

## LL 155 Critical Thinking Spring 2009

Location: Loop Campus Thursday evenings, 6:00 – 9:00 pm

Dates: April 2, 2009- June 11, 2009

Faculty: Patrizia Acerra M.A., M.P.S.

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### Course Description

This course aims to (a) make students aware of their own thinking processes (b) help them develop those processes; and (c) help them bring those processes to bear on college-level intellectual activity. These aims emphasize the skills and strategies of critical thinking and reading, as well as practice in the recognition, construction, and evaluation of arguments. Bottom line, we will continuously unravel the questions, “What do we know?” and “How do we know it?” In pursuing these goals, we encounter principles of logic, strategies of persuasion, and techniques of propaganda. The course presents a variety of readings, exercises, and projects designed to help students develop competence in the following areas: identifying assumptions, connecting assertions to evidence, stating generalizations, analyzing arguments, and bringing multiple perspectives to bear on complex issues and questions. We are particularly interested in the development of reasoning skills across historical time, and on the shaping force of ancient Greek culture on our ways of thinking.

Credit Hours: 4

### Competence Statement & Criteria for Assessment:

(L5): **Can analyze issues and reconcile problems through critical and appreciative thinking.**

1. Analyzes, critiques, and evaluates different forms of thinking and reasoned discourse;
2. Constructs well-reasoned arguments in the context of real-life experiences and issues.

### Learning Activities & Outcomes:

The course design brings together a number of different learning activities in the pursuit of evidence for the L5 competence: textual analysis (written and oral), argument-development, collaborative critical reading, journal writing, oral presentation, dialogue, and debate. These activities for learning are the foundation of all required assignments, and reflect the formal specifications of the L5 assessment criteria.

### Expected Outcomes

*By the end of the course, students should be able to*  
*identify* claims and assess their fit with reasons;  
*distinguish* among different kinds of reasons adduced to support claims;  
*distinguish* between reports, inferences and judgements;  
*identify* common rhetorical strategies, propaganda devices and logical fallacies;  
*recognize*, construct and make evaluative distinctions among different kinds of arguments;  
*examine* experiences with critical scrutiny;  
*discuss* the roles played by perception, emotion and belief in shaping views;  
*recognize* problems and limitations inherent in linguistic discourse;  
*appreciate*, engage with, and make use of viewpoints other than one's own.

### Evidence of Learning

Analysis of text – written and oral  
Structured Journal Writing – five (5) assignments  
Dialogue – in class discussion and via Blackboard  
In Class Exercises

## Required Texts

*The Vocabulary of critical Thinking* by Phil Washburn, 2010. Oxford University Press

*The Passion of the Western Mind*. Richard Tarnas, 1991. Harmony Books, Crown Pub. 0-345-368-096.

## Additional Readings & Materials Required

1. From the *Dialogues of Plato*:

a. Euthyphro

b. Phaedrus

*Purchase* a three-ring binder (or a clip binder) to hold your “CT Journal” pages.

*Purchase*, or make certain you own, a good dictionary (rec: American Heritage or Oxford – either hard copy or CD).

*Identify* a vendor for *The New York Times* or *The Economist* magazine, and plan to purchase the once per week.

## Policy on Academic Integrity:

All work done for this course must observe the “Guidelines for Academic Integrity” as outlined in the *Code of Student Responsibility* (see, DePaul Student Handbook). **Plagiarism of others’ words or ideas, or other violations of the integrity code, will result in the grade of “F” for the course, and possible expulsion from the University.**

## Grading & Assessment:

This competence is graded Pass/Fail. All student work merits the instructor’s narrative feedback and one of the following grades: *HighPass/Pass/LowPass/Provisional Pass/ Fail*. **All work handed-in after the due date will receive a maximum grade of Low Pass.** These specifications of the “Pass” grade give students a clear sense of how well they are developing the elements of competence in critical thinking. We might say (with apologies to George Orwell) “Everyone passes, but some pass more than others.”

## Meaning of Pass/Fail and Letter Grades

The following is meant to help you understand the nature of the course grading system:

Work assessed as *A* or *Pass* is characterized by *thorough and thoughtful engagement* with the material, superior comprehension of key concepts and exceptionally fluent, college-level writing. Work that is “thoughtfully engaged” covers the basics but goes beyond them by a) drawing insightful connections; b) raising incisive questions; and c) making well-supported evaluations, inferences or arguments.

Work assessed as *B* or *Pass* is characterized by *thorough engagement* with the material, good comprehension of key concepts and fully fluent, college-level writing. Work that is “thoroughly engaged” covers the basics and applies them aptly and consistently while providing the occasional provocative connection, relevant question or well-supported evaluation.

Work assessed as *C* or *Pass* is characterized by *engagement* with the material, comprehension of key concepts and mostly fluent, college-level writing. Work that is “engaged” covers the basics and applies them aptly without going beyond them.

Work assessed as *D* or *Fail* is characterized by *low engagement* with the material, comprehension of few key concepts and writing that is intermittently fluent. Work that is “lowly engaged” occasionally covers the basics and attempts to apply them with limited success.

Work assessed as *F* or *Fail with overall low marks* is characterized by *poor engagement* with the material, incomprehension of key concepts and writing that lacks fluency. Work that is “poorly engaged” covers few or no basics and attempts to apply them without

### Writing Help

Writing is the way in which we make concrete our ideas. Clear, coherent writing is essential for this course. For help with organizing your ideas, grammar, citing sources, avoiding plagiarism, sample SNL assignments and much more, see the Writing Guide for SNL Students at <http://snl.depaul.edu/writing/index.html>.

For on-campus and online tutoring, see the DePaul University Writing Centers at <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/>

### Attendance & Communications Policy

Students must attend all class sessions. Missing two (2) sessions will make it difficult for you to pass the course. Missing three (3) sessions results in the grade of “F.” If you need to miss class, all work due at that time must be sent to me prior to the end of the class session or it will not be accepted. I will make exceptions to this only for illness and serious personal matters. You have my phone number and email for being in communication.

Please arrive on time, remain for the entire class period, and disable all cell phones and other such equipment while you are in the room. Cell phone usage and texting will not be tolerated in class.

### Vincentian Principles Governing the Teacher-Student Relationship

This course, and its learning activities and requirements, are designed to reflect the four recognized bases of Vincentian personalism: *empathy*, *clarity*, *integrity*, and *flexibility*. I invite dialogue around these qualities at any time during the quarter.