

ONLINE COURSE – CRITICAL THINKING – PHIL 125

Phil 125 – Critical Thinking
Cuyamaca College, Spring Semester 2012
Section 5637 (3 units): Online Class

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WELCOME! Welcome to the class entitled, Critical Thinking! I look forward to working with you in your pursuit of knowledge related to the appreciation and analysis of this branch of philosophy. We will only meet virtually in this class as it is designed to be 100% online. Continue to read through the syllabus to learn how to communicate with your instructor and your peers throughout the semester. I, as your instructor, especially, want you to feel comfortable to contact me electronically throughout the entire semester.

ADVICE FOR SUCCESS IN THIS CLASS: If this is your first online class, please read the following advice very carefully and assess your own level of commitment to the process. Online classes are convenient yet they demand much more self-discipline and stricter time-management skills than traditional classes require.

- Log onto **Blackboard** as soon as possible. Access to **Blackboard** for enrolled students is available on January 23, 2012. **Browse the links. Familiarize yourself** with the course requirements.
- **Print out a copy** of the syllabus and reading schedule and keep it with your text and notes.
- **Jot down or post in your calendar** all due dates (assignments, discussion postings, quizzes, exams)
- **Be present** means logging into **Blackboard** regularly each week (minimum of 3 times per week on different days).
- Make it a practice to **log onto the course content** found in **Blackboard**.
- **Be aware of due dates** and honor them. If the day something is due is not convenient for you, do the assignment the day before!

ABOUT THIS SYLLABUS: This syllabus contains information that is essential for success in this course. It is the responsibility of every student to read and be familiar with the course requirements and other information presented in this document. Any adjustments, corrections, or clarifications to this syllabus, which may become necessary, will be posted on my website (<http://www.cuyamaca.edu/kathryn.valdivia/>) as well as on **Blackboard**.

PREREQUISITES: No previous formal coursework is required for this class. However, the student must have the ability to participate in and to enter into reflection about what it means to study critical thinking. In other words, students are asked to invest in the experience of learning about the methods, questions, problems, and various solutions to critical thinking concerns. This investment, while taking time and energy (approximately 6 hours per week besides what is considered “classroom time,” which is an additional 3 hours per week), should result in a worthwhile and meaningful learning experience that, hopefully, contributes to your appreciation of critical thinking skills.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The study of critical thinking examines the methods and principles for distinguishing correct from incorrect reasoning. Though some of our reasoning is formal and some informal, both types must meet certain criteria in order to be correct. In this course, students will learn to recognize, analyze, evaluate, and compose arguments, which are primary objects of study for both the logician and, more generally, the critical thinker. We will investigate a variety of the many forms arguments take, addressing both formal and informal methods of argumentation and distinguishing between good arguments and bad arguments. In our study of formal logic, we will focus upon the methods of syllogism, the Aristotelian square of opposition, and propositional logic. Our study of informal logic will address the strengths and weaknesses of arguments as they occur in ordinary, non-technical writing and speech, with particular emphasis on the informal fallacies.

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We will also devote time to examining reasoning in a variety of contexts. By the end of the course, you should be able to write extended pieces of logically coherent and well-supported reasoning and provide thoughtful and thorough analyses of any reasoning you encounter in any walk of life. In other words, upon completion of the course, successful students will be able to identify, analyze, and evaluate persuasive arguments encountered in day-to-day life.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of the course, students should have the ability to:

- Write logically coherent and well-supported arguments
- Provide thoughtful and thorough analyses of any reasoning you encounter in any walk of life
- Identify, explain, and evaluate several major ethical theories
- Examine contemporary and perennial moral problems in the light of these ethical theories
- Read, write, and think critically about ethical issues
- Display an increased awareness of basic ethical terms and issues
- Develop an understanding of a variety of ethical views

COURSE METHODOLOGY: The methodological approach to this class will be primarily students' individual study guided by the use of Judith A. Boss' text, *THiNK: Critical Thinking and Logic Skills for Everyday Use*, viewing of online lectures, participating in online discussions, taking online quizzes, submitting homework assignments online and taking two mandatory exams (midterm and final). The success each student has in this class, since it is administered exclusively online, depends upon regularly scheduled online work. Each time a student logs on to the course container through Cuyamaca's website, the student's familiarity with the course content increases. Put simply, the more interaction students have with the course material, the greater their comprehension of the material. Logging on at least 3 to 5 times per week is recommended.

REQUIRED TEXTS: Judith A. Boss, *THiNK: Critical Thinking and Logic Skills for Everyday Use* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012)

Please note: The above text is a second edition text; students may also use a first edition text although the pagination will not be the same in the first edition.

