

SSF '00

PM

Critical Thinking

(PHIL 103-15)

Chaminade University of Honolulu

Summer Evening, 2000. NCTAMS (Wahiawa)

July 5 through September 13, 2000. Wednesdays, 5:30 to 9:40 p.m. .

Instructor: Robert Buss. Phone: 528-4067 (home).

"Critical Thinking" -- A study of the nature of critical thinking, 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. 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: *Becoming a Critical Thinker* (second edition, 1998) by Sherry Diestler.
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 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, primarily from material from the text. Attendance will be a factor, since quizzes can not be taken late and in-class exercises may be difficult to make-up.

- Quizzes (best five scores out of eight given). 30%
- Midterm Exam (in class), August 16. 30%
- Final Exam (take-home, due September 13). 30%
- In-class exercises, attendance and special assignments. 10%

(Note: Re-writes and late submittals are accepted, but
No work will be accepted after September 13)

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 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foundations of Arguments and Critical Thinking.• Structure of Arguments. The Three Parts of an Argument: Issues, Reasons and Conclusions.• The Toulmin Model of Paragraph and Essay Logic (handout).	Chapter 1. handouts
July 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Value Assumptions and Ethical Decision Making.• Ethics in Argumentation.	Chapter 2. Quiz 1
July 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reality Assumptions. Patterns of Deductive Reasoning.• Validity and Soundness in Arguments.	Chapter 3. Quiz 2
July 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inductive Arguments. Statistical and Causal Generalization.• Reasoning in Science.	Chapter 4. Quiz 3
August 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inductive Arguments. Use of Authority and Expert Testimony.• Reasoning by Analogy. Reasonableness in Arguments.	Chapter 5. Quiz 4
August 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reasoning Errors: Identifying Fallacies. Informal Logic.• Prejudicial and Misleading Arguments.• Review for Midterm.	Chapter 6. Quiz 5
August 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Midterm Exam (in-class).	No Quiz
August 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Power of Language. Using Definition Reasonably.• Fallacies of Vagueness and Ambiguity.• Reasoning in Legal Thinking and Political Issues.	Chapter 7. Quiz 6
August 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persuasive Thinking in Media and Popular Culture.• The Medium and the Message.• Assumptions in the Art World (art history, aesthetics & criticism).• Final exam (take-home) handed out.	Chapter 8. Quiz 7
Sept. 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fairmindedness. The Art of Listening Well.• Developing Empathy and Considering Alternative Perspectives.• Reasoning in History (history's habits of the mind).• Discussion of progress on take-home final exam.	Chapter 9. Quiz 8
Sept. 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persuasive Thinking and Effective Communication.• Three Elements of a Persuasive Argument (ethos, logos and pathos).• Reasoning in Public Speaking and Oratory.• Final Exam (take-home) due. (Last day to submit any late work)	Chapter 10.

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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)