

**WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE**  
**LIBERAL ARTS DIVISION**  
**GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE**

PHI	101	Critical Thinking	3-0	3
Course Prefix	Course Number	Course Title	(Lec-Lab)	Semester Hours

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Introduces the student to reasoning in a language-centered context. Students will learn how to identify arguments and distinguish them from other types of discourse. Some topics covered will be: evaluating claims, recognizing informal fallacies, problem solving, evaluating media. Students will also learn how to cast issues in a neutral manner, to recognize and appreciate a variety of perspectives, and to argue for and against more than one perspective on an issue. The focus of this course is on everyday practical reasoning. IAI H4 906

**TOPICAL OUTLINE**

- I. Identifying issues, claims, facts, opinions, arguments
- II. Writing: clarity, definitions, ambiguity, vagueness, organization, evaluative writing, inclusive writing
- III. Claims: assessing credibility (expertise, observer credibility, reference works, the Internet, news media)
- IV. Arguments: arguments vs. non-arguments, deduction vs. induction, premises and conclusions, evaluating arguments, identifying unstated assumptions
- V. Fallacious reasoning: fallacies of weak induction, fallacies of relevance, fallacies of presumption
- VI. Induction: evaluating arguments by analogy, inductive generalization, causal arguments
- VII. Reasoning in specific contexts: scientific reasoning, moral reasoning, and legal reasoning

**METHODS OF PRESENTATION**

1. Lecture
2. Discussion of arguments
3. Individual and group exercises
4. Extensive use of media: film, video, internet, newspaper, editorial cartoons
5. Debates

**STUDENT OUTCOMES:** (*The student should . . .*)

1. Identify issues and claims:
2. Identify the kinds of support offered for claims
3. Identify unstated assumptions in various arguments.
4. Evaluate the support for claims in terms of acceptability, relevance, sufficiency.
5. Apply the above skills to extended arguments, including two or more of the following: arguments from analogy, causal arguments, inference to the best explanation, moral arguments, statistical arguments, testimonial arguments
6. Produce an original argument that includes an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of one's own position.

**METHODS OF EVALUATION**

Many but not all of the following:

1. Class participation
2. Objective tests
3. Final exam
4. Essays/Term papers
5. Brief papers (1-3 pages each)
6. Debates

7. Homework assignments Examples of such assignments include written analyses of editorial positions and/or letters to the editor, written analysis of a piece of advertising, a critique of an argument for or against a moral issue (e.g. abortion or euthanasia), critique of a Supreme or Appellate Court opinion.

SOME SUGGESTED TEXTBOOKS/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Moore, Brooke N. and Richard Parker, *Critical Thinking*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., McGraw-Hill, 2014

Browne, M. Neil and Stuart Keeley, *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., Prentice Hall, 2014

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Semester Spring Year 2015