

Critical Thinking and Methods of Inquiry

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Description: Critical thinking involves reading comprehension, argument analysis, evidence evaluation, and writing. These skills are relevant to the study of leadership because these skills enable people to better understand and evaluate leaders and to think for themselves. These skills are relevant to the practice of leadership because leaders and other professionals often use these skills in real time, under time constraints, in new situations. For these reasons, critical thinking is a crucial leadership competency. As Dr. Terry Price writes,

“Because arguments happen in real time, quick recall and near-automatic identification of fallacies are intrinsic to critical thinking. We will work throughout the semester to build these skills so that you are prepared to deploy them in everyday life, where arguments wait for no one.”

To develop these leadership competencies, students will develop their comprehension, analysis, evaluation, and writing skills through a series of time-constrained, in-class activities. These activities include quizzes, debates, in-class writing and revising, peer review, collaborative work, and simulations.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will learn to quickly reconstruct written arguments.
- Students will learn to evaluate arguments in real time.
- Students will learn to communicate under pressure with style, clarity, and precision.
- Students will learn to review and revise written arguments.
- Students will learn to quickly generate new ideas, questions, and objections.
- Students will learn to charitably engage with controversial viewpoints.

Assignments

Many of the learning outcomes for this class involved timed skills. Assignments and activities are designed to build students' ability to read, speak, and write under realistic constraints. Time constraints are crucial to the skills that these assignments develop and assess.

Quizzes: Quizzes are given at the beginning of class, and then we discuss the quizzes in class. For this reason, students who are late cannot retake the quizzes at a later time. Each quiz is worth 2% of the total grade.

8 Comprehension Quizzes	16%
Research Activity	4%
Paper 0	5%
Paper 1	15%
Paper 1 Revisions	15%
Paper 2	20%
Paper 2 Revisions	15%
Active Learning	10%

Research Activity: This activity will be a graded, in-class worksheet.

Papers: Paper 0 is not graded. If you show up and write the paper, you will get credit for it.

Paper 1 will be graded, and it will also go through an in-class peer review process.

Paper 2 will not go through peer review. It will only be graded by the instructor.

Active learning: The active learning grade has three components.

- Attendance:* Remain in the classroom for the entire class period and fully participate in all class activities. Please use the restroom and fill your water bottles before class. You are welcome to bring snacks to class. I will make a note of students who are late or absent for parts of class, and this may inform my evaluation of their active learning. Phones and laptops are not permitted in class. Students who are unable to attend class must email me before class to schedule an alternative assignment for the day.
- Respectful Engagement:* Contribute in ways that enhance other people's learning. Do not dominate the discussion. If you already talked in class, the instructor may not call on you for a while. Additionally, do not disparage anyone in class for their viewpoint.
- Courage and Creativity:* Don't be afraid. You can say things that are unpopular, offensive, or weird. Try to defend positions that you do not hold, provisionally, so that you can learn why people think that way. Follow the arguments to surprising conclusions.

Y2K Pedagogy: For the most part, this is a low-tech class. The course does not have a website. Students will read from course packs and write in composition books and bluebooks. Phones and laptops are prohibited. All notes will be provided in class. Email is discouraged except for notifications of an absence. If you need to talk to the instructor about assignments or course material, please come to office hours or use the sign-up sheet to schedule an appointment before or after class.

Academic Integrity:

Students may not use artificial intelligence to assist with any assignments, use course materials from previous versions of this course, distribute the course materials without authorization, record class discussions or lectures, submit work from previous courses, or use laptops, e-readers, phones, smartwatches, or tablets in class. Students must complete every assignment on their own unless otherwise specified, and students must comply with the UR honor code.

Grades:

Students are encouraged to track their progress in the course by recording their grades. Students can visit office hours to see a record of their grades. Final grades are not calculated until the end of the semester.

All graded work will be returned to students, who should keep this work until final grades have been submitted.

Final letter grades correspond to the following numerical values:

(A+ 100-97; A 96.99-94; A- 93.99-90; B+ 89.99-87; B 86.99-84; B- 83.99-80; C+ 79.99-77; C 77.99-74; C- 73.99-70...)

Schedule

Date	Class	Quiz	Reading Due	Skill
January 12	1a			Courage
Unit 1: Reading Comprehension (6%)				
January 14	1b		(A) Arguments	Analysis: Simplifying Arguments
January 19	2a			MLK
January 21	2b		(B) Tuvel	Comprehension: What is the Thesis?
January 26	3a	Quiz 1		Reconstruction: What is the Argument?
January 28	3b	Quiz 2		Analysis: Is the argument valid/supported?
February 2	4a	Quiz 3		Evaluation: Is the thesis true?
February 4	4b			No Class
Unit 2: Writing (35%)				
February 9	5a		(C) Hidalgo	Paper #0 (Pass/Fail)
February 11	5b		Instructor Feedback	Constructing an argument
February 16	6a			Paper #1 Day 1
February 18	6b			Paper #1 Day 2
February 23	7a		Peer Paper	Giving and Receiving Feedback
February 25	7b		Reviewer Feedback	Responding to Objections
March 2	8a			Paper #1 Revisions
March 4	8b		Instructor Feedback	Meta-cognitive reflection
March 9	9a			Spring Break
March 11	9b			Spring Break
Unit 3: Verbal Reasoning and Debate (10%)				
March 16	10a	Quiz 4	(D) Chappell	Methods: Argument by analogy
March 18	10b	Quiz 5	(E) Case	Methods: Reductio
March 23	11a	Quiz 6	(F) Lamey	Methods: Refinement
March 25	11b	Quiz 7	(G) Botts	Methods: Analytic Orientations
March 30	12a	Quiz 8	(H) Taylor	Methods: Intellectual Generosity
Unit 4: Original Research (39%)				
April 1	12b		(I) Research Guide	Tranimals Research Activity
April 6	13a			Style and Voice
April 8	13b			Paper #2 Day 1
April 13	14a			Paper #2 Day 2
April 15	14b			Paper #2 Day 3
April 20	15a			Self-Scrutiny
April 22	15b		Reviewer Report	Study Skills and Strategy
	Finals			Paper #2 Revisions

This syllabus may be revised throughout the semester.