



SUFFOLK
UNIVERSITY
MADRID CAMPUS

PHIL 113 M1 – CRITICAL THINKING AND ARGUMENTATION

Instructor Information:

Instructor: Robert Greenan

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Course Information:

Catalog description: An introduction to non-formal methods of analyzing and formulating arguments, including treatment of such concepts/topics as: the nature of argument, induction, deduction, validity, soundness, aspects of language which tend to interfere with logical thought, definition, role of emotion, types of disagreement, and fallacies. The course also emphasizes the practical application of sound reasoning in both evaluating arguments and making arguments of one's own about matters of issues facing society.

Instructor's Additional Course Description: "Critical thinking" has become utterly confused with "being critical" in society today. This course will encourage students to learn the skills necessary to evaluate arguments using evidence and reason as their criteria rather than emotion. Scientific and fact based assertions will be distinguished from irrational and superstitious ones. Students will learn to be precise and accurate, not angry and offended.

Prerequisites: None.

Credit hours: 4

This course follows the US Federal Government's Credit Hour definition: "An amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutional established equivalence that reasonably approximates no less than:

- (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
- (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours."

For full up-to-date statement:

https://cihe.neasc.org/sites/cihe.neasc.org/files/downloads/POLICIES/Pp111_Policy_On_Credits-And-Degrees.pdf

To complete this course, students will need to dedicate, at a minimum, the following amount of time to the listed activities:

Assignment/Activity	Engagement Estimate	Engagement Hours
Course Readings	400 pages x 8 minutes per page	53
Review Lecture Notes	8 pages/lecture x 20 lectures x 5 min per page	13
Homework	Weekly reading reports x 15 (3 hours each)	45
Mid-Term Review Preparation		5
Mid- Term Exam Preparation		10
Final Exam Review Preparation		5
Final Exam Preparation		10
Class Attendance	3 hours x 15 weeks	45
TOTAL		186 HOURS

Textbook/Course Materials:

Vaughn, Lewis. 2013. *The Power of Critical Thinking.* Fourth ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Articles from academic journals will be distributed during the semester.

NB Students must search for appropriate material depending on their own interests.

Please Note: Readings from the textbook will be assigned in advance depending on the level of the class and the speed at which the material is covered to the satisfaction of the instructor. During the semester hand-outs will also be distributed for the purposes of helping students in the collecting of a coherent set of notes on the subject, and where it is deemed relevant, academic papers and newspaper articles which help give practical perspective to an abstract or obscure notion.

Course Goals & Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will know/understand/appreciate:	Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:	How the student will be assessed on these learning outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The meaning of the word "meaning". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read independently, identifying sources and justifying their choice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mid-Term Exam
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The complexity of argumentation and the techniques used to persuade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance themselves from clichéd and simplistic viewpoints. Distinguish between scientific propositions and superstitious ones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mid-Term Exam
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The historical context of oratory and rhetoric. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speak authoritatively on the subject of great speeches from the past and the evolution of methods of persuasion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class discussion. And Final Exam
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How the techniques of critical thinking can be applied today. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch and listen to speeches being made by politicians and other public figures today and analysis their arguments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research paper and Presentations.

Assignments/Exams/Papers/Projects:

Students will be evaluated in the following areas:

First Mid-Term Exam:	25%
Final Exam:	25%
Research Project and Presentation:	25%
Informed Participation (Class debates):	25%

Selected assignments in this course may be used by our accreditation team for institutional assessment purposes and will be handled confidentially.

Grading/Evaluation:

Students are expected to be self-conscious in their pursuit of sources of information and knowledge for this course. It will be considered self-evident in this course that at a third level learning institution students need not be told to visit the library and seek out for themselves books and articles relating to subjects covered in class.

Course and Classroom Policies:

- Students may not eat in class.
- Students may not chat to each other during class and will be asked to leave for doing so.
- Course work is not accepted late, or by e-mail unless this is expressly agreed upon with the instructor.
- Computers may be used only if specific permission is received.
- Students arriving more than five minutes late for class may be marked absent. Those arriving more than 15 minutes late may be refused entry. Late arrivers must make sure they are marked as present as this cannot be done afterwards.
- Students may not use mobile 'phones during class or be able to see their mobile 'phones during class.
- Students who use their 'phone to monitor the time ought to buy a watch for this purpose which can be worn on the wrist or placed on the desk.

Participation/Attendance Policy:

The SUMC Student Handbook states the following:

Once a student is registered for a course, attendance at every meeting of every class is expected, including those held in the first week of the semester. A maximum of two unjustified absences is permitted. Each additional absence will cause the final course grade to be lowered by one-third of a letter grade, i.e., from A to A-; A- to B+; B+ to B, etc.

Excessive absences in a course will have a negative effect on the final grade. When a student is absent, the quality of his or her work in a course will deteriorate since material missed in class sessions can rarely be made up satisfactorily, even though the student remains responsible for that work.

Please note that even when a student has a justified reason for missing class, such as illness, the negative academic impact on learning will be the same as if the absence were for spurious reasons.

