



Department of Communication Skills & Social Sciences

809-103-009: THINK CRITICALLY & CREATIVELY

Spring 2008: Saturday, 8:30am to 11:25am, B010

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Office: B185P **Office Hours:** By Appointment (typically, 11:25am to 12:25pm, Saturdays)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Thinking Critically and Creatively provides instruction in the vital, realistic, and practical methods of thinking which are in high demand in all occupations of substance today. Decision making, problem solving, detailed analysis of ideas, troubleshooting, argumentation, persuasion, creativity, setting goals and objectives, and more are considered in depth as the student applies specific thinking strategies and tools to situations in a wide variety of workplace, personal, interpersonal, academic, and cultural situations.

To truly accomplish the goals of this course, students need to do more than understand course concepts. Students must also be ready, willing, and able to directly apply them. Therefore, it is vital that students maintain an open mind and participate actively in all course activities, including readings, discussions, assessments, reflections, observations, and other assignments. Teaching methods include lecture and audio/video presentations, as well as small group activities. There may also be guest speakers for some topics. **In addition, there is a heavy emphasis on class and small group discussions.** Students are expected to come to class with questions and be eager to share their reactions to class readings and assignments.

As the wisest, most objective, most rigorous critical thinkers can (and often do) reasonably (and at times, unreasonably) disagree, debate and even feud, it is vital that we work together to achieve a reasoned approach to the study of thinking. To do this, we need to be open to and tolerate a rich discussion of multiple perspectives by students with an array of different skills, experiences, attitudes, values and worldviews. Hence, please do your best to help each student feel comfortable to think openly and creatively, while also fostering a setting where we can all become wise and confident thinkers. Keep in mind that as humans we are encumbered by more than thoughts, but are also influenced by biology, emotion and culture. Moreover, our thoughts (and thinking styles) may change as the course progresses, and as a result of life experiences. Please be open. Be respectful of others. Grow.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- *Define, compare and contrast, evaluate, synthesize and apply* major concepts related to thinking critically and creatively
- Assess one's own personal thinking strengths and developmental needs, compare and contract personal thinking habits with those of others, compose personal goals for thinking skills improvement for life and work, and develop a personal mission statement
- Recognize and apply specific thinking behaviors and principles for creative thinking, problem solving, and decision making
- Build and defend one's own assertions and make reasoned arguments by differentiating facts and observations from inferences, assumptions and judgments; recognizing fallacies of reasoning; analyzing a claim from multiple perspectives; comfortably discussing and debating controversial issues using reasons, evidence, logic and deliberate organization;

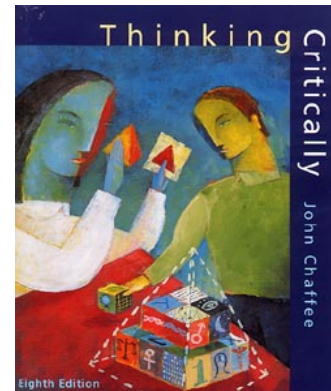
REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Textbook:

Chaffee, J. (2006). Thinking Critically (8th Edition). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Students are encouraged to visit the textbook website: http://college.hmco.com/english/chaffee/thinking_critically/8e/students/index.html. We will read the entire textbook during this course.

Thinking Critically & Creatively Student Manual
(available only in WCTC bookstore)



Other Course Materials:

Students are required to regularly visit the course website on Blackboard (go to MyWCTC) and the textbook website, which requires a computer and Internet connection. In addition, students are required to submit word-processed documents throughout the course, which requires access to a computer, word processing software (ideally, MS Word), and a printer.

