Course Description

Introduces the art of devising ways to improve the quality of learning and life by systemically improving the thinking that underlies them.

Overview

What is Critical Thinking? It is the art of clarifying your use of the reasoning process because sound thinking is practical and poor thinking inevitably causes problems, wastes time and energy, and causes frustration.

Why study your own thinking process? To maximize the quality of your thinking you must make learning about your own thinking a priority. If you focus your attention on the role that thinking plays in your life, you will recognize that everything you do, want, or feel is influenced by your thinking. Understanding how and why you think the way you do can open up new doors, help you see new options, minimize significant mistakes, maximize potential understandings, and enhance your reasoning regarding your choices in life.

Becoming a skilled critical thinker requires hard work; it will not happen overnight, but it is a possibility. If you want that to happen, you must be willing to practice certain methods of thinking and problem solving that will at times seem awkward. The benefits will become more visible as you become more effective at problem solving, supporting your conclusions and ideas, and when you realize you have improved your ability to see reality from diverse perspectives.

The overall goal of this course is to teach you how to be a synthetic thinker. A synthetic thinker sees the merit in different viewpoints and is able to synthesize them into a workable solution or point of view. This contrasts with (1) a dualistic thinker who thinks only in black-and-white where there is only one right and one wrong answer, and with (2) a relativistic thinker who may see many sides of an issue but thinks all answers and opinions are equally valid.

To become a synthetic thinker, you will need to:

- Read and study for comprehension the material assigned in your textbook.
- Spend time with classmates doing thinking activities from the book.
- Write essays and manage oral discussions that demonstrate your understanding of and your ability to apply critical thinking strategies and skills.

Course Textbook


Films

Note about films: The unit study guides and the unit checklists state which movie is assigned to that specific unit. These movies have all been chosen based on how they help illustrate and enhance the main focus of each unit. It is your responsibility to find the films. They will not be provided by Waldorf. However, some of the films may be available here. If you are unable to access the films listed in a given unit for any reason, you may use a film of your choosing upon professor approval.


Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Use critical thinking to solve problems.
2. Use evidence and sound reasoning to support your arguments, beliefs, and judgments.
3. Use critical self-evaluation to enhance your personal growth.

Academic Integrity

Honesty and integrity are taken very seriously at Waldorf University. All students should be familiar with the Waldorf University Academic Integrity Policy (found in the current Student Handbook) and the consequences that will result from breaches of this policy.

Credits

Upon completion of this course, the students will earn three (3) hours of college credit.

Course Structure

1. **Unit Learning Outcomes:** Each unit contains Learning Outcomes that specify the measurable skills and knowledge students should gain upon completion of the unit.
2. **Unit Lesson:** Each unit contains a Unit Lesson, which discusses unit material.
3. **Reading Assignments:** Each unit contains Reading Assignments from one or more chapters from the textbook or other resources. Units I-VII contain an assignment film to view.
4. **Discussion Boards:** Discussion Boards are a part of all Waldorf courses. Information and specifications regarding these assignments are provided in the Course Policies listed in the Course Menu bar.
5. **Unit Assessments:** This course contains eight Unit Assessments, one to be completed at the end of each unit. Assessments are composed of multiple-choice, matching, and written response questions.
6. **Unit Assignments:** Students are required to submit for grading Unit Assignments in Units I-VII. Specific information and instructions regarding these assignments are provided below. Grading rubrics are included with the Unit I-VII Assignments. Specific information about accessing these rubrics is provided below.
7. **Ask the Professor:** This communication forum provides you with an opportunity to ask your professor general or course content related questions.
8. **Student Break Room:** This communication forum allows for casual conversation with your classmates.

Unit Assignments

**Unit I Essay**

**Film Essay**

Each of the films selected for Unit I portrays a teacher/student relationship that proves to be life changing. Identify your movie selection with a brief synopsis of the main characters, the underlying issue, and how it is or is not solved. Touch on the key points of the process of change in your movie. What needed to happen? What risks were taken? What were the positive and negative (if any) outcomes? This should be no more than half of your essay.

