

Critical Thinking

(PHIL 10360)

Chaminade University of Honolulu

Summer Evening 1999. Pearl Harbor Naval Base, Building 679, Second Floor,

July 6 through September 15, 1999. Mon & Wed, 7:05 to 9:10 p.m.

Instructor: Robert Buss.

Phone: 528-4067 (home).

"Critical Thinking" -- A study of the nature of critical thinking, types of argument patterns, and ways to evaluate and analyze reasoning in various contexts. The course will examine the main features of critical theory, including the nature of definition, logical aspects of language, and whether arguments are sound (reasonable) or unsound (fallacious). Students will learn formal and informal procedures for determining what is reasonable to accept as a convincing argument and especially for recognizing weak or poor thinking regardless of its persuasiveness. The class will explore alternative models of critical thinking in areas such as history, ethics, law, art, science, literature, popular culture, and comparative philosophy. Throughout the class, students will learn the basics of logical thinking and apply this learning to consider, critically and impartially, the quality of reasoning in everyday situations and in confronting issues relevant to a responsible citizen and reasonable person.

Text: *Critical Reasoning: Understanding and Criticizing Arguments and Theories* (4th edition) by Jerry Cederblom & David Paulsen. There will also be occasional handouts and study aids.

Organization of Course and Basis for Grading -- There will be eight quizzes covering chapters of the text and related areas covered in the course. These will be given at the beginning of the indicated class period (no make-up quizzes will be allowed). The best five scores will count toward your final grade. There will be two exams (one take-home and one in-class), which will explore general forms of reasoning in alternative "models of critical thinking," primarily from material from the text. Attendance will be a factor, since quizzes may not be taken late and in-class exercises will be difficult to make-up.

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| -- Quizzes (best five scores, from eight possible). | 30% |
| -- Take-Home Midterm Exam (given out Aug. 4 / due Aug. 24). | 20% |
| -- Final Exam (In-class / September 15). | 20% |
| -- Analysis Paper (on Argument/Persuasive Essay to be written for Expository Writing, English 10261). | 15% |
| -- In-class exercises and assignments, indicated on syllabus by an asterisk (*). | 15% |

Class Objectives ■■

- The main objective of this course is to develop in students the ability to think analytically and to evaluate objectively arguments and issues in their daily lives;
- to distinguish the differences between an emotional disagreement with somebody and a well thought out, persuasive argument;
- to train students to identify valid, persuasive arguments as well as fallacies in various contexts, including those in the mass media;
- to acquire reasoning skills;
- to demonstrate the quality of being an objective reader, listener and communicator;
- to differentiate various types of arguments and statements;
- to improve their communication skills by delivering clearer and more effective statements that are logically consistent;
- to analyze and respond, critically, to the arguments of others; and
- to make sound arguments.

