



Syllabus



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COURSE SYLLABUS

CRIT 500: Critical Thinking 4 Credits

Online

Fall, 2008

September 13 - December 12; (*Thanksgiving Break: November 22-28*)

Last Updated: July 28, 2008



Instructor: Pat Erwin

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Course Description

This course is designed to help learners think and write with clarity and logic. Learners are immersed in a process that encourages them to practice and value objective inquiry over subjective preconceptions. By careful examination of their own thinking processes and the strategies of successful problem-solvers, students build a diverse repertoire of effective thinking skills. Students then apply these numeric, deductive, and evaluative approaches to a gamut of problem scenarios, from the practical to the abstract.

Prerequisites

Students must meet one of the following:

1. acceptable scores on Accuplacer
2. approved exemption
3. achievement of a minimum grade of B in ENG 402 Developmental Reading and/or ENG 405 Developmental Writing

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, learners will be able to:

1. acquire the basic "numeracy" skills necessary in solving simple math word problems, logic puzzles, and numerical analogies.
2. formulate and evaluate multiple strategies and alternate theories for solving problems and explaining phenomena, whether social, physical, numerical, or theoretical/ hypothetical. This process involves the following particular skills:
 - a. differentiate between subjective and objective information.
 - b. formulate probing, clarifying questions about underlying assumptions in accepted paradigms of thought.
3. apply problem-solving techniques based on logical, systematic analysis.
4. construct written analyses in an academic format standard throughout Granite State College, particularly emphasizing the following:
 - a. evaluate in writing the truth claims of an argument or hypothesis based on logic and empirical evidence

- b. articulate in writing the difference between bias and the principles of sound reasoning, particularly when examining written arguments.
 - c. demonstrate the ability to articulate in verbal and written form the difference between subjective and objective assessment of evidence.
 5. conduct a self-examination of critical thinking skills, applying the principles learned in this course to the learner's own thought processes and problem-solving techniques.
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Course Resources

Textbook(s):

1. **Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking.** Browne, Publisher: Prentice Hall 8th ed. ISBN: 0132203049
2. **Problem Solving and Comprehension.** , Whimbey & Lockhead, publisher: Lawrence Erlbaum, 6th ed. ISBN: 0805832742
3. **How Good People Make Tough Choices : Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living.** Kidder, publisher: Harper Collins, 2003 ISBN: 0688175902

Textbooks are available via GSC's online bookstore, MBS Direct at:

<http://bookstore.mbsdirect.net/gsc.htm> (The course-CRN number for ordering this textbook is: 10135). Textbooks can also be purchased from MBS via phone, mail or fax. For additional information, visit the [Online Bookstore](#) section of the college web site.

PLEASE NOTE: It is the learner's responsibility to have purchased all required course materials before the start of the course. Learners are expected to meet all course expectations even if the shipment of a required textbook or other learning resource is delayed. Be sure to choose the shipping option that will get your text/resource delivered in a timely manner.

Blackboard Orientations

There are no face-to-face sessions for this course. If you have never taken an Online Interactive Course (OIC) at the college, we highly recommend that you attend one of the [2-hour Blackboard Orientation sessions](#) available throughout the state. If you choose not to attend a face-to-face session, you are encouraged to complete the [Online Orientation with audio](#) at your own convenience.

Course Policies

Announcements: I expect students to check announcements and their course mail at least every other day.

Tasks List: I use the course task list to record when assignments are due. If there is an inconsistency between what is said in chat, on the discussion board, or any other course venue, please recognize the Task List as the official source for due-date information.

Chats: Please try to come to chat on-time. If you do enter late consider how you might physically enter a classroom, discreetly and quietly. While chat is not required, I strongly recommend your attendance. If you can't attend, we provide a transcript of the chat which I expect you to read.

Meeting Obligations: Please let me know if you are having trouble understanding concepts presented in the class, keeping up with assignments, or balancing your work, family, and class responsibilities. Don't wait until you are in a panic or so far behind that catching up is a major problem. I expect students to have a certain amount of initial challenges in balancing all the many competing priorities we as adults share.

Late Assignments: I am generally understanding when you need to turn an assignment in late. Two important points- you must let me know ahead of time that the assignment will be late, and this cannot be a consistent request.

Disputed Grades: If you believe I have unfairly graded a paper or assignment, lets discuss it. I generally find that students who simply ask why or ask for clarification have a more satisfying experience in the class

Confidentiality: We occasionally discuss personal issues, particularly in the last module on ethical problem solving. In order to have an honest exchange students need to feel that what they say will not be repeated beyond the online class. Please respect one another's privacy.

Online Communication: It is often hard in a beginning online class to understand how different communication is. Things said in a F2F class may be tempered with a facial expression, tone of voice, etc.-those queues' are missing in an online class. Please try to remember this as you make a joke, criticize the work of others, or lodge a complaint. The online environment takes a little getting used to.