Other supplies necessary to complete course assignments include: pencil, pen, paper (for note taking), index cards (for discussion questions), and a binder/folder to organize course materials and notes.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to arrive to each class on time and attend the entire class period. In addition, attendance includes far more than physical presence. To be truly attentive, students are expected to arrive to class prepared for the day's lecture and activities and remain alert throughout the course period. There are several reasons for this expectation. First, each lesson builds on the material learned from the previous lesson. Second, students benefit directly (and indirectly) from participation in class and small group exercises and discussions of key course concepts. Third, some class activities cannot be made up (e.g., guest speakers, class discussions)

or are difficult to make up (e.g., audio/video presentations). Fourth, inattentive students are a distraction to other students and the instructor. Fifth, only course assignments and assessments that are turned in on or before the due date are accepted (and some assignments are given impromptu in class and then turned in that same class period). Finally, course participation accounts for 10% of the final grade for this course.

If there is a planned absence, please inform the instructor in person at least one class meeting prior to the absence and be sure to turn in all relevant assignments in advance of the absence. Please beware: unless otherwise approved by the instructor in advance in writing, students do not earn credit for emailing assignments moments (or longer) before an unplanned absence. It is also important to remember that assignments are posted on Blackboard. Attempts to email or phone the instructor prior to class with no reply is not a sufficient reason for turning assignments in late.

GRADING SCALE/EVALUATION

An electronic gradebook is available on Blackboard for this course (see **My Grades**). Students are encouraged to review the gradebook at least weekly. Students are also required to keep copies of all graded coursework in case of a gradebook dispute. The course grade is determined by student performance across four critical course components:

- Exams (20%)
- Assignments (20%)
- Interview, Observation and Reflection Papers (IORs) (50%)
- Course Participation (10%)

Exams (20%):

Exams typically include two components: (1) a series of short answer questions (e.g., definitions, brief essays, applied problems) and (2) a series of objective questions (e.g., multiple-choice questions). Exams in this class will emphasize short answer questions. Some exams may include both take home and in-class components. Questions are specifically selected to gauge your understanding of key concepts from the textbook, lectures, and audio/video presentations. Students are urged to take comprehensive notes and to practice good study skills. To assist with study, the instructor's lecture slides, when electronic, are posted on Blackboard at least one day prior to each class period. Students are encouraged to use these notes as a starting place for note taking during class.

Two exams are scheduled this semester as follows:

- Mid-Term Quiz: In Class/Take Home (5%)
- Final Exam: In Class/Take Home (10%) and Take Home Essay (5%)

The final exam take home essay will be distributed two weeks or more before the final exam date. The exam will require a summary of the top 10 lessons learned from the class and how (it is hoped) these lessons will impact the student's future.

Assignments (20%):

Throughout the semester, there will be several brief assignments that require further exploration of course concepts.. These assignments will account for 20% of the course grade. *Potential assignments may include:*

Thoughtful and Personal: The IOR reflects critical thoughts and ideas that are supported by experience and reason, particularly interviews, observations and reflections.

0-----3
Strongly Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly
Disagree Agree

Clear and Integrated: The ideas and thoughts in this IOR are presented in a clear, readable manner and demonstrate an understanding of the relevant concepts (as presented in course lectures, readings, and other resources)?

0-----3
Strongly Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly
Disagree Agree

Appropriate Format, Organization, Spelling and Grammar: Was the paper submitted in the appropriate format and with clear organization, accurate spelling, and grammar?

0-----1
Strongly Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly
Disagree Agree

Timely: Was the assignment turned in on time in class? (Yes = 0; No = -3)

In order to encourage class discussion, IORs are not only submitted in class, but also posted on a forum in the discussion board for this course. If you wish to have your perfect 10-point IOR included as a sample for future classes, please let me know.

IORs up to one week late may be accepted, but these late IORs will earn no more than 70%.

The aim of this course is your learning, not assessment for assessment sake. Therefore, students may revise and resubmit any of their first three IORs as an attempt to improve the grade as they gain confidence with writing IORs. Revised and resubmitted IORs must be turned in within a week of receipt of the initially graded IOR. Each of the first three IORs (assuming again that they were submitted on time) may be revised and resubmitted only once. For the record, most students find that within a few IORs, they know what it takes to earn a perfect 10 and that the IORs become a helpful way to increase self-awareness, reflect on key concepts, refine one's worldview, and become more comfortable with writing tasks. With that in mind, IORs and assignments reflect a greater proportion of the final course grade than exams.

