

## Critical Thinking Syllabus

PHL 2303-W, online version  
Office: CHSS 358  
Credit hours: 3

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**Course Description:** Designed to improve students' ability to think critically, the course covers the fundamentals of deductive reasoning, the identification of common fallacies, and an introduction to inductive reasoning, as well as sensitizing students to some of the ways information is distorted, e.g., by advertising and news management agencies. Additionally, we will engage in the self-reflective practice of contemplating what it says about us, here in the USA in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, that we think about the enterprise of thinking critically the way that this course description says that we do (or ought to do). In order to do this, we will consider some critiques of contemporary technology, specifically as they pertain to the topic of media literacy, which we will attempt to develop.

**Stated Objective:** Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.

**Implied Objectives:** Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of the intellectual and cultural activity of philosophy; developing a clearer understanding of, and commitment to, personal values; and acquiring an interest in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers.

**Required Texts:** Note: I have indicated ISBN numbers so that you may purchase these texts via reasonably priced avenues:

Heidegger, Martin, *Discourse on Thinking*. (DT) HarperTorchbooks (1966).  
9780061314599

Orwell, George, *1984*. (1984) New American Library (1961). 9780451524935.

Plato, *Five Dialogues*. (FD) Hackett, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2002). 9780872606335.

Vaughn, Lewis, *The Power of Critical Thinking*. (PCT) Oxford UP (2016).

9780199385423

Other reading selections will be made available through our Blackboard course page from time to time.

**Grading Plan, Assignments, Attentiveness, Exams:** Final Grades will be determined according to the following rubric:

Critical reflection paper	30%
MidTerm exam	15%
Final exam	30%
Attentiveness*	25%

I use the grading scale: 90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D, and below 60 = F

This is a “W” course, which means that at least 50 percent of your course grade will derive from writing activities designed to help you master course objectives. Writing in this course is one of the tools I will use to help you learn course material. Some writing activities will require you to draft and revise your work, with or without instructor feedback. Others may not receive a grade but are designed to assist you in critical reflection of the course material. You should approach writing in this course as a tool to use as part of your learning as well as a tool I will use to assess your level of learning.

*Critical Reflection Paper:* I will provide prompts for you to use in constructing a paper (of page lengths to be determined and spelled out in the prompts, though not to exceed 6-pages). These prompts will be disseminated at least one week prior to the due date for the assignment.

*MidTerm exam:* The midterm exam will be administered within the session specified below. This exam will be objective—meaning that it will consist of a combination of questions of the form: T/F, matching, and multiple choice. **No make-up exam will be given.**

*Final exam:* The final exam will be administered online within the officially scheduled session indicated below. The exam will be cumulative and presented in the form of an equally distributed (= 50% each) combination of objective (T/F, matching, multiple choice, etc.) and subjective (essay) questions. **No make-up exam will be given.**

*\*Attentiveness:* Please note well my use of the term *attentiveness* as a component of your final grade above. I use the term to distinguish my expectation of your performance in class from mere bodily presence at the computer screen. You will only be able to earn attentiveness credit by showing “all the way up” to class. This means that the assessment of your performance in the class will be made on the basis of your active involvement in class discussions/lectures/activities. Among the ways that I will assess your attentiveness will be the written reflections you post in the discussion threads associated with each official session as designated. These written reflections will be opportunities for you to build up to the critical reflection paper that falls due near the end of the course. At least

1/3 of your attentiveness grade will be founded upon your written weekly discussion board posts. In addition, I will post from time-to-time current reports from various media outlets that you will be asked to analyze for validity and consistency.

Institutional policies and requirements regarding Q-drops, dates of Religious Observance, Academic Dishonesty, Disabilities Accommodations, etc., may be found at the following link: <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

Please familiarize yourself with the policies.

### **Departmental Grade Policy:**

As of the fall semester 2009, only grades of C or better (A, B, or C) will be counted toward the student's major in Psychology or Philosophy.

### **Schedule of Readings, Discussions, Exams, Due dates, and other vital course information:**

Session One: Introductory remarks. **Take SACS Pre-test.**

Session Two: Read and discuss Martin Heidegger, "Memorial Address" (*DT*, 43-57).

Session Three: *The Power of Critical Thinking*. Read chapters one and two (*PCT*, pp. 3-61). Discuss and work assigned problems.

Session Four: Vaughn, chapters three and four (*PCT*, 62-167). Discuss Deductive and Inductive Reasoning and work assigned exercises.

Session Five: Vaughn, chapters five and six (*PCT*, 168-242). Propositional Logic  
Work assigned exercises.

Session Six: Read Vaughn, first parts of chapter eight (*PCT*, 276-303).  
Work exercises. **MidTerm exam.**

Session Seven: Read and discuss Plato's *Euthyphro* (*FD*, ix-x, 1-20).  
See guided questions on Discussion Board.  
Prompts for Critical Reflection Paper posted.

Session Eight: Read and discuss Plato's *Apology* (*FD*, 21-44). See guided questions on discussion Board.

Session Nine: Read and discuss Heidegger, "Conversation on a Country Path" (*DT*, 58-90). See guided questions in Discussion Board.

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· NB: Instructor reserves the right, at his whim, to modify this schedule on occasions that will be announced on the course page. It is incumbent on you to keep abreast of any changes to the syllabus that might occur as we go along.

Session Ten: Read and discuss Orwell's *1984* and excerpts from McLuhan (on course Page). **Reflection paper falls due.**

Session Eleven: Vaughn, remainder of chapter eight, chapter nine (*PCT*, 304-381).  
Watch video, "Linking Probabilities". Work assigned exercises.  
**Take SACS Post-test**

Session Twelve: **Final Exam**