

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Developing critical thinking is valuable because it can help you develop a better life, become a better professional, and become a better citizen in a democratic society. In short, critical thinking is a guide to evaluate information, whether it be planning a community needs assessment, providing program evaluation, deciding who to vote for in a national or local election, marshalling evidence in persuading a co-working or a supervisor, or gaining information when buying a car. Critical thinking, also called reflective thinking, has also been described as “thinking about thinking” where a person compares their thinking (or someone else thinking) to intellectual standards (e.g., descriptive assumptions).

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Rodney B. Dieser
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Class Delivery: Online via Blackboard Learn

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will

- Articulate the individual and societal benefits of critical thinking.
- Break down an argument in order to assess issues, conclusions, and reasons.
- Outline prescriptive and descriptive assumptions, information that has been omitted, fallacies in reasoning, and how research and statistics can be deceptive.
- Differentiate between credible and non-credible evidence when marshalling support for a claim.
- Outline obstacles to critical thinking
- Evaluate knowledge claims presented in the mass media, science/research, marketing/advertising, websites, politics, and in everyday life

REQUIRED READINGS

Browne, M. N., & Keeley, S. M. (2011). *Asking the right question with readings: A guide to critical thinking*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. This book is abbreviated as **ARQ**

Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2012). *Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your learning and your life*. Boston, MA: Pearson. This book is abbreviated as **CTT**

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD

This class consists of six modules. In each module students are expected to (1) read the required readings, (2) read the module explanations in the course outline/assignments and (3) answer the questions located at the end of the module.

Readings are an independent means of providing concrete experience to prepare students for each class session. Students are expected to carefully read and take the time to reflect upon the assigned readings. Successful reflection journals entries depend heavily on a high level of student preparation with regard to the reading.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Note: Answering Question at the End of Each of the Six Modules

This class has six modules. At the end of each module there are a listing of question to be answered. Each question is worth five points. The rubric for grading these reflective journal entries are based on:

- Clarity (to be precise, specific or exact): 1 point
- Accuracy (free from errors, mistakes, or distortions): 1 point
- Relevance (a close logical relationship with critical thinking): 1 point
- Breadth (exploring alternative or many perspectives, ideas, solutions): 1 point
- Depth (entails explaining the complexity of an issue/idea): 1 point

Although the page length of each answer varies due to the information in the textbooks, in general, each answer to each question in all six modules should be approximately a page in length (double spaces)

Open Book Exam

At the end of this class you will take an open book exam. In this exam you are able to bring the two required books into the examination room at continuing education. This test asks one essay question: Explain what critical thinking is. Answer this question in an in-depth way drawing on the two books that you used in class.

Appendix A will be used to evaluate this assignment. The page length of this open book exam is 8 pages. The required time period is 2 hours.

An Imagined Critical Thinking Argumentative Dialogue

Chapters 15-19 in the book *Asking the Right Question* are separate chapters that are focused on a specific/single topic (e.g., chapter 15 is focused on the critical thinking question "Should we protect children from advertising?"; chapter 17 is focused on the critical thinking question "What is the secret to happiness?"). Within in chapter 15-19, students are to pick one chapter (topic) and evaluate the differing arguments/positions based on critical thinking elements. That is, based on a critical thinking perspective, imagine you are now part of the argument/dialog and write position paper based on the topic at hand. This paper should be 5-6 pages in length (double spaced) and needs to include five academic reference that are within the last five years. Appendix B will be used to evaluate this assignment. This assignment should be started after students have completed all six modules.

GRADING SCALE AND CRITERIA

Module #1 assignment	80 points
Module #2 assignment	55 points
Module #3 assignment	80 points
Module #4 assignment	40 points
Module #5 assignment	55 points
Module #6 assignment	30 points

Total Module points 340 points

Critical Thinking Evaluation of an Argument 20 points

Open Book exam 40 points

Total points for class 400 points

A	372-400 points (93% or higher)
A-	360-371 points (approximately 90-92%)
B+	348-359 points (approximately 87-89%)
B	332-347 points (approximately 83-86%)
B-	320-331 points (approximately 80-82%)
C+	308-319 points (approximately 77-79%)
C	292-307 points (approximately 73-76%)
C-	280-291 points (approximately 70-72%)
D+	268-279 points (approximately 67-69%)
D	252-267 points (approximately 63-66%)
D-	240-251 points (approximately 60-62%)
F	239 points or less (approximately 59% or less)

A= Excellent scholarship; students display an excellent level of knowledge of course content as demonstrated by ability to accurately repeat, synthesize, and apply specific information given through lectures, discussions, readings, handouts, guest speakers, and various forms of media used in class to complete assignments or as evident during class discussion. He or she actively pursues additional information, critiques information presented, completes assignments on time, uses proper grammar and spelling in all written work, and follows format requested by professor.

B= Above average academic performance; student displays an above average level of knowledge of course content as demonstrated by ability to somewhat accurately repeat, synthesis, and apply specific information given through lectures, discussions, readings, handouts, guest speakers, and various forms of media used in class to complete assignments or as evident during class discussion. He or she occasionally pursues additional information, critiques information presented, completes assignments on time, uses proper grammar and spelling in all written work, and follows format requested by professor.

C= Average academic performance: student displays an average level of knowledge of course content as demonstrated by ability to periodically repeat, synthesis, and apply information given through lectures, discussions, readings, handouts, guest speakers, and various forms of media used in class to complete assignments or as evident during class discussion. He or she completes assignments on time, uses proper grammar and spelling in all written work, and follows format requested by professor.