Purchasing Course Materials: It is the learner's responsibility to have purchased all required course materials before the start of the course. Learners are expected to meet all course expectations even if the shipment of a required textbook or other learning resource is delayed. Be sure to choose the shipping option that will get your text/resource delivered in a timely manner.

Description of Course Activities and Requirements

Participants will demonstrate their learning through completing the activities described below. Please see the Major Assignments page for more details about each assignment.

Assessment Activities

- **Opening Assessment Activity:** During the first week of the term each of you will respond to questions based upon a reading that will be provided to you by the Instructor. The Assessment activity will count towards your grade, and will allow your Instructor to assess the critical thinking strengths and weaknesses of the class as a whole, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of individual students. If applicable, the results of the assessment may lead the Instructor to make some changes to the course assignments in order to best meet the outcomes for the course for the particular students taking the class.
- **Closing Assessment Activity:** During the last week of the term each of you will respond to questions based upon a second reading. Your responses will be graded and evaluated by the instructor. The evaluation will provide students with an indication of the critical thinking skills that they have improved upon, as well as those areas that still need improvement.

Lost in the Woods

Students in CT500 enter the class with a host of motivations, concerns, and experiences that influence their perspective on learning and growing. The assignment in this module uses literary illusion to explore the various journeys each of us in on. The major assignment for this module is a short reflection paper based on our reading and analysis of Dante's 'Canto I', and what how 'lost in the woods' might speak to you.

Problem Solving Workbook

In Module 2 you will have specific problem-solving assignments from Problem Solving and Comprehension. Your work on assigned problems will be submitted as your Problem Solving Workbook.

Process Problems Exercise

We will look at the way visual tools are often used to successfully convey complex information. Each student will complete a concept map, fishbone diagram, or flowchart on an assigned topic.

Analysis of the Issues

Key to your success in becoming a critical thinker is being able to ask the right questions, and formulate those questions correctly. We will look at how authors develop and present arguments on an issue. You will then write a short essay comparing how two authors present their information on the issue.

Reflection Paper

We will read Plato's Allegory of the Cave Through a guided discussion we will identify key aspects of the good life, as defined by Plato, and the role learning plays in living the good life. You will then submit a 3-4 page paper on what the good life means to you. You will also be responsible for posting a concept map of your paper before it is due.

Ethics Case Study

In module 6 we will look at ethical problem solving. Each of you will have an ethical case study to evaluate based on the concepts of ethical decision making we have discussed. In preparation for completing this assignment, we will practice with case studies that illustrate key aspects of ethical problem solving.

Participation on Discussion Board Forums

We will use the course Discussion Board to post exercises, pose questions, and comment on the readings. Since a part of your grade is based on your participation on the Discussion Board, please get in the habit of checking new postings at least every other day. I have found that the Discussion Board is where excitement and involvement in the course is generated. Please comment thoughtfully and often! How do I define often? - my expectation is that at least three times a week students will contribute to the Discussion Board.

Grading Percentages

Please see the Grading Rubric contained within the course for more details.

Activity	% of Final Grade
Participation	10%
Getting 'Out of the Woods' Reflection paper	15%
Problem Solving Workbook	10%
Analysis of Issues	15%
Process Problems Exercises	10%
Reflection Paper	15%
Ethical Problems Case Study	15%
Critical Thinking Assessment Activities (Opening & Closing)	10%
Total	100%

Grades in this class will follow the scale of Granite State College, where A/4.0 is awarded for Excellent work and F/0.0 is awarded for Failure/ No credit.

Granite State College Standard Grading Scale

Grade	Percent	Grade Points	Level of Achievement
A	95-100	4.0	Excellent
A ⁻	90-94	3.67	
B ⁺	87-89	3.33	Good
B	84-86	3.0	
B ⁻	80-83	2.67	
C ⁺	77-79	2.33	
C	74-76	2.0	*Acceptable
C ⁻	70-73	1.67	†
D ⁺	67-69	1.33	Poor
D	64-66	1.00	
D ⁻	60-63	0.67	
F	≤59	0	Failure, no credit
*A grade of C or better is required to fulfill requirements in the major, minor, or general education core at GSC. Please consult the GSC catalog for details.			
† A grade of C ⁻ or below generally does not transfer to other academic institutions.			

Course Schedule & Topics

The course consists of six learning modules with various sub-topics. Each module contains specific assignments, projects, and exercises. The following information is presented to help you plan your schedule. This schedule of activities may need to be altered to fit the needs of the class. The Tasks List remains the most up-to-date source of information about when class activities happen, and when specific assignments are due.