WHAT YOU WILL DO EACH WEEK: Here is a quick list of tasks you will typically do each week. Getting into a routine, following through on these tasks, and submitting work each week will ensure that you not only complete the course but statistically do well in the course too.

- Read each chapter once through each week.
- Re-read sections of each chapter each week as prompted by discussion posts or study questions.
- Post 3 times to the weekly discussion board on 3 different days: (once to the instructor's question and 2 more times to other student's responses), in other words:
 - Post a first response to the instructor's question online via **Blackboard** by Tuesdays, 10:00pm.
 - Post two responses to a peer's comment on 2 different days.
- Submit either a weekly assignment (chapter T/F and MC) or an online quiz by Saturdays, 10:00pm.

Weekly Discussion Postings: Initial postings are due by 10pm on Tuesdays. All subsequent postings are due by 10pm Saturdays.

(In other words, the Discussion Board on **Blackboard** will be closed on 10pm each Tuesday for initial weekly responses and Saturday throughout the semester for subsequent responses.)

Since this class is offered exclusively online, "meeting" with each other through online discussion forums is the primary means of regular contact with each other. A "Discussion Board" link on **Blackboard** guides students to the weekly discussion question. Students are to respond at least once to the discussion question

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directly and respond 2 more times each week on different days to another student’s posting. Here is a sample chart you might find helpful:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Respond to instructor’s discussion question by 10pm	Respond to another student’s post		Respond to another student’s post	Be sure to have posted at least 3 times this week by 10pm

Each student’s responses are judged on quality, comprehension of the material related to the question, and depth of understanding. In other words, responding to many student’s postings with comments such as “that sounds good,” or “I agree” will not be judged highly. Rather, **a minimum of 3 substantive responses is the goal**. “Substantive responses” will normally entail writing 2 to 4 sentences that display not only comprehension of the question but some critical thinking on the student’s part regarding how to interpret the question. Postings for each week will be graded on a scale of 1 to 10. (See sample chart below for an example.) If you meet the minimum quota per week (3 substantive posts on different days), then you get full credit (10 points); if you do not submit the minimum or if your posts are of low quality, then points will be deducted accordingly. Students will be graded on a minimum of **45 postings at the end of the semester**. This is based on a minimum of 3 postings per week posted on different days each week.

The following sample chart would earn a full 10 points for the week. Use this as a gauge for the quality and quantity of your own posts each week.

Sample Discussion Question: How does an inductive argument differ from a deductive argument?					
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thur	Friday	Saturday
	Student’s response to the question: Deductive arguments claim that their conclusion necessarily follows from the premises, whereas inductive arguments only claim that their conclusion probably follows from the premises. This may not sound like a big distinction but it really matters.	Response to another student’s post: I would like to add that deductive arguments can be true or false whereas inductive arguments are said to be stronger or weaker. Remembering this has helped me make judgments about the argument.		Response to another student’s post: I find it helpful to note certain words in an argument. For example, inductive arguments conclude with terms such as: <i>probably, most likely, chances are that, it is reasonable to suppose that, we can expect that, and it seems probable that.</i>	Be sure to have posted at least 3 times this week by 10pm

Note that the responses to other students may be on different days from the ones in the chart; as long as they are on separate days and as long as all responses are made by 10pm on Saturdays, students will earn full credit. Basically, students should be mindful of four things each week to earn full credit for discussion postings:

1. Post your initial response to the question by 10:00pm on Tuesdays.
2. Post quality responses: usually 2 to 4 sentences; substantive content that addresses the question, furthers the conversation, or adds new insights.
3. Post 2 responses to other students’ posts on separate days
4. **Late submittals will not be accepted or acknowledged.**

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Completion of weekly reading assignments: Stay current with the reading assignments scheduled for each week. The discussion postings and the assignments are based upon the weekly reading assignments. In other words, students will not be able to do satisfactory work in other areas of the course without doing the required reading. Students who engage with the course content statistically do better academically than those who are passive in their education. Jot down notes, questions, and ideas as you read. We will compare insights through online discussions.

Online Assignments: **Due dates are posted in this syllabus.** This portion of your course work requires you to submit tutorial assignments found in **Blackboard** under “**Assignments**” link. **The deadline for all assignments will be 10:00pm on Saturdays.** We will cover 10 chapters this semester in our text so there will be 10 tutorial assignments this semester. (The lowest of 10 grades will be dropped AND there will be one extra-credit opportunity – see next paragraph.)