GENERAL OUTLINE OF TOPICS

With Reading Assignments and Special Topics

- July 7
- Orientation. Introduction to "Critical Thinking" and Systems of Logic.
 - Deciding What to Believe (chapter 1).
- July 12
- Varieties of Critical Thinking: Identifying Styles of Thinking and Arguments.
 - Models of Critical Thinking: What is Philosophical Reasoning?
-- Differences Among Myth, Magic, Religion and Philosophy.
 - Critical Thinking About Stereotypes, Hidden Assumptions and Prejudices.
(Showing of video documentary *Ethnic Notions*.)
- July 14
- The Anatomy of Arguments: Identifying Premises and Conclusions (chapter 2).
 - * Exercise: Find the position or argument in a newspaper editorial (identify the argument, its main point and supporting points, and discuss it in class).
- July 19
- **Quiz No. 1** (The Anatomy of Arguments).
 - Understanding Arguments Through Reconstruction (chapter 3).
- July 21
- (double period:
begins at
4:45 p.m.)
- **Quiz No. 2** (Reconstruction of Arguments).
 - The Toulmin Model of Paragraph and Essay Logic (class discussion, handout).
 - Models of Critical Thinking: History's Habits of the Mind.
 - * Exercise: You will be given a short essay on "The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement." List its main points and summarize it in two to three sentences. In small groups, students will read their summaries and look for causes and effects. Note the difference between details of description and broader interpretation of meaning/significance in historical reasoning.
- July 26
- Evaluating Arguments: Some Basic Questions (chapter 4).
-- Validity: When does the conclusion follow from the premises?
-- Truth Claims: When should the premises be accepted as true?
- July 28
- **Quiz No. 3** (Evaluating Arguments & Using the Toulmin Model).
 - Models of Critical Thinking: Ethical and Moral Dilemmas.
 - * Exercise: We will consider a case-study in bioethics. Looking for how one can defend a moral decision in "hard cases." What are some of the different "ways" of defending ethical positions? How do moral assumptions affect conclusions? What kind of information is relevant/necessary to making "informed decisions?"
- Aug. 2
- Why Are Bad Arguments Sometimes Convincing? (chapter 6)
 - Fallacies of Reasoning and Prejudicial Language.
 - * Exercise: Bring an advertisement to class that demonstrates in some way a fallacious means of persuading us. Identify the fallacy and explain how it works, or is meant to work. Reconstruct it as an argument, with actual premises and a conclusion, providing implicit statements when needed.
- Aug. 4
- **Quiz No. 4** (Informal Fallacies).
 - Models of Critical Thinking: Legal Reasoning and Political Issues.
 - **Take-home midterm exam given out (due August 23).**
- Aug. 9 &
Aug. 11
- Companion course, English 10261, will meet for both periods to discuss research methods and skills at Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

- Aug. 16
 - "That Depends on What You Mean by...." Argument and Definition.
 - Dealing With Unclear Expressions and Misleading Definitions (chapter 7).
- Aug. 18
 - **Quiz No. 5** (Argument and Definition).
 - Models of Critical Thinking: The Art World: Art History, Criticism and Aesthetics.
 - * Exercise: Compare and contrast two different reviews of the same art show, or two music reviews or movie reviews. Reconstruct the arguments and evaluate the persuasiveness or effectiveness of each review, consider the role of language and use of example in making the case. If possible, see the art show or movie or listen to the music and note whether either review helps or hinders your experience. What is the function of a good art review or piece of art criticism? Identify problems of language, use of examples and role of personal taste or opinion in such criticism.
- Aug. 23
 - Evaluating Inductive Arguments.
 - Generalization and Arguments From Analogy (chapter 8).
 - **Take-Home Midterm Exam Due**
- Aug. 25
 - **Quiz No. 6** (Induction and Empirical Generalization).
 - Models of Critical Thinking: The Scientific World View.
 - Reading: Excerpt from Carl Sagan's book *The Demon-Haunted World*.
 - * Exercise: Contrast an example of scientific versus "pseudo-scientific" thinking on some issue (you might discuss an episode of *The X Files* t.v. series or a tabloid account of an alien abduction); how does what counts as evidence vary?
- Aug. 30
 - Explanation and the Criticism of Theories (chapter 9).
- Sept. 1
 - **Quiz No. 7** (Criticism of Theories).
 - Putting It All Together: Six Steps to Understanding & Evaluating Arguments (chapter 10).
- Sept. 6
 - Labor Day Holiday -- No Class.
- Sept. 8
 - **Quiz No. 8** (Putting It All Together).
 - Making Reasonable Decisions in a World of Experts (chapter 11).
- Sept. 13
 - Review for Final Exam.
 - Models of Critical Thinking: "Alternative Rationalities" in Non-Western Traditions.
 - Reading: Introductory essay by Eliot Deutsch and "One Rationality, Many Persuasions" by George J. Tanabe, Jr.).
- Sept. 15
 - **Final Exam (In-Class)**

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- "And what is thinking? -- Well, don't you ever think? Can't you observe yourself and see what is going on? It should be quite simple. You do not have to wait for it as for an astronomical event and then perhaps make your observation in a hurry." (Ludwig Wittgenstein)
 - "People would rather die than think... and most do." (Bertrand Russell)
 - "Arguments, like men, are often pretenders." (Plato)