Course Participation (10%)

Active participation in this course accounts for 10% of the course grade.. Participation credit is awarded when students show active interest in course concepts (e.g., by asking questions, staying alert, participating in discussions and small group exercises, responding to Blackboard discussion board posts). To further encourage participation in the course, students are required to submit discussion questions, feedback, or helpful teaching resources at least weekly (i.e., every Saturday). To do this, students should submit an index card with at least: (a) a thoughtful (open-ended,) question to be addressed in class; (b) constructive feedback (e.g., a request for further examples or clarification of a concept); or (c) an example of the concept(s) we've discussed in class from the media (e.g., cartoon, news article, web link) or from recent life experience.

Thoughtful questions, constructive feedback, and teaching resources are aimed at helping students better comprehend, apply analyze, synthesize, or evaluate concepts from assigned course readings or the prior class period's lecture or other presentation.

WCTC uses a letter grading scale for recording student achievement as follows:

| <u>Grade</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Grade Point Value</u> |
|--------------|----------|--------------------------|
| A | 95-100 | 4.00 |
| A- | 93-94 | 3.67 |
| B+ | 91-92 | 3.33 |
| B | 87-90 | 3.00 |
| B- | 85-86 | 2.67 |
| C+ | 83-84 | 2.33 |
| C | 79-82 | 2.00 |
| C- | 77-78 | 1.67 |
| D+ | 75-76 | 1.33 |
| D | 72-74 | 1.00 |
| D- | 70-71 | 0.67 |
| F | 69/Below | 0.00 |

Withdrawal (W): It is the responsibility of a student to drop or withdraw from a course for personal or academic reasons. A grade will be issued to students who fail to drop or withdraw from a course. A student may withdraw from a course up to 80% of the course duration (or 3 weeks before the last day of class). The instructor may also withdraw a student, up to 80% of course duration, for violation of course policy. The "W" grade is not included in GPA and is not counted in credits earned toward graduation. Students who withdraw after the refund period are fully responsible for tuition and fees. The instructor will not initiate a student requested withdrawal. After 80% of course duration, a letter grade other than a "W" will be assigned.

Incompletes (I): An "incomplete" is given only upon approval of the instructor and only when the majority of course requirements have been fulfilled, but circumstances beyond the student's control prevent course completion. The student must be passing (and participating in) the course at the time the request for an incomplete (I) grade is submitted. *It is at the discretion of the instructor to approve or disapprove the request.*

If approved, the student is allowed the following semester to complete the course requirements. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements to fulfill all course requirements. Failure to make such arrangements and complete the requirements will result in an "F" for the course. Students who have a recorded incomplete for a course or courses will not be eligible for honors recognition until complete grade records have been submitted. This grade may affect the student's ability to receive financial aid and/or the academic progress requirements of a financial aid award.

HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY COURSE GRADE?

The goal of the course is student learning, not student assessment. Students may be offered opportunities to improve grades and further demonstrate their understanding of course concepts. However, these opportunities are at the discretion of the instructor. In making decisions about

whether to offer opportunities to further demonstrate competence of course concepts, the instructor will consider the student's attendance, participation in class, and willingness to proactively seek help from the academic support center (e.g., attend test anxiety or study skills workshops, visit the reading or writing lab) and the instructor (e.g., meet during office hours).

SPECIAL NEEDS

The instructor and WCTC wish to include persons with disabilities or otherwise qualified persons in this course. Please let the instructor know if there is a need for any special accommodations. WCTC has special services available to help students find their educational experience enjoyable and worthwhile. For further information, please contact the instructor or the Director, Counseling, Retention, Special Services, at 262-691-5210 or the Transition Retention Specialist at 262-691-5281.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Students are encouraged to review the student handbook published at MyWCTC. Policies of particular relevance to this course include: code of conduct; library; computer access; and academic standing. Some specific policies related to the class environment and etiquette are summarized below:

Class Environment:

The classroom is meant to be a learning environment, both from the instructor and from one another. However, learning is inhibited when there is a lack of respect for one another's individuality as well as for the class as a whole. Therefore, there are a few ground rules for the classroom environment.

