class or out of class writing and critical thinking

## **V. Assignments:**

**1. Reading and Writing:** Students must read the assigned pages in the text book before each class period. They must also be prepared to answer questions and discuss the reading material. It is essential that students read the material prior to class and do the writing assignment, if there are any, in order to fully understand and appreciate the topics and issues studied.

**2. Essay:** There will be one paper due before the last week of class. It should be between 3-5 pages long and double spaced. Possible topics will be discussed in class. This will enable the student to explore an area of interest that he or she has developed in more depth.

**3. Homework:** It is essential that you keep up with the homework assignments. If you are absent the day the assignment is given, you may turn it in the next class period, but you also must have the assignment for that class completed also. Failure to complete the homework assignments means you can not actively participate in the class.

**4. Exams:** The four exams will be comprised of multiple choice, true-false and essay questions. You will need a Scantron 882-e for all four exams. Students absent for a test must take the test the next class period unless excused by the instructor, otherwise they will receive a zero.

**5. Attendance, Tardies, Behavior etc:** Everybody begins the semester with 100 points in this area. If you are perfect or near perfect in the above categories you can keep all 100 points and they will be averaged into your final grade. However, by violating the rules in the above areas you can lose points off your total. Here is how it will work.

**3 points off for using your cell phone or any other electronic device during class w/o prior permission**

**3 points off for each absence after the first one. You get one free absence.**

**1 point off for each tardy if you are no more than 10 minutes late.**

**2 points off for each tardy between 10 and 20 minutes late**

**3 points off for each tardy more than 20 minutes late.**

**3 points off for sleeping, closing your eyes or putting your head down on your desk**

**3 points off for doing work unrelated to this class during class**

**3 points off for side conversations during the class.**

**All of these rules will apply from the first day. There will be no warnings given.**

**VI. Grades:** Your grade will be made up of four exams, points given for completing homework assignments and the essay. Extra points can be made by class participation and involvement. This also includes active involvement in small groups with classmates. Students can actually lose points by failing to actively participate in the small groups. Class participation in all its phases will be especially important if your final grade is hovering between two grades.

### **VII. Grading System:**

A: 4 tests (100pts each)	400pts
B: In/Out of Class Work: (5pts each)	50pts Approximately
C. Attendance, Tardies, Behavior (See Explanation below)	100pts
D. Essay	<u>50pts</u>
Total:	600pts (Approximately)
90-100 - A	
80-89 - B	
70-79 - C	
60-69 - D	
0-59 - F	

**VIII. Attendance:** Regular/Full attendance is absolutely necessary to understand the problems and issues studied in this course. Absences will be limited to 6 meetings. 2 tardies will be counted as 1 absence. Leaving early will be counted the same as a tardy. **Since this is a college course, there are no excused absences or lateness for any reason.** You will be automatically dropped without warning if you exceed the attendance limit. Plan well! There are no exceptions! If you are late, it is your responsibility to inform me after class, otherwise it stands as an absence.

### **IX. Agreements:**

**1. You are to agree to examine the information in this course with an open mind.** The nature of education is to learn about things you don't yet know, or about things with which you may disagree. There is no learning in being able to only see your world one way. We will spend a lot of time in this course examining different ways to look at the world and at ourselves. **At no time are you expected to agree with what is presented in this course.** You are expected to participate verbally in this course. Please do not speak in class when another student or the

professor is speaking. If you want to give your view on a subject under discussion, please do not share it with your neighbor during the classroom discussion, but instead raise your hand and give your opinion to the class. To do otherwise is extremely rude and disruptive to the class discussion, and is grounds for being dropped from the class.

**2. You agree to manage yourself in this course. Rude behavior such as:** side conversations, sleeping, eating in the classroom, cosmetic activities, writing letters, updating your diary, using/checking your cell phones and working on projects unrelated to this course are not acceptable and **are grounds for having points taken away from your total point score, and if it continues, being dropped from the course.** You are expected to inform me before class if you know you are planning to leave early. A sense of humor will be helpful in this class, but anyone engaging in interruptive attention getting as the class comedian or clown will be dropped. Students will be actively participating in small groups. Failure to actively participate in the task at hand is ground for being dropped from the class.

**3. It is acceptable for you to disagree with anything in this course that is said by me or by another student, but it must be done in a respectful manner.** The idea of a philosophy class is to allow students a comfortable atmosphere in which to express their own ideas and opinions about topics discussed.

**X. Course Content:** It is essential that reading and writing assignments be completed before each class.

**Class Schedule: The Instructor reserves the right to amend the class schedule if needed.**

January 25/27: Syllabus, Introduction, Chapter 1: *Critical Thinking: Why It's Important.*

February 1/3: Finish Chapter 1 and begin Chapter 2: *Reasons and Emotions*

**4: Last day to drop a Semester-Length Class without a "W" Appearing on your transcripts.**

**Last day to Receive a refund for Semester-Length Classes**

8/10: Finish Chapter 2 and Begin Chapter 3: *Language and Communication*

15/17: Finish Chapter 3 and Review for Test 1.

**22/24 Test 1: Chapters 1-3.**

Begin Chapter 4: *Knowledge, Evidence & Errors in Thinking*

**25: Last Day to Apply for CR/NC for Semester-Length Classes**

March 1/3: Finish Chapter 4 and Begin Chapter 5: *Informal Fallacies*

8/10: Finish Chapter 5 and Begin Chapter 6: *Recognizing, Analyzing & Constructing Arguments*

15/17: Finish Chapter 6 and Review for Test 2.

**22/24: Test 2: Chapters 4-6**

Begin Chapter 7: *Inductive Arguments*

29/31: Finish Chapter 7 and Begin Chapter 8: *Deductive Arguments*

April 5/7: Finish Chapter 8 and Begin Chapter 9: *Ethics and Moral Decision-Making*

12/14: Finish Chapter 9 and Review for Test 3

**15: Last Day to Drop Semester-Length Classes**

**19/21: Spring Break**

**26/28: Test 3: Chapter 7-9**

Begin Chapter 10: *Marketing and Advertising*

May 3/5: Finish Chapter 10 and Begin Chapter 11: *Mass Media*

10/12: Finish Chapter 11 and Begin Chapter 12: *Science* and/or Chapter 13: *Law and Politics*

17/19: Finish Chapter 12 and/or 13

**26: Final Exam: 9:30-11:30am**

This course adheres to policies outlined in the Cuyamaca College catalogue. For further information see Academic Policies in the catalogue