No late assignments will be accepted, no exceptions! Get your work in on time and you won't have to ask about this policy only to be disappointed. To account for unforeseen circumstances that we all experience from time to time, the lowest grade of your ten assignment submittals will be dropped AND an extra credit assignment will be offered at the end of the semester.

Quizzes: There will be four online quizzes scheduled throughout the semester (see schedule below). These online quizzes will include a selection of objective questions (multiple choice or T/F). Each quiz will typically be a review of 2 to 3 previous chapters. There will **not** be any opportunity for students to make up quizzes so be sure to make note of these due dates.

Exams: There are two exams for this course, midterm and final. These exams will be administered online through **Blackboard**. These exams are mandatory and may not be rescheduled. Each exam will include a selection of objective questions (Multiple choice, T/F, as well as some brief essay questions). All questions for the exam will be taken from material within the chapters, from online lectures, and from required text reading assignments most recently covered. The midterm will cover chapters 1-5; the final exam will cover chapter 6-10.

NOTE: Make-up exams **may** be considered but only because of the most unusual of circumstances. “Unusual circumstances” would normally entail a doctor’s note or official notice of some sort indicating that you are unable to be present for the scheduled exam. Coordinating a time to make up an exam BEFORE the scheduled due date is the student’s obligation. Making up an exam after the due date is not an option.

GRADING / EVALUATION

- Online Discussion Postings (min 3 per week, each on different days) - 20%
- Online Quizzes (4 at 5% each) - 20%
- Midterm (3/31/2012) - 20%
- Final Exam (5/29/2012) - 20%
- Online Assignments - 20%

Final Grades

90 – 100	A	80 – 89.99	B	70 – 79.99	C	60 – 69.99	D
						Below 60% = F	

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Chapter Asgts	Schedule for Online Text Quizzes, Course Quizzes, and Exams	Due Date
Opening Activity for Week 1 and 2 (non-graded)	Post your introduction / bio on Blackboard Db and also complete the orientation “quiz.” (Orientation “quiz” is found under “Assignments” link)	10pm, 1/28
Assignment #1 (chapter 1)	Chapter 1: Critical Thinking: Why It’s Important	10pm, 2/11
Assignment #2 (chapter 2)	Chapter 2: Reason & Emotion in Critical Thinking	10pm, 2/18
	Quiz #1 covering chapters 1 and 2 on Blackboard under “Quizzes & Exams”	10pm, 2/25
Assignment #3 (chapter 3)	Chapter 3: Language & Communication	10pm, 3/3
Assignment #4 (chapter 4)	Chapter 4: Knowledge, Evidence & Errors in Thinking	10pm, 3/10
	Quiz #2 covering chapter 3 and 4 on Blackboard under “Quizzes & Exams”	10pm, 3/17
Assignment #5 (chapter 5)	Chapter 5: Informal Fallacies	10pm, 3/24
Midterm Exam - (ch 1-5) on Blackboard under “Quizzes & Exams”		3/31 online
Assignment #6 (chapter 6)	Chapter 6: Recognizing, Analyzing & Constructing Arguments	10pm, 4/14
Assignment #7 (chapter 7)	Chapter 7: Inductive Arguments	10pm, 4/21
	Quiz #3 covering chapter 6 and 7 on Blackboard under “Quizzes & Exams”	10pm, 4/28
Spring Recess 4/18 – 4/22		
Assignment #8 (chapter 8)	Chapter 8: Deductive Arguments	10pm, 5/5
Assignment #9 (chapter 9)	Chapter 9: Ethics & moral Decision-Making	10pm, 5/12
	Quiz #4 covering chapters 8 and 9 on Blackboard under “Quizzes & Exams”	10pm, 5/19
Assignment #10 (chapter 10)	Chapter 10: Marketing & Advertising	10pm, 5/26
Final Exam – (ch 6-10) on Blackboard under “Quizzes & Exams”		5/29 10pm online

Contacting your Instructor: You may contact me via email at any time: Kathryn.Valdivia@gccd.edu . Please put your class in the subject box and include your full name. It is very difficult to determine who “surferdude@aol” is without a class and name reference.

Students with Disabilities: If you have needs that require special accommodation, contact me privately to make suitable arrangements within the first two weeks of the semester (Kathryn.Valdivia@gccd.edu). You are also encouraged to contact disabled student services & programs (DSP&S) so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented as soon as possible. Students may contact DSP&S in person in or by phone.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus if necessary.

This course adheres to the academic policies outlined in the 2008-2009 Cuyamaca College catalog.