In this course, any absence due to illness should be justified by a note from the student's physician or other health professional confirming the day(s) on which the student was unable to attend class. A written excuse from a student's host parent or residence supervisor is also acceptable.

In the case of a student not turning up for an exam without giving notice, the student must provide documentary proof not only that they visited the doctor, and were incapable of sitting the exam, but also that they were physically incapable of contacting the university to advise of the issue.

Students arriving more than 15 minutes late will not be admitted.

In the event that a class meeting is unexpectedly cancelled, students will be expected to continue with readings or other assignments as originally scheduled. Any assignments due or class activities (e.g., a quiz, exam or presentation) planned for such a cancelled class are due at the next class meeting unless other instructions are communicated.

Disability Statement:

If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in my classroom.

If formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is very important that you be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at the main Campus in Boston so that I am notified of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations. Check the ODS web site at www.suffolk.edu/disability for information on accommodations.

Student Resources:

SUMC provides a range of student services, both academic and personal. To learn more about course-related tutorials and academic workshops, refer to the SUMC Student Handbook, Section 2 “Academic Policies and Services”. Section 5, “Living in Madrid”, contains information on the medical and mental health resources, including an English-speaking therapist, available to you.

Midterm Review:

At midterm, around week 6, you will be given a midterm grade based on your progress to date and performance on assignments and midterm exam. Midterm grades of C- or below will be reported to the Madrid Campus Academic Standing Committee, with an explanation of what I believe has contributed to that grade: excessive absences, poor time management or study skills, lack of effort, difficulty with the course material or with writing or language skills, etc. The Academic Standing Committee or I may contact you to suggest strategies for addressing these difficulties. I strongly encourage you to visit me during my office hours so we may discuss how you can be successful in this class.

Academic Misconduct:

www.suffolk.edu/about/mission-history/policies-procedures/academic-misconduct-policy

Suffolk University expects all students to be responsible individuals with high standards of conduct. Students are expected to practice ethical behavior in all learning environments and scenarios, including classrooms and laboratories, internships and practica, and study groups and academic teams. Cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, use of unauthorized electronic devices, self-plagiarism, fabrication or falsification of data, and other types of academic misconduct are treated as serious offenses that initiate a formal process of inquiry, one that may lead to disciplinary sanctions.

Student work will be thoroughly examined for academic integrity and may be scanned using plagiarism detection software. A faculty member suspecting academic misconduct will contact the student using the Suffolk email address to schedule a meeting and will make all effort to do so within five business days of detecting the incident. During the meeting, the faculty member will present the documentation that led to suspected academic misconduct. Resolution of the incident will be according to the procedures outlined in the SUMC Student Handbook.

Academic Grievances Policy:

www.suffolk.edu/student-life/student-services/student-handbook/university-policies-for-student-cas-sbs/grievances-academics

The schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better student learning.

Part 1. Introduction to class procedure.

- An outline of the difference between “critical thinking” and “being critical”.
- What is the opposite of “critical thinking”?
- Who disapproves of critical thinking, and why?
- The Trivium, in all its neglected glory.
- For this part of the course, the student will be required to read the following sections of their textbook:
 - Preface.
 - Part 1. Basics:
 1. The Power of Critical Thinking.
 2. Why it matters.
 3. How it works.
 4. Claims and Reasons.
 5. Arguments in the Rough.

Part 2. An introduction to the emergence of critical thinking as a deliberate and deliberative act.

- Ancient Greece.
- Thales.
- Democritus
- Socrates
- Aristotelian Logic
- Ockham’s Razor
- Francis Bacon and Inductive Reasoning.
- Descartes. “I think, therefore I am”.
- The instructor will make recommendations regarding reading for this section. These will be available in the library and on-line on the “Internet”.

Part 3. Obstacles to Critical Thinking.

- Obstacles to Critical Thinking
- Psychological Obstacles.
- The Almighty Self.
- The Power of the Group.
- Philosophical Obstacles.
- Subjective Relativism.

Part 4. The Theoretical Underpinnings of Argumentation.

- This section will follow the textbook closely as we cover the areas of:
 - Making Sense of Arguments.
 - Reasons for Belief and Doubt.
 - Fallacies and Persuaders.
 - Part 4. Explanations
 - Inference to the best Explanation.
 - Judging Scientific Theories.

Part 5. Putting it all into practice.

This section of the course will be spent examining controversial arguments and debates both from the past and the present. Speeches, newspaper articles and TV debates will all be scrutinised using tools learned in the previous sections.

Students will be invited to give their own analysis (in the form of presentations) of a debate surrounding an area of interest to them.

Examples Include:

- Black Lives Matter.
- The difficulty of rape trials.
- The Rhetoric of Hip-Hop.
- God on trial, God in trials.
- Punctuation in the American Constitution
- Feeling threatened as a defence against murder.
- Being offended as a defence against anything.
- Je suis Charlie.
- Group think and cults.
- The “Scopes Monkey Trial”.
- The Huxley v Wilberforce debate.
- Rhino horns, tiger testicles and Homeopathy.
- Why terrorists are also pink.
- Why it’s OK to chop off part of a man’s penis but not OK to chop off part of a woman’s labia.
- Fox News v Auntie.