Module	Assignments/Activities
Module 1: Out of the Woods September 13-October 3	Module 1 will begin with an online discussion of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goals of CRIT 500 • How this course is organized • Materials used • How adults learn • Becoming an assertive learner • Key to your success in becoming a critical thinker is being able to ask the right questions, and formulate those questions correctly. Module 1 will focus on how good questions are formulated, behaviors that can impact our ability to ask well formulated questions, and how the questions we ask improve our critical thinking skills. <p>Major Assignment Due: Getting 'Out of the Woods' reflection paper</p>
Module 2: Well-defined Problems	Module 2 is devoted to mathematical problems. We will examine and practice solving a host of problems, from word and probability problems, to brain teasers and analogies

October 4-10	Major Assignment Due: Problem-solving Workbook
Module 3: Process Problems October 11-24	Module 3 will cover the strategies and techniques employed when addressing problems of process. Students will learn the techniques of concept mapping, flowcharting, and several other visual problem-solving tools. We will then practice selecting the appropriate technique and employing it to solve process problems. Major Assignment Due: Process Problem
Module 4: Analysis of the Issues October 25-November 7	Module 4 we will contrast and compare how two authors of articles on major issues present information to support their claims. During Module 4 we will be using the book <i>The Art of the Question</i> . Major Assignment Due: Analysis of the Issues
Module 5: Writing for Clarity November 8-21	Module 5 will focus on being able to formulate questions, solve well-defined problems, and work through the intricacies of a process problem—as these are all important to critical thinking. At the same time, if you must also be able to clearly explain your reasoning in writing. Module 5 is a brush-up on putting your thoughts to paper. The emphasis will be on writing clear and well-developed arguments. We will use Plato's Allegory of the Cave to spark debate on the questions about adult learning. Major Assignment Due: Reflection Paper on 'The Good Life': Plato's Allegory of the Cave
Module 6: Ethical Problems November 22-December 12 Thansgiving Break: Nov 24 - 30	In Module 6 you will first look at how ethical problems are defined. What are the characteristics of a sound ethical decision? You will also be asked to examine your own values, and evaluation systems that might help or hinder you in making ethical decisions. Major Assignment Due: Ethics Problems Case Study

Note: The schedule above may change at the instructor's discretion.

Library Resources

Granite State College has a Virtual Library (<http://www.granite.edu/current-students/virtual-library/>) available 24/7 with access to the full-text of thousands of journals and professional periodicals, an online Reference Room, selected Internet resources, writer's resources, research and citation help, and a collection of tutorials. The databases are password protected.

See GSC Library tab in MyGranite for username and password. In addition, the **Library Info** link in the course menu provides direct links to research databases, *Research FAQs* and more.

Academic Resources and Information Services

Academic assistance to students is available at GSC Centers at no additional charge in such areas as basic skills preparation in reading, writing and math; study skills and research and citation help. Academic Resources staff members work closely with faculty and students toward academic success. A whole range of tools is available, including study and time management tips, APA and MLA citation assistance, access to learning resources online, and feedback on course writing projects. To contact an Academic Resource and Information Coordinator, see the Academic Resource Link on the Resources page in the course menu or go directly to http://bbresources.granite.edu/course_docs/acad_resources.htm.

Technical Assistance

For assistance with issues related to accessing the MyGranite portal, GSC email, Webrock, online courses or other technical issues related to any of the Blackboard tools, please visit the GSC Technical Assistance Center (<http://bbresources.granite.edu/techassist/help.htm>) for answers to the most frequently asked questions or to submit an online help request form. Or call **1-888-372-4270** (Hours: M-F, 8:30-5:00, messages checked twice daily on weekends. Extended hours for the week before start of the term and first week of the term: M-Th, 8:00-7:00.)

Documented Disabilities / Americans with Disabilities Act

Granite State College will provide qualified individuals with disabilities the same educational opportunities available to persons without disabilities. When an individual's documented disability creates a barrier to educational opportunities, the College will attempt reasonable accommodation to remove the barrier. If you need assistance, we recommend that you make contact early to ensure that your requests can be reviewed prior to the start of each term. If you wish to apply for accommodations, contact your academic advisor or the Dean of Learner Services in Concord. See the complete Granite State College policy in the current college catalog for further details.

Academic Honesty

An academic community is based on honesty and integrity. Plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty are not acceptable at Granite State College. Faculty and students have a joint responsibility to ensure the integrity of learning.

All work that you submit must be your own except in those instances when your instructor gives specific permission to collaborate. When quoting, summarizing or explaining ideas that are based on another's work, whether in print or online, make sure to cite references appropriately. Plagiarism is using another's words or even paraphrasing another's work without giving proper credit through the use of citations.

For Granite State College's complete [academic honesty policy](#), see the current college catalog.

Conduct in the Online Classroom

Membership in society implies minimal norms for civil behavior towards one another. It is Granite State College's expectation that all members of our college community treat faculty, staff, and fellow learners with respect. Learners need to be knowledgeable of and comply with college policies. Each individual is accountable for his/her actions and for the consequences of any behavior that is inconsistent with these values and expectations.

Institutional Assessment

Assessment is an ongoing process that enables the College to improve its programs, courses, and teaching methods. Institutional evaluation may be embedded in tests, exams, and other measurements of student learning. As members