D= Below average academic performance; student displays a below average level of knowledge of course content as demonstrated by ability to repeat general information given through lectures, discussions, readings, handouts, guest speakers, and various forms of media used in class to complete assignments or as evident during class discussion. He or she occasionally completes assignments on time, uses proper grammar and spelling in all written work, and follows format requested by professor.

F= Failing academic performance; student displays a lack of knowledge of course content as demonstrated by lack of ability to repeat, synthesize, or apply general information through lectures, discussions, readings, handouts, guest speakers, and various forms of media used in class to complete assignments or as evident during class discussion. He or she fails to complete assignments on time, uses proper grammar and spelling in all written work, and follows format requested by professor.

Academic Integrity

To ensure academic integrity and to follow UNI policies on Student Academic Ethics (see: IV. Academic Ethics Violations), students will not plagiarize, misrepresent, fabricate, or cheat. Unless otherwise instructed and approved by the instructor,

students will take quizzes and exams **individually**, without collaboration with other parties and/or using notes or other texts. Similarly, students will submit work (papers, presentations, and other assessments) that is their own work (in regard to violations of these ethics policies, see: V. Academic Ethics Sanctions).

Communication with Instructor

I will primarily communicate with students via email, but I will be available by appointment as well for discussion by phone or a persona meeting at my UNI office. Send personal concerns to me via my UNI email address and request appointments with me if you prefer to discuss concerns and questions live by phone or in person rather than in an email. Generally it will take me 24 hours to respond to emails, except on the weekends where it may take up to 48 hours. I will provide feedback on assignment submissions only as needed, and I will do this as well as grade within one week of the submission.

Technical Support

If you experience any technical problems, do **not** contact the instructor. Please contact the **Office of Continuing and Distance Education** at 319-273-7740 (local), or 800-772-1746 (toll-free) or cesp-consult@uni.edu. Support hours are available Monday – Thursday 8am – 9pm and Friday 8am – 4:30pm.

Appendix A

Evaluation of Open Book Examination

Objective: Student can synthesis the various aspects of critical thinking into order to articulate the meaning of critical thinking.

	Not meet expectations (2 points)	Marginal Expectations (5 points)	Met Expectations (8 points)	Exceeded Expectations (10 points)
Explanation/Description of Critical thinking (10 points)	Lacking or incorrect	Ambiguous and/or contains irrelevant information	Good grasp of critical thinking with minor issues or inaccuracies.	Full, comprehensive understanding of critical thinking
Application (10 points) Ability to: • Apply critical thinking to self,	Lacking of or incorrect application critical thinking skills and strategies.	Limited connections between critical thinking and life experiences.	Makes correct inferences related to critical thinking	Applies in-depth analysis and synthesizes connection between critical

	Not meet expectations (2 points)	Marginal Expectations (5 points)	Met Expectations (8 points)	Exceeded Expectations (10 points)
<p>others and societal;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess and analyze behavior critical thinking in self and others; • provide pertinent examples of critical thinking 	Irrelevant connections (examples)	<p>Superficial knowledge of critical thinking skills and strategies.</p> <p>Simple examples.</p>	Uses appropriate critical thinking skills and strategies, with pertinent examples with sufficient explanation.	<p>thinking and life experience in an original, insightful way.</p> <p>Shows a deepened understanding of how critical thinking skills learned in class are applicable to self, others, and societal issues</p>
Conclusions (10 points)	None provided	Simply restates or sums up what has been stated already at a very basic level.	Clear, complete and logical but offers limited additional insights.	<p>Thoughtful, logical reflection.</p> <p>Synthesizes previous discussion in a novel way.</p>
<p>Communication Skills (10 points)</p> <p>-Written</p>	Incoherent communication throughout	Generally conveys meaning to the audience but communication skills are substandard due to multiple errors.	<p>Communication skills are adequate.</p> <p>Occasional errors and need for clarification</p>	<p>Eloquent language</p> <p>Attention to details</p> <p>Virtually error free</p>

Appendix B

Evaluation of An Imagined Critical Thinking Argumentative Dialogue

Objective: Students can evaluate differing arguments/positions based on critical thinking elements.

	Not meet expectations (1-2 points)	Marginal Expectations (3 points)	Met Expectations (4 points)	Exceeded Expectations (5 points)
Explanation/Description of Critical thinking (5 points)	Lacking or incorrect	Ambiguous and/or contains irrelevant information	Good grasp of critical thinking with minor issues or inaccuracies.	Full, comprehensive understanding of critical thinking
Application (5 points) Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply critical thinking to an argument; • provide pertinent examples of critical thinking 	Lacking of or incorrect application critical thinking skills and strategies. Irrelevant connections (examples)	Limited connections of critical thinking. Superficial knowledge of critical thinking skills and strategies. Simple examples.	Makes correct inferences related to critical thinking Uses appropriate critical thinking skills and strategies, with pertinent examples with sufficient explanation.	Applies in-depth analysis and synthesizes connection between critical thinking in evaluation of argument. Shows a deepened understanding of how critical thinking skills learned in class are applicable an argument written by another person

	Not meet expectations (1-2 points)	Marginal Expectations (3 points)	Met Expectations (4 points)	Exceeded Expectations (5 points)
Conclusions (5 points)	None provided	Simply restates or sums up what has been stated already at a very basic level.	Clear, complete and logical but offers limited additional insights.	Thoughtful, logical reflection. Synthesizes previous discussion in a novel way.
Communication Skills (5 points) -Written	Incoherent communication throughout	Generally conveys meaning to the audience but communication skills are substandard due to multiple errors.	Communication skills are adequate. Occasional errors and need for clarification	Eloquent language Attention to details Virtually error free