In the second part of your essay, discuss your own experience with education. How much of your education has consisted of teachers pouring ideas into your mind and then requiring you to pour them back onto a test? How many teachers have tried to inspire your mind in new ways? Which type of education do you prefer, and why?

Your essay should be no less than two full pages in length, roughly 500 words. If you use outside sources, please cite and reference them according to APA standards.
Information about accessing the Blackboard Grading Rubric for this assignment is provided below.

**Unit II Essay**

**Film Essay**

The movies in Unit II all deal with major decision making. Start by identifying your movie selection and providing a brief synopsis of the core issue. What was the main character’s goal? What major decision needed to be made, and by whom? What was the process? What were the problems or roadblocks? Then, discuss your analysis of the final outcome. This should be no more than half of your essay.

In the second part of your essay, analyze your own decisions that have been important in your life. What is your process for making these kinds of decisions? What are the strengths and weaknesses of that process for you? This part of your think piece should be focused on the process, not on details about your decisions.

Your essay should be no less than two full pages in length, roughly 500 words. If you use outside sources, please cite and reference them according to APA standards.

Information about accessing the Blackboard Grading Rubric for this assignment is provided below.

**Unit III Essay**

**Film Essay**

The movies in Unit III depict many great examples of problem solving. Discuss the major problem in the movie you selected, and how that problem was (or could have been) broken down into smaller, more solvable problems.

For the second half of your essay, choose a smaller problem you are facing now, and describe how you would use Chaffee’s five steps of problem solving to find a solution. The problem you write about can be personal or professional, and you can change names and other details, if you feel the need. What you discuss will be kept confidential.

Your essay should be no less than two full pages in length, roughly 500 words. If you use outside sources, please cite and reference them according to APA standards.

Information about accessing the Blackboard Grading Rubric for this assignment is provided below.

**Unit IV Essay**

**Film Essay**

Each of the movie selections this unit deal with a big question that is very hard to answer, but a question we should all wrestle with. How do we determine perception vs. reality?

In the movie *A Beautiful Mind*, a doctor is explaining the horror of schizophrenia to John Nash’s wife and he says:

> You see the nightmare in schizophrenia is not knowing what’s true. Imagine if you had suddenly learned that the people and the places and the moments most important to you were not gone, not dead, but worse . . . had never been. What kind of hell would that be?

Discuss perception vs. reality within your selected movie. How does the movie determine perception vs. reality?

What about you? When you look around you at the world, how do you know how to react to the people, events, or things that cross your path? As you make decisions about things both big and small, how do you know that you are awake and not dreaming? How do you determine what is perception and what is reality?

Your essay should be no less than two full pages in length, roughly 500 words. If you use outside sources, please cite and reference them according to APA standards.

Information about accessing the Blackboard Grading Rubric for this assignment is provided below.
Unit V Essay

Film Essay

This think piece is more analytical and less personal. The plots of the films this unit contrast the differing perceptions of faith believers and non-believers. Illustrate the roles that factual information, inferences, and judgments play in the main character(s) major decisions. Be sure to differentiate between the three terms and give examples for support.

In the second half of your think piece, discuss which path—science or faith—is a more influential part of your own believing and knowing things about the world.

Your essay should be no less than two full pages in length, roughly 500 words. If you use outside sources, please cite and reference them according to APA standards.

Information about accessing the Blackboard Grading Rubric for this assignment is provided below.

Unit VI Essay

Film Essay

These films raise questions about American society, ranging from racism and sexism to the fairness of the legal system. Explore the relationship between vengeance and justice in your movie. Argue for or against the acceptability of personal vengeance—the taking of revenge—in American society, using the events portrayed in your film as the main source of evidence and/or examples. How does revenge fit into your understanding of justice? What makes revenge worth the consequences for society and the legal system?

Although you will need to rely on definitions and descriptions of the structure of argument discussed in Chapter 6 of our textbook, remember that the movie must be used as the main source of evidence in your argument.