- **Privacy and confidentiality.** Most likely there will be times when class members share very personal experiences and beliefs. Since we all benefit from hearing each other's perspectives, we must be respectful of those who feel comfortable in sharing this personal information. Therefore, we will have an understood policy that nothing shared in class can be divulged outside of the class. While you may discuss general issues with others, you cannot share any information that may identify another member of the class. As means to promote privacy, students are given options on many course assignments and students may also use pseudonyms (agreed to in advance) when publishing content on Blackboard.
- **Risk taking.** To learn from each other we need to step out of our comfort zones. We may be expressing ideas that others do not agree with or listening to ideas that challenge our own beliefs, attitudes, or preconceptions. Be willing to listen to one another and be prepared to be respectfully challenged when controversial issues arise.
- **Support.** If we are to step out of our comfort zones, we need to support one another. This does not mean you have to agree with someone. It means that you have to allow her/him the space and freedom to express her/himself. It is difficult to take risks if you are concerned that people will attack your ideas.
- **Respect.** Respect that someone's ideas may be different from your own and try to understand where that person is coming from. Being open to other perspectives is important to academic and personal growth.
- **No "put downs."** All comments should be made with the desire to educate or support, not hurt. You can express disagreement with an issue or idea, but be aware of how you express yourself. Also, express why you disagree to continue the learning process for all of us.

Class Etiquette:

- **Coming and Going:** Arrive to class on time. Coming in after class has started can be disruptive. If you arrive after roll has been taken, check with me after class to be sure you get marked present. If you must leave class early, please let me know before class starts. If you leave more than 10 minutes before the end of class, I will typically count this as an absence.
- **Talking in class:** Please refrain from talking when another student is asking or answering a question or has the floor in a class discussion. Do not talk with other students during a film or activity unless directed to do so as part of the activity. This is the #1 complaint of students – other students talking while they are trying to listen to the professor, film, etc. If you continue to disrupt the class with talking, I will ask you to leave and record an absence.
- **Raise your hand when you wish to speak.** There are times when several people want to speak, so some just blurt out their responses. This behavior, especially when repeatedly perpetrated, takes away people’s equal access to the classroom forum. If you speak out of turn, you will be ignored.
- **Napping in class is not tolerated.** If you lay your head down on your desktop or fall asleep sitting in class, I will ask you to leave.
- **Cell phones and pagers.** Any beepers or cell phones will be turned off or otherwise silenced during class time.

Disclaimer:

This is a course aimed at teaching fundamental psychological concepts relevant to healthy personal, interpersonal and career adjustment. This is not therapy or counseling. At times, some of the concepts and the instructor’s reflections may prompt critical self-examination. It is hoped that this self-examination will help to solidify an understanding of the nature and importance of course concepts. If at any time in the class, insights gained from class exercises lead to distress, students should inform the instructor and, if appropriate, seek further personal or professional growth by meeting with a WCTC counselor. For more information on WCTC’s counseling resources, check out: <http://www.wctc.edu/web/student/counsel/counseling.htm>.

CLASS CANCELLATION

If WCTC may be closed, look for a message on the front page of the WCTC website, call the WCTC weather emergency information number 262.691.5239 (a recorded message will provide specific instructions and the latest available information), or listen to announcements on local radio and television stations.

CRITICAL LIFE SKILLS

WCTC recognizes critical or core life skills that allow students to continually adapt and learn. Some might call these critical life skills “employability skills,” workplace and life skills, or professional attributes. While students may not be tested on all critical life skills directly, students are required to demonstrate or apply them to satisfactorily complete the course. The critical life skills are summarized at <http://www.wctc.edu/web/student/critical/critical.htm>. The skills emphasized in this class include:

- **Communication Skills:** grammar, writing, interpersonal communication, public communication, and reading
- **Analytical Skills:** problem solving; critical thinking; science and technology; professional and personal ethics; and information seeking

