

II. Catalog Description

Prerequisite: Placement into ENGL 111 English Composition I with ENGL 070 English Composition I Workshop, or higher.

This course introduces the student to the basic principles, techniques, and concepts of critically assessing beliefs, both our own as well as those of others. Emphasis is placed on formulation and evaluation of arguments as the fundamental practice of reasoning: forming beliefs supported by reasons drawn from the lifeworld. Students are introduced to a wide range of arguments from various areas of Philosophy, from metaphysical and scientific debates across questions of epistemology and language to ethics and politics. Concepts of truth, validity, definition, deduction, induction, fallacy, thought experiment, and bias (among others) are explained through their application to particular examples. Overall, the course aims to provide students with the know-how of critical thought to help them navigate the constantly shifting, intentionally distorted, and hotly contested space of reasons in order to form their own critical understanding of themselves in a highly complex world; all while protecting their understanding against manipulative and coercive forces deployed by rhetoric, propaganda, and ideology.

III. Statement of Course Need

- A. The course offers practice in skills essential to thinking and writing across disciplines from natural to human sciences. It is intended to improve clarity of thought, precision in critical evaluation of argumentation in reading and writing, and the interpretation of language within print and non-print media. It introduces the student to a range of philosophical problems and issues contained within academic discourse and the information environment.
- B. No lab component
- C.
 - 1. This course generally transfers as a General Education Course in Humanities/Philosophy and Religion.
 - 2. This course generally transfers as a Philosophy program requirement.
 - 3. This course generally transfers as a Philosophy elective.

IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum

- A. Free Elective
- B. This course serves as a General Education course in Humanities/Philosophy and Religion.
- C. To see course transferability: a) for New Jersey schools, go to the NJ Transfer website, www.njtransfer.org; b) for all other colleges and universities, go to the individual websites.

V. Outline of Course Content

- A. Approaches to Thinking
 - a. Nature of Beliefs, Doubts, and Reasons
 - b. Distinguishing Objectivity, Subjectivity, and Intersubjectivity
 - c. Using Language Critically and Expressively
 - d. The Meaning of “Meaning”
 - e. Defining Terms
 - f. Theories of Truth
 - g. Ethic and Fixation of Belief
- B. The nature of reasoning and elements of formal logic
 - a. Difference between Deduction, Induction, and Abduction
 - b. Identifying Premises and Conclusions
 - c. Validity, Soundness, Cogency
 - d. Overview of Logical Operators
 - e. Basic Syllogisms
 - f. Formal Syllogistic Fallacies
 - g. Truth Tables
 - h. Schematizing an argument
 - i. Venn Diagrams
 - j. Principle of None-Contradiction
 - k. Game Theory
- C. Identifying informal fallacies and avoiding flawed forms reasoning
 - a. Role of Bias in Cognition
 - b. Perceptual Blind Spots
 - c. Constructing and Assessing Examples
 - d. Fallacies of Relevance
 - i. Appeal to Force
 - ii. *Ad Hominem*
 - iii. Appeal to Popularity
 - iv. Strawman
 - v. Two Wrongs
 - vi. “Red Herring” Fallacies
 - e. Fallacies of Adequacy
 - i. Causal Fallacies
 - ii. Appeal to Authority
 - iii. Naturalistic Fallacy
 - iv. Circular Reasoning
 - v. Appeal to Ignorance
 - vi. Slippery Slope
- D. The nature of science: induction, abduction, evidence, and conceptual schemes associated with empirical thinking
 - a. Experimentation Procedures
 - b. Scientific Norms of Inquiry
 - c. Using Thought Experiments

- d. Technology and Everyday Life
- e. Critiques of Science and Scientism
- f. Systemic Thinking
- g. Seeing Through Paradigms
- E. Critical thinking about ethics, politics, and religion
 - a. Structures of Value Judgments
 - b. Theory of Practice
 - i. Art of dialogue
 - ii. Art of persuasion
 - c. Role of Reason in Culture
 - d. Construction of Social Reality
 - e. Art as Interpretation of Experience
- F. Examining complex claims and interpreting distortive speech
 - a. Contestable claims to truth in the visual world
 - b. Resilience in the Media Landscape
 - c. Conspiracy Theories
 - d. Fascist Rhetoric
 - e. Reflecting on Ideological Prejudices

VI. A. Course Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Develop understanding of what is involved in effective reasoning and be able to identify common errors of inference (GE *);
2. Differentiate between deductive and inductive reasoning, and identify what is involved in the confirmation of an inductive hypothesis (GE 3, 5 *);
3. Assess arguments in moral philosophy, psychology and the social sciences (GE 5, ER *);
4. Evaluate arguments in select text materials in science, philosophy, and the information environment (GE 3, 5, IL *)
5. Formulate arguments and organize reasons in support of student's own views on a range of topics (GE 1, 8, ER *)

(* Embedded Critical Thinking)

B. Assessment Instruments

1. course lecture
2. small group discussion
3. large-group discussions
4. extra-credit student presentations
5. essay exams
6. reflections/think pieces
7. hand-out in-class assignments

VII. Grade Determinants

- A. reflections
- B. group assignments
- C. quizzes
- D. exams
- E. student presentations
- F. essays/papers
- G. participation

Primary formats, modes, and methods for teaching and learning that may be used in the course:

- A. small-group work
- B. lecture/discussion
- C. computer-assisted instruction
- D. guest speakers
- E. student oral presentations
- F. simulation/role playing
- G. student collaboration
- H. independent study

VIII. Texts and Materials

Suggested primary texts:

- A. Halpern, Diane F., (2014) *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking*. 5th edition. Psychology Press: New York
- B. William Hughes, Jonathan Lavery, Katheryn Doran. *Critical Thinking: An Introduction to the Basic Skills*. 7th Edition. (Broadview Press, 2014). ISBN: 9781554811977
- C. DiGiovanna, James. *Critical Thinking: Primary Concepts* (CUNY Academic Works, 2013). OER at https://academicworks.cuny.edu/jj_oers/1/
- D. Dowden, Bradley. *Logical Reasoning* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1993). ISBN: 0-534-17688-7. Available under Creative Commons license: <http://www.csus.edu/indiv/d/dowdenb/4/logical-reasoning.pdf>
- E. Other Essays
 - a. Peirce, Charles S. *The Fixation of Belief*
 - b. Peirce, Charles S. *How to Make Our Ideas Clear*
 - c. Clifford, William. *The Ethics of Belief*
 - d. James, William. *The Will To Believe*
 - e. Dewey, John. *How We Think*
 - f. Frankfurt, Harry. *On Bullshit*

g. Meadows, Donella. *Leverage Points*

(Please Note: The course outline is intended only as a guide to course content and resources. Do not purchase textbooks based on this outline. The RVCC Bookstore is the sole resource for the most up-to-date information about textbooks.)

IX. Resources

- A. texts
- B. library resources
- C. in-class exercises
- D. various on-line sources

X. Honors Options [if relevant]

N/A