

**Syllabus**  
**Critical Thinking**  
Spring, 2006

Instructor, JT Young

Office Hours Mondays 2pm, Ketchum 208

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**Course Purposes**

- 1] To introduce you to formal critical thinking processes, methods and practices
- 2] To foster your ability to use these skills in writing, speaking and thinking
- 3] To improve your ability to organize and formulate your own ideas and ideals concerning issues in the real social world

**Prerequisites**

Social theory and Statistics

**Text**

Fisher, Alec. (2001) *Critical Thinking, An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Course Requirements**

- 1] You will be required to write assignments weekly. These assignments will be assigned in class and therefore class attendance is mandatory. If you miss more than 5 classes without an excused absence, you will lose one letter grade. If you miss more than 10 classes, you will lose two letter grades. This is not negotiable.
- 2] The first part of the class will be didactic in nature, which will count 30% of your total grade. The midterm will be short answer, multiple choice and essay.
- 3] The second portion of the class will consist of assignments assessing your ability to critically think, write and speak. You will be expected to speak in class and if this is a problem for you, see me immediately. You will need access to the web, to certain newspapers and periodicals, and to the University online and Chinook materials. The instructor and the department do not have the wherewithal to provide copies to each student, so pool your efforts to get and read the materials. The bulk of the discussion, writing and speaking materials will come from the following:  
The New York Times  
Time Magazine  
The New Republic  
The Denver Post/Rocky Mountain News  
The Economist  
We will focus on contemporary musical lyrics and do content analysis as well.

These are available on campus or at local bookstores and the web. The library may also have copies.

I will attempt to make pdf files and place them on the website as applicable.

4] On Tuesdays during the second portion of the course, background material will be discussed by the instructor. An assignment will be made for Thursday at the end of the Tuesday class. This will require library AND web research by methods described in class plus a written assignment of variable length each week due at the beginning of class on Thursdays.

5] Class discussion about the weekly project will occur on Thursdays. You are required to participate and you will be graded on that participation weekly. This participation should be guided by careful, thoughtful preparation, and notes from your research. The discussion will be made in a civil and intellectual nature. This requires thinking, not emoting. This class participation will count for 30% of your grade. The weekly assignments will count 30% of your grade.

6] A written final paper/exam will be given at the end of the term which will require a larger than usual amount of research. You will have two weeks to write this paper. It will not be discussed in class. You must work alone on this piece—I want your critical thinking skills to show in this paper, not group skills. You are on your honor in this. The final will count 10% of your grade.

7] The workload in this course is onerous. Therefore I do not expect work on the weekends. You should however use your skills and your free time to look at the media (blogs, print media, reputable TV and Radio, etc.) and bring issues and discussions to the class for use. This will require a paper copy, .pdf file or video presented to the instructor on Mondays so that I have time to collate and research the issue for class. Extra credit **TO BE DETERMINED BY THE INSTRUCTOR** will be given for worthy projects.

8] This is a class about issues and the application of sociology to those issues. Everyone has opinions and will be welcome to voice them. What is discussed in the class **MUST** stay in the class. We will honor conservative and liberal, radical and other epistemologies. Please be solicitous of your fellow students. If I find out that public derision of opinions expressed in the class is occurring, and that derision negatively impacts a student in the class, the perpetrator will receive a warning. If remedial action is not taken and a second offense occurs, two letter grades will be deducted from the perpetrator's grade.

### **Disability Statement**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me an letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed.

Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities.

Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard Hall 322, and [www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

### **Religious services and holidays**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, please inform me **before** the event or holiday and I will accommodate you. If you inform me

after the event or holiday, I will not accommodate you. Students can see full details of this policy at [www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html).

### **Classroom Behavior and Lateness Policy**

Students and faculty each have a responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the responsibility to treat students with understanding, respect and dignity, to guide classroom discussion, and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which students express opinions.

There are topics in my classes that are controversial, medically oriented and occasionally personal and graphic. Please understand that my intent is to provide information, not to influence your opinions, or make outrageous statements or assertions. Every opinion is treated with respect and your right to hold that opinion is protected.

I treat you as adults. You will be held to that standard regardless of circumstances. If you are going to be late with an assignment, absent for a test, or absent from a required presentation or class you **MUST inform me prior to the event in question**. This rule **INCLUDES** illness, deaths in the family and any other event. I will hold you to this standard, so do not test me. The only exceptions are your death or your unconsciousness/coma.

### **Honor Code Policy**

All students of the University of Colorado are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of the institution. Violations of this policy include:

- a] cheating
- b] plagiarism (document sources very carefully and rigorously)
- c] aiding others in academic dishonesty,
- d] fabrication and lying,
- e] bribery and
- f] threatening behavior.

All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council. If you are found to be in violation of University policy, you will be subject to sanctions from the instructor and the University including but not limited to probation, expulsion, and suspension. The Honor code can be found at [www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html).

### **Sexual Harassment**

The University of Colorado policy on sexual harassment applies to all students, staff and faculty. Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual attention. It can involve intimidation, threats, coercion, or promises that create an environment that is hostile or offensive. Harassment can occur between members of the opposite sex, those of the same sex, students, staff, faculty or administrators, and may occur anywhere on the campus or related to campus activities. Any student, faculty or staff who believes that he/she has been sexually harassed should contact the Office of Sexual Harassment (OSH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Further information may be found at [www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment](http://www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment).

## **Course Schedule**

Week 1—Introduction to the course

How to do research

Introduction to Critical Thinking

Fisher 1-32

Week 2--Reasoning patterns and assumptions

Fisher 33-60

Week 3—Clarification and Credibility

Fisher 61-106

Week 4—Inferences and Deductive reasoning

Fisher 107-137

Week 5—Causation, Decision-making and Policy

Fisher 138-169

Week 6—Test on Tuesday\*\*\*

Thursday Discussion of research techniques

Weeks 7 through 15—Discussion and writing assignments as noted above

Week final exam writing assignment handed out Thursday of week 13, **due in class in last class period**

**There will not be a final exam other than the final paper.**

Good luck, I think we shall have a splendid term together.