

TEACHING GUIDE FOR: **Critical thinking, critical reading, and presenting arguments**

Subject identification

Lecturer: Marcos Nadal Roberts

Credits: 6 ECTS (total 150 hours)

Teaching language: ENGLISH

Teaching period and schedule: Second Semester. Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 16:00 to 18:00

Contextualization

University students are mostly encouraged to learn specific contents related to a specific subject matter. While this is an understandable basic objective of education, it does little to develop skills that are crucial to professional success in any domain. Specifically, students are rarely encouraged and given the time to develop the skills for critical thinking, critical reading, and articulating arguments. Unless students develop these skills for themselves, they run the risk of becoming “uncritical thinkers”: people who are used to taking things at face value, who easily believe what they read or hear, and who do not stop to consider whether an idea, an argument, or a strategy is accurate, true, justified, or reasonable. In consequence, many students will find it difficult to find and keep jobs because they have not been trained to think and read critically, or to present arguments clearly, concisely, and convincingly.

Students who are able to think critically by actively seeking to understand the reality behind ideas, arguments, and strategies, by using reasoning skills, assessing evidence and carefully analyzing thought processes will also be able to present and defend stronger arguments that will withstand the scrutiny of others. These students will undoubtedly have an advantage over their colleagues when seeking and retaining jobs that require independent, proactive, and creative thinking.

The aim of this course is to help students develop their skills for critical thinking, critical reading, and presenting arguments. The course does not aim to be the final word on these topics. Rather, it hopes to make students realize that these are valuable skills, that they are crucial in virtually any professional setting, that they need to train them, and that they can achieve very good results by practicing them following certain exercises.

Requirements

The course has no requirements, except for a good oral and written English comprehension and expression. Students should be able to focus on thinking

processes and argument construction, and not be held back by basic grammatical issues.

Skills

Specific

- To develop an objective stance towards others' and our own ideas
- To understand and evaluate reasoning
- To understand and evaluate evidence
- To understand and account for bias
- To become a critically engaged user of technology
- To develop an independent and confident approach to reading and writing
- To make and defend solid arguments
- To present arguments in a convincing manner

Generic

- The ability to work in an international environment
- Strategies that facilitate the acquisition of deeper knowledge in international environments
- An improvement in written and oral reports in English
- The development of ethical and social commitment

Content

1. Critical thinking

- 1.1. Critical thinking vs. uncritical thinking
- 1.2. Skepticism and objectivity
- 1.3. Detecting biases and heuristics
- 1.4. Fallacious arguments
- 1.5. Overcoming bias and fallacy
- 1.6. Critical thinking in study
- 1.7. Critical thinking at work
- 1.8. Critical thinking in life

2. Critical reading

- 2.1. Critical reading of primary and secondary sources
- 2.2. Strategies for critical reading
- 2.3. Assessing evidence

3. Developing and presenting arguments

- 3.1. Building arguments on substance
- 3.2. Evaluating premises
- 3.3. Use of examples and analogies

- 3.4. Use of sources
- 3.5. Making causal arguments
- 3.6. Making deductive arguments
- 3.7. Extended arguments
- 3.8. Persuasion in written and oral forms

Teaching methodology

In-work class activities

Modality	Name	Group Type	Description
Theory	Lecture	Large	The aim is to convey the basic contents of this course.
Practice	Seminar	Medium	The aim is to put into practice the contents of this course, and exercise the skills listed above.

Distance education work activities

Modality	Name	Group Type	Description
Individual study and work	Studying	Individual	Students will be encouraged to study the materials presented in class
Individual study and work	Critical reading	Individual	Students will be given a text to analyze, read critically, and annotate.
Individual study and work	Short argument	Individual	Students will be required to make a short argument on a selected topic.
Group work	Extended argument	Small	Students will have to make an extended argument on a selected topic.
Assessment	Final exam	Individual	Students will be given one final assignment to complete individually.

Specific risks and protective measures

None

Workload estimate

Modality	Name	Hours	ECTS	%
Theory	Lecture	20	0,8	13,33

Practice	Seminar	30	1,2	20
Individual study and work	Studying	36	1,44	24
Individual study and work	Critical reading	25	1	16,66
Individual study and work	Short argument	25	1	16,66
Group work	Extended argument	10	0,4	6,66
Assessment	Final exam	4	0,16	2,66
Modality	Name	Hours	ECTS	%

Student learning assessment

Lecture classes

Students are expected to actively participate during lectures and seminars. Participation is crucial for a positive assessment (max 1 point). In order to pass the course, each student requires at least half of this grade.

Homework

Students' work at home on the critical reading and short argument will also be assessed (max 4 points). In order to pass the course, each student requires at least half of this grade.

Exams

An online exam will be the final assessment (max 3 points). In order to pass the course, each student requires at least half of this grade.

Preparation of group work and projects

Students group work on an extended argument will also be assessed (max 2 points). In order to pass the course, each student requires at least half of this grade.

Resources, bibliography and additional documentation

Basic bibliography

Chatfield, T. (2018). *Critical thinking*. London: SAGE.

Ryan, J. E. (2017). *Wait, what? And life's other essential questions*. New York: Harper Collins.

Strunk Jr., W. & White, E. B. (1959/2009). *The elements of style*. New York: Pearson Education.

Weston, A. (2009). *A rulebook for arguments, 4th ed.* Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

Complementary bibliography

Bowell, T. & Kemp, G. (2015). *Critical thinking: A concise guide, 4th ed.* London: Routledge.

Cottrell, S. (2011). *Critical thinking skills: developing effective analysis and argument, 2nd ed.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crusius, T. & Channell, C. (2003). *The aims of argument: A text and reader, 4th ed.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Fisher, A. (2001). *Critical thinking: An introduction, 2nd ed.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gleick, J. (2011). *The information: A history, a theory, a flood*. London: Fourth Estate.

Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking fast and slow*. London: Penguin.

van den Brink-Bugden, R. (2010). *Critical thinking for students, 4th ed.* Oxford: How To Books.

Vaughn, L. (2007). *The power of critical thinking, 2nd ed.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Wallace, M. & Wray, A. (2011). *Critical reading and writing for postgraduates, 2nd ed.* London: SAGE.

Lecturers' office hours



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