In the second half of your think piece, reflect on what you think your own decisions would have been if placed in the same situation(s) you described from the movie. Would your decisions have been the same as those made by the character(s)? Why, or why not?

Your essay should be no less than two full pages in length, roughly 500 words. If you use outside sources, please cite and reference them according to APA standards.

Information about accessing the Blackboard Grading Rubric for this assignment is provided below.

Unit VII Essay

Film Essay

In these films, very specific claims are made on information, inferences, and judgments. Do you agree? What is your analysis of the main argument's strengths and weaknesses?

- If you do agree with the film's conclusions, what information, inferences, or judgments carry the most weight with you? Why those? As you write, you may include other information that you bring to this topic. What are the inferences and judgments you rely on as you take a position on the topic?

- If you do not agree, then explain why in terms of the information provided and/or the inferences and judgments made. What's "wrong" with or about any of them? What information do you have that counters the information cited in the movie? What do your inferences and judgments lead you to believe is the truth about the issue?

Your essay should be no less than two full pages in length, roughly 500 words. If you use outside sources, please cite and reference them according to APA standards.

Information about accessing the Blackboard Grading Rubric for this assignment is provided below.
Submitting Course Papers/Projects

Once you have completed your papers/projects, submit your completed papers/projects by uploading through the Assignment tab in each unit. Do not e-mail your paper directly to your professor. By using the Assignment tab, your record will automatically be updated to indicate you have submitted your papers/projects and the assignment will be provided to your professor for grading. Instructions for submitting your assignment can be found under the Assignment tab in each unit.

APA Guidelines

Waldorf University requires that students use APA style for papers and projects. Therefore, the APA rules for formatting, quoting, paraphrasing, citing, and listing of sources are to be followed. Students can find Waldorf’s Citation Guide in the myWaldorf Student Portal by clicking on the “Citation Guide” link under the “Resources” heading. This document includes examples and sample papers.

Grading Rubrics

This course utilizes analytic grading rubrics as tools for your professor in assigning grades for all learning activities. Each rubric serves as a guide that communicates the expectations of the learning activity and describes the criteria for each level of achievement. In addition, a rubric is a reference tool that lists evaluation criteria and can help you organize your efforts to meet the requirements of that learning activity. It is imperative for you to familiarize yourself with these rubrics because these are the primary tools your professor uses for assessing learning activities.

Rubric categories include: (1) Discussion Board, (2) Assessment (Written Response), and (3) Assignment. However, it is possible that not all of the listed rubric types will be used in a single course (e.g., some courses may not have Assessments).

The Discussion Board rubric can be found within Unit I’s Discussion Board submission instructions.

The Assessment (Written Response) rubric can be found embedded in a link within the directions for each Unit Assessment. However, these rubrics will only be used when written-response questions appear within the Assessment.

Each Assignment type (e.g., article critique, case study, research paper) will have its own rubric. The Assignment rubrics are built into Blackboard, allowing students to review them prior to beginning the Assignment and again once the Assignment has been scored. This rubric can be accessed via the Assignment link located within the unit where it is to be submitted. Students may also access the rubric through the course menu by selecting the “Grades” link.

Again, it is vitally important for you to become familiar with these rubrics because their application to your Discussion Boards, Assessments, and Assignments is the method by which your instructor assigns all grades.

Communication Forums

These are non-graded discussion forums that allow you to communicate with your professor and other students. Participation in these discussion forums is encouraged, but not required. You can access these forums with the buttons in the Course Menu. Instructions for subscribing/unsubscribing to these forums are provided below.

Click here for instructions on how to subscribe/unsubscribe and post to the Communication Forums.

Ask the Professor

This communication forum provides you with an opportunity to ask your professor general or course content questions. Questions may focus on Blackboard locations of online course components, textbook or course content elaboration, additional guidance on assessment requirements, or general advice from other students.

Questions that are specific in nature, such as inquiries regarding assessment/assignment grades or personal accommodation requests, are NOT to be posted on this forum. If you have questions, comments, or concerns of a non-public nature, please feel free to email your professor. Responses to your post will be addressed or emailed by the professor within 48 hours.
Before posting, please ensure that you have read all relevant course documentation, including the syllabus, assessment/assignment instructions, faculty feedback, and other important information.