- Group Effectiveness Skills: conflict resolution; social responsibility and effective citizenship; teamwork; valuing diversity; and effective relationships
- Personal Management Skills: career development; career securing; study skills; stress management; coping with change; time management; and self-concept

WORDS OF WISDOM

In addition to attending each class period, success in this course will require time dedicated to study and other activities outside of class. Although only a rule of thumb, the successful student will likely spend an hour outside of class for every hour spent in class. Given that we typically meet twice a week for about 3 hours, students can expect to spend about 3-4 hours outside of class on course activities, including reading, studying, and reflecting (i.e., writing). Students are encouraged to review **Professor DuBois' Study Tips** on Blackboard for an exhaustive list of potential study activities that could contribute to your success in this class. These tips are meant as a menu of possible activities, not as a suggested regimen for weekly study.

It is important to keep in mind that college courses are demanding and require dedication to immediate, short-term, and long-term goals. Nearly all students, in my experience, start out with the best of intentions (as well as new pencils, binders, and book bags). Then, life happens. One of the things students will learn in this class is that life always happens (and life is often difficult to boot). If students are trying to overachieve (i.e., take a course load far beyond their available time and other demands), reconsider. If students struggle to dedicate time to study (versus other fun things to do), please take a moment to review the long-term goals that prompted the decision to attend WCTC). The instructor (and WCTC) aims to provide students the best possible education to enable the best possible career success. Don't be shy about the career dreams. Ask for the occasional pep talk. Ask for help. If I can't help, I can certainly refer you to someone who can. All I ask in return is that you attend class and give every assignment and exam your best effort. **Good skill!**



809-103-009 THINK CRITICALLY & CREATIVELY: SPRING 2008

| <u>Section I</u> | <u>Topics for Class</u> | <u>Assignments Due</u> |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| January 26 | Introduction & Overview / What is Thinking? / Assessments (Workbook pp. 1-23) | |
| February 2 | Bio-Psycho-Social Framework / Theory of Mind / Thinking (Ch1) / Workbook (pp. 5, 26-39) / Other Assessments | Forum: Who am I? IOR1 Assessment / DQ |
| February 9 | Thinking Critically (Ch2) / Workbook (pp. 40-58) | IOR2: Assessment / DQ |
| February 16 | Solving Problems (Ch3) / Workbook (pp. 122-144) | IOR3: Analysis/ DQ |
| February 23 | Perceiving (Ch4) / Workbook (pp. 59-73) | IOR4: Analysis / DQ |
| March 1 | Believing and Knowing (Ch5) / Workbook (pp. 151-152) / Catch-Up | IOR5: Analysis / DQ |
| March 8 | Mid-Term Quiz (Ch1-5, Workbook) / Language and Thought (Ch6) / | DQ |
| March 15 | Creativity / Workbook (pp. 74-84, 89-94) | IOR6-7: Mission Argument Paper Topic Forum: Mid-Course Eval |
| ---Spring Break--- | | |
| March 29 | Forming & Applying Concepts (Ch7) / Workbook (pp. 98-108) | IOR8: Assessment / DQ |
| April 5 | Relating and Organizing (Ch8) / Workbook (pp. 109-121) | IOR9: Analysis / DQ |
| April 12 | Reporting, Inferring, and Judging (Ch9) | IOR10: Analysis / DQ |
| April 19 | Constructing Arguments (Ch10) / Workbook (pp. 145-150, 153-159) | IOR11: Analysis / DQ |
| April 26 | Reasoning Critically (Ch11) / Workbook (pp. 160-176) / Thinking Critically, Living Creatively (Ch12) | IOR12: Assessment / DQ |
| May 3 | Major Class Activity (Mock Trial or Debate) / Review and Catch-Up | IOR13-15: Argument Paper DQ |
| May 10 | Final Exam (Ch6-12, Workbook) | Take Home Essay Due Course Evaluation |

DQ = discussion question (index card); IOR = interview, observation and reflection paper

**The syllabus may be modified by the instructor at any time.
Be sure to check Blackboard and attend class to stay current.**