

Critical Thinking

(PHIL 103-10)

SE '01
Buss

Chaminade University of Honolulu
Spring Evening 2001. Schofield Barracks
Building 560, Sgt. Yano Library, 2nd floor

April 2-June 11 (Fridays, 5:30-9:40 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 ways of 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, 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 toward 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 an in-class exam, 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%
- Exam on Chapters 1-6 (In-Class on Friday, May 18). 30%
- Special Project and Report on a Social Concern or Issue. 30%
- The report will examine the nature of an issue and alternative positions, examine ethical and reality assumptions, clarify key terms, analogies and arguments, and discuss examples of good and bad reasoning found in news articles, editorials, statistical or sociological studies and televised coverage of related stories.*
- In-class exercises, attendance and special assignments. 10%
- (Re-writes and late work are accepted, but not after June 1st)

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.

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- "People would rather die than think... and most do." (Bertrand Russell)
 - "Arguments, like men, are often pretenders." (Plato)
 - Lord Mansfield gave the following advice to a newly appointed governor of a colony who was unversed in the law: "There is no difficulty in deciding a case -- only hear both sides patiently, then consider what you think justice requires, and decide accordingly; but never give your reasons, for your judgment will probably be right, but your reasons will certainly be wrong."

GENERAL OUTLINE OF TOPICS

With Reading Assignments and Special Topics

April 6	<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).• WRAITEC -- The Good Thinker's Tool Kit (handout).	Chapter 1. handouts
April 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Value Assumptions and Ethical Decision Making.• Ethics in Argumentation. • Problem: Ethics in Health Care.• What is an Ethical Life? • Hard Cases in Ethics.• <i>Simple Courage: Father Demian, An Historical Portrait</i> (video)	Chapter 2. Quiz 1 (on chap. 1)
April 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reality Assumptions. Patterns of Deductive Reasoning.• Validity and Soundness in Arguments.• <i>The Scope of Logic</i> by Wesley C. Salmon (handout).• The Primal Mind: Cultural Pluralism & the Interplay of Differences• Discussion of The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920 (National Museum of American Art, 1991)• <i>In the White Man's Image</i> (The American Experience video series)	Chapter 3. Quiz 2 (on chap. 2)
April 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inductive Arguments. Statistical and Causal Generalization.• Reasoning in Science and the Pull of Pseudo-Science.• Reading from Carl Sagon's <i>The Demon Haunted World</i> (handout)• Essay by Alan Lightman: <i>Nothing But the Truth</i> (handout)• Video: Interview with Maxine Singer (<i>Genetics Research and Values</i>)	Chapter 4. Quiz 3 (on chap. 3)
May 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inductive Arguments. Use of Authority and Expert Testimony.• Reasoning by Analogy. Reasonableness in Arguments.• <i>Fixing Belief</i> by Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel (handout).• Seeing and believing -- The problems of Truth, truths and opinion.• <i>Mystery of the Senses: Vision</i> (with Diane Ackerman, video)	Chapter 5. Quiz 4 (on chap. 4)
May 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reasoning Errors: Identifying Fallacies. Informal Logic.• Prejudicial and Misleading Arguments.• The Origins and History of Racial Stereotypes and Thinking in America -- <i>Ethnic Notions</i> (video).• Readings from author bell hooks on gender and racism.	Chapter 6. Quiz 5 (on chap. 5)
May 18	Exam (chapters 1-6) -- In-class.	Quiz 6 (take-home)
May 25	<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.• Martha Nussbaum on Goodness: Lessons from the Ancient Greeks and their Application to Modern Life (video).	Chapter 7. Quiz 7 (on chap. 6)
June 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persuasive Thinking in Media and Popular Culture.• Fairmindedness. The Art of Listening Well.• Persuasive Thinking and Effective Communication.• Evaluating Television News -- <i>Sensations Art Exhibit</i> (video).• Turn in Special Projects.	Chapter 8. Chapter 9. Chapter 10. Quiz 8 (on chap. 7)
June 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Return of Special Projects.• Putting it all together: Being a Critical Thinker in Today's World.	(No Quiz)