

PHIL 2305: Critical Thinking
Dr. Jesse Butler
Fall 2018, CRN 10101
Tuesday and Thursday 10:50 am to 12:05 pm
Irby Hall 307

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Instructor Office Hours: 9-10:50 am Tuesday & Thursday, & MWF by appointment
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Required Textbook

Critical Thinking: Your Guide to Effective Argument, Successful Analysis and Independent Study
Tom Chatfield
2017 Sage Publications, ISBN-13: 978-1473947146

Course Description and Objectives

This course will introduce students to key concepts, methods, and skills in critical thinking. Students will learn how to identify, analyze, and assess good and bad modes of human reasoning, cultivating the ability to think clearly and effectively across the difficult and uncertain issues people face in life. Specific topics and issues covered will include: reasoning, arguments, logic, persuasion, fallacies, biases, decision-making strategies, and social influences on thinking. The course will emphasize functional understanding and active practical application, prompting students to exercise their minds and strengthen their capacity to think for themselves.

UCA Core Critical Inquiry

This course is part of the Critical Inquiry component of the Lower-Division Core. Critical Inquiry courses promote the ability to analyze new problems and situations to formulate informed opinions and conclusions. For more information, go to <http://uca.edu/core>.

Reading Assignments

Regular reading assignments will be made throughout the semester. You will be expected to complete assignments before the class for which they are assigned, coming to class ready to discuss, analyze, and practice the material. Be sure to actively engage with the readings, reflecting on the concepts and examples as you go along. You should also work through the exercises described throughout the readings, which will help you deepen and internalize your grasp of the material. Take notes on any thoughts or questions that occur to you and bring them to class for discussion and clarification. The material we will cover builds upon itself, so it is very important for you to keep up with the pace of the course. If you miss something, it is your responsibility to catch up. If you have any concerns with the pace of the course or would like assistance with the course in any way (whether it be help with the material or a desire for more challenging engagement), I encourage you to come talk to me. I'll be happy to assist you.

Required Grade Components and Distribution

❖ Attendance & Participation:	25% of total grade
❖ Midterm Exam:	25% of total grade
❖ Final Exam:	25% of total grade
❖ Final Essay:	25% of total grade

Attendance & Participation

Critical thinking is an activity. Accordingly, class attendance and participation is required and will count as 25% of your total grade. The major basis of this grade will be 11 participation assignments that will take place throughout the course. There will be a variety of assignments, including random reading quizzes and in-class group activities. To do well on these assignments, it will be essential to come to class regularly and keep up with the material. Successful assignments will earn you up to 10 points each and the total number of points you earn will determine your grade for this portion of the class, up to a total of 100 points on a standard grading scale. No make-up assignments will be offered, but one missed assignment is automatically allowed without penalty, given that there will be 11 total assignments throughout the course. I will also take attendance periodically. You will be allowed one recorded absence without penalty, but each additional absence will drop your attendance and participation grade by 10 points. Exceptions to the one absence and one missed assignment policies will be made only under exceptional circumstances with official documentation that clearly justifies your absences (e.g. hospital records covering your one allowable absence plus others for which you request an exception). In addition, I reserve the right to record absences for students who fail to be properly engaged in class. For example, if I observe you texting during class, having a private conversation unrelated to class discussion, or other such failures of class involvement, I may record an absence for you for that class session. Finally, please note that students will not be dropped from this course for non-attendance. If you feel that you should drop due to missing too much of the course, it is your responsibility to do so.

Midterm and Final Exams

There will be two exams in the course to assess your understanding and application of the class content. Each exam will count equally as 25% of your total grade. The first exam will be a Midterm Exam, covering the first half of the course. The tentative date for the Midterm Exam is October 9th, although that may be adjusted depending on the pace of the course. The second exam will be a Final Exam at the end of the course, focused on the material from the second half of the course. Further details about each exam will be provided as the course progresses, with sufficient advance notice for you to be well-prepared in both cases.

Final Essay

One of the central goals of this course is to help you develop your ability to think well for yourself and to communicate your thoughts effectively. Accordingly, you will be required to write a 3-5 page argumentative essay in which you explain and defend a viewpoint on a topic that is important and relevant to you. Further instructions and details will be provided as the course progresses. There will be several preparatory assignments to help you develop your project along the way but the final essay itself will be due at the end of the course.

Class Conduct and University Policies

Punctuality & Attention: You should be in your seat and ready for class at the beginning of class time. Repeated tardiness is a distraction to other students and will not be tolerated. Again, students who are not present in class at the time attendance is taken will have an absence recorded. While in this class, your attention should be directed towards the class. Activities unrelated to the class (texting, doing work for another class, reading a newspaper, playing a game, surfing the Internet, talking to your neighbor about things unrelated to class, etc.) are strictly prohibited during class time. Students who violate these policies may receive recorded absences for failed engagement. Disruptive students may be asked to leave the classroom, and repeated violations may result in being asked to drop the class.

Integrity: The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the *Student Handbook*. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Harassment: No harassment of any kind will be tolerated in this class. Please familiarize yourself with all information contained in the *Student Handbook*, including the Sexual Harassment Policy and the various other policies concerning academics and the university. If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs, and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. **Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.*

Disabilities: The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Disability Resource Center, 450-3613.

Emergencies: An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

Evaluations: Student evaluations of a course and its professor are a crucial element in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Please be sure to complete your course evaluations at the end of the semester.