

PHL 262
Critical Thinking
3 Credit Hours
Spring, 2008

Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-11:50	Smith-Hutson, Room 128 (Mafrige Auditorium)
Glenn M. Sanford 401 Academic Building 4 (936) 294-1510 sanford@shsu.edu Fax: (936) 294-3978 Departmental: (936) 294-1174	Office Hours: Tuesday 11:00-12:00 and 1:00-2:00 Thursday 11:00-12:00 and by appointment

Catalog Description: PHL 262 CRITICAL THINKING. [PHIL 2303] Designed to improve students' ability to think critically. The course covers the fundamentals of deductive reasoning, the identification of common fallacies, and an introduction to inductive reasoning, as well as sensitizing the students to some of the ways information is distorted, e.g., by advertising and news management. Credit 3.

Course Format: This course will be primarily taught in a lecture format. Students are encouraged to ask questions during the lecture.

Objectives: The primary objective of this course is to familiarize students with the techniques of logical analysis and argumentation. Toward this end, we will focus upon the following: 1) investigating the role of logic in clarifying one's own thinking, 2) examining deductive and inductive reasoning with the aim of understanding both the strengths and limitations of logic, and 3) developing the necessary skills for identifying common errors in reasoning. **Note:** One of my personal objectives is to make myself available to students as much as possible. If you wish to meet with me to discuss any portion of this course, please feel free to contact me at the e-mail address above or in person and I will be happy to set up a mutually convenient meeting.

Required Texts:

Vaughn, Lewis (2008) The Power of Critical Thinking: Effective Reasoning About Ordinary and Extraordinary Claims Second Edition. Oxford University Press.

Additional web-based readings will be supplied to supplement the text. These readings will be available at no charge to the students.

Supplies: All students must provide their own full-sized scantron form for each exam.

All students are required to purchase and register a "ResponseCard RF Transmitter" (RF-RFC-01). This can be purchased from the bookstore or directly from Turning Technologies via the web (<http://he-ecommerce-n.turningtechnologies.com/>). Students must bring these to all class meetings, except exams.

Attendance Policy: **Attendance records will be used in determining your grade.** Attendance will be taken using a combination of sign-in sheets, TA checking of the seating chart, and the

student-response system. Each student may be absent up to three class periods without penalty. For each absence after the third, a student's final grade will be reduced by one letter grade.

Aside from absences for religious holidays (see below), there are no excused absences. Class attendance is strongly encouraged as all students are responsible for any material covered or assignments given in class even if it does not appear in the texts or on the website. For exams,

There are no make-up exams in this course. If a student misses an exam, a grade of zero (0) will be entered for that exam. Any student may replace her/his lowest exam grade with the grade from the comprehensive final exam. **The only exception to the above is an absence for a religious holy day covered under the policy on religious holidays.**

STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS:

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911(a)(2) defines religious holy days as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code...."

A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will notify the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed.

Assignments: There will be a reading assignment for most class days. These will be posted on Blackboard. All students are responsible for reading assignments **BEFORE** class. Students are expected to prepare for an interactive questioning during every class period. An indefinite number of interactive questions may be asked at any point during a class period. Questions will use various formats such as multiple choice, matching, and true/false, etc. Questions will come in two types: 1) student feedback and 2) quiz. Student-feedback questions are designed to gauge student attitudes and understanding. These questions are graded on a pass-fail basis—all students who respond get 2 point for answering the question. Quiz questions will ask students about specific aspects of the topic we are covering. Students will receive 1 point for answering these questions. All students who answer correctly will receive an additional 4 points. Students will receive a point total for each class meeting in which graded questions are asked. At the end of the semester, these points will serve as the basis of one-quarter of your final grade. Any student who is absent will receive 0 points for the class in question. Students will be allowed to drop their three lowest daily percentages. Be aware that should a student miss more than three classes, this will affect negatively the student's grade beyond the penalties called for under the attendance policy.

Student grades for the in-class questions will be determined by dividing the total number of points a student earns by the total possible points for that student, then multiplying that amount by 134. The formula is: $[(\text{total points earned} \div \text{total possible points}) * 134]$.

There will be five exams (including the final). Each exam will be graded on a 100-point scale. Exams will use multiple choice, matching, and true/false questions in a scantron format. Exams may also include a section of short answer/fill in the blank questions. For more details, please refer to the Blackboard review for each exam. Review suggestions and sample questions for each exam will be posted at least two weeks prior to each exam.

Grading Plan: Grades for this course will be determined based upon your percentage of total points using the following scale: 90-100% = A, 80-89.99% = B, 70-79.99% = C, 60-69.99% = D, and below 60% = F. There will be 534 total points in this course (400 from exams and 134 from in-class questions), so the points scale will be 481-534 = A, 428-480 = B, 374-427 = C, 321-373 = D, and 0-320 = F. I do not expect to offer any extra credit during this course; however, on occasion, I have provided students the opportunity to earn extra credit points for participating in university-sponsored research projects. If any such opportunity arises, I will announce it in class. You must be present on the day the assignment is announced to earn the points—attendance is important. Only exam grades will be posted on BlackBoard. Points for in-class questions will be made available periodically throughout the semester for those students who wish to know where they stand.

Study Tips: All students are encouraged to attend every scheduled class meeting. In addition, because this class focuses on developing critical thinking skills, students are encouraged to attempt the exercises offered in the Power of Critical Thinking textbook. Often, working together in groups to practice the skills presented is an effective strategy. Students are encouraged to make use of the SAM Center, the Reading Center, and the Writing Center.

University policies concerning **academic dishonesty**, **Americans with Disabilities Act**, **religious holidays**, and **visitors to the classroom** are available at <https://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

For any student caught violating the policy on academic dishonesty, I will enter a grade of 0 for the given assignment and work with the appropriate university authorities to seek the expulsion of the student. In all cases, I will seek the maximum penalty allowed by the university. **It is considered cheating for any student to bring another student's response pad to class.**

Instructor Evaluations: Near the end of the semester, all students will be asked to complete an IDEA evaluation of the instructor's performance in this class. This confidential evaluation is your chance to provide feedback on the effectiveness of this course.

Americans with Disabilities Act:

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be

subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If the student has a disability that may affect adversely their work in this class, then he or she needs to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how they can best be helped. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center. There will be no retroactive accommodations.

Academic Dishonesty:

In accordance with the University's Academic Policy Statement 810213, the following statement applies to all students in my classes:

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials.

Classroom Rules of Conduct:

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students therefore must refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Cellular phones, pagers, and music players (for example, iPod-type devices) must be turned off and earphones removed before class begins. Students are prohibited from using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, talking at inappropriate times, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in a directive to leave class. Students who are especially disruptive also may be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy. Violation of these rules may result in the student being counted as absent for the class in which the behavior occurs. The SHSU policy on student conduct and discipline is available at:

<https://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>

Visitors in the Classroom:

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not he/she will be allowed to remain.

Course Outline:

There is no master course outline. After the initial list of assignments, all assignments will be posted on BlackBoard at least two weeks before they are due. This allows for flexibility to alter the pace of the course relative to the needs of students.