Student Break Room

This communication forum allows for casual conversation with your classmates. Communication on this forum should always maintain a standard of appropriateness and respect for your fellow classmates. This forum should NOT be used to share assessment answers.

Grading

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Boards (8 @ 2%)</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Units I-VII Assessments (7 @ 4%)</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Assessment</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<td>Essays (7 @ 7%)</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Course Schedule/Checklist (PLEASE PRINT)

The following pages contain a printable Course Schedule to assist you through this course. By following this schedule, you will be assured that you will complete the course within the time allotted.
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<th>Unit</th>
<th>Course Schedule</th>
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<td><strong>Unit I</strong></td>
<td>Creativity and Critical Inquiry</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Review:</strong></td>
<td>Unit Study Guide</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Read:</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 8: Thinking Critically, Living Creatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Film Assignment:</strong></td>
<td>See Study Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discuss:</strong></td>
<td>Discussion Board Response: Submit your response to the Discussion Board question by Saturday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Discussion Board Comment: Comment on another student’s Discussion Board response by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Submit:</strong></td>
<td>Assessment by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Essay by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notes/Goals:</td>
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| **Unit II** | Critical Thinking |
| **Review:** | Unit Study Guide |
| **Read:** | Chapter 1: Making Decisions |
| | Chapter 2: Thinking Critically |
| | Film Assignment: See Study Guide |
| **Discuss:** | Discussion Board Response: Submit your response to the Discussion Board question by Saturday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) |
| | Discussion Board Comment: Comment on another student’s Discussion Board response by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) |
| **Submit:** | Assessment by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) |
| | Essay by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) |
| Notes/Goals: | |

| **Unit III** | Problem Solving |
| **Review:** | Unit Study Guide |
| **Read:** | Chapter 3: Solving Problems |
| | Film Assignment: See Study Guide |
| **Discuss:** | Discussion Board Response: Submit your response to the Discussion Board question by Saturday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) |
| | Discussion Board Comment: Comment on another student’s Discussion Board response by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) |
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| | Essay by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) |
| Notes/Goals: | |
## Unit IV: Perceiving, Believing, and Knowing

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<th>Review:</th>
<th>□ Unit Study Guide</th>
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</table>
| Read:  | □ Chapter 4: Perceiving, Believing, and Knowing  
        | □ Film Assignment: See Study Guide |
| Discuss: | □ Discussion Board Response: Submit your response to the Discussion Board question by Saturday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)  
          | □ Discussion Board Comment: Comment on another student’s Discussion Board response by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) |
| Submit: | □ Assessment by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)  
         | □ Essay by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) |

### Notes/Goals:

## Unit V: Reporting Information, Inferring, and Judging

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<th>Review:</th>
<th>□ Unit Study Guide</th>
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| Read:  | □ Chapter 5: Reporting, Inferring, Judging  
        | □ Film Assignment: See Study Guide |
| Discuss: | □ Discussion Board Response: Submit your response to the Discussion Board question by Saturday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)  
          | □ Discussion Board Comment: Comment on another student’s Discussion Board response by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) |
| Submit: | □ Assessment by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)  
         | □ Essay by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) |

### Notes/Goals:

## Unit VI: Constructing Arguments

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<th>Review:</th>
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| Read:  | □ Chapter 6: Constructing Arguments  
        | □ Film Assignment: See Study Guide |
| Discuss: | □ Discussion Board Response: Submit your response to the Discussion Board question by Saturday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)  
          | □ Discussion Board Comment: Comment on another student’s Discussion Board response by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time) |
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<th>Critical Reasoning</th>
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<td>Chapter 7: Reasoning Critically</td>
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<td>Film Assignment: See Study Guide</td>
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<th>Unit VIII</th>
<th>Putting It All Together</th>
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<td>Review:</td>
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<td>Read:</td>
<td>Review Your Textbook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit:</td>
<td>Final Assessment by Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (Central Time)</td>
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