

WEE '01  
Bms

# Critical Thinking

(PHIL 103-20)

Chaminade University of Honolulu  
Interim Winter 2000. Kane'ohē MCBH  
Building 220, Classroom C

December 18, 2000 through January 4, 2001  
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 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 final 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.

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| -- Quizzes (best five scores out of eight given).          | 40% |
| -- Final Exam (In-Class on Thursday, January 4, 2001).     | 40% |
| -- In-class exercises, attendance and special assignments. | 20% |
- (Note: Re-writes and late submittals are accepted, but  
*no work will be accepted after January 4th*)

## 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

Monday Dec. 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foundations of Arguments and Critical Thinking.</li> <li>• Structure of Arguments. The Three Parts of an Argument: Issues, Reasons and Conclusions.</li> <li>• The Toulmin Model of Paragraph and Essay Logic (handout).</li> <li>• WRAITEC -- The Good Thinker's Tool Kit (handout).</li> </ul>	Chapter 1. handouts
Tuesday Dec. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value Assumptions and Ethical Decision Making.</li> <li>• Ethics in Argumentation.   • Problem: Ethics in Health Care.</li> <li>• What is an Ethical Life?   • Hard Cases in Ethics.</li> <li>• <i>Simple Courage: Father Demian, An Historical Portrait</i> (video)</li> </ul>	Chapter 2. Quiz 1
Wednesday Dec. 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality Assumptions. Patterns of Deductive Reasoning.</li> <li>• Validity and Soundness in Arguments.</li> <li>• <i>The Scope of Logic</i> by Wesley C. Salmon (handout).</li> <li>• The Primal Mind: Cultural Pluralism &amp; the Interplay of Differences</li> <li>• Discussion of The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920 (National Museum of American Art, 1991)</li> <li>• <i>In the White Man's Image</i> (The American Experience video series)</li> </ul>	Chapter 3. Quiz 2
Friday Dec. 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inductive Arguments. Statistical and Causal Generalization.</li> <li>• Reasoning in Science and the Pull of Pseudo-Science.</li> <li>• Reading from Carl Sagon's <i>The Demon Haunted World</i> (handout)</li> <li>• <i>Mystery of the Senses: Vision</i> (with Diane Ackerman, video)</li> </ul>	Chapter 4. Quiz 3
Saturday Dec. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inductive Arguments. Use of Authority and Expert Testimony.</li> <li>• Reasoning by Analogy. Reasonableness in Arguments.</li> <li>• <i>Fixing Belief</i> by Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel (handout).</li> <li>• The Utopian Impulse (Steven Weinberg's <i>Five and a Half Utopias</i>)</li> <li>• Video: Interview with Maxine Singer (<i>Genetics Research and Values</i>)</li> </ul>	Chapter 5. Quiz 4
Wednesday Dec. 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasoning Errors: Identifying Fallacies. Informal Logic.</li> <li>• Prejudicial and Misleading Arguments.</li> <li>• The Origins and History of Racial Stereotypes and Thinking in America -- <i>Ethnic Notions</i> (video).</li> <li>• Readings from author bell hooks on gender and racism.</li> </ul>	Chapter 6. Quiz 5
Thursday Dec. 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Power of Language. Using Definition Reasonably.</li> <li>• Fallacies of Vagueness and Ambiguity.</li> <li>• Reasoning in Legal Thinking and Political Issues.</li> <li>• Martha Nussbaum on Goodness: Lessons from the Ancient Greeks and their Application to Modern Life (video).</li> </ul>	Chapter 7. Quiz 6
Friday Dec. 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persuasive Thinking in Media and Popular Culture.</li> <li>• The Medium and the Message -- <i>Barbie Nation</i> (video).</li> <li>• <i>Visions of Heaven and Hell: Information Technology and the Future: Selling the Future</i> (Video)</li> </ul>	Chapter 8. Quiz 7
Tuesday Jan. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fairmindedness. The Art of Listening Well.</li> <li>• Persuasive Thinking and Effective Communication.</li> <li>• Review for final exam.</li> </ul>	Chapter 9. Chapter 10. Quiz 8
Thursday Jan. 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Exam (in-class).</li> <li>• Last day to turn in written work.</li> </ul>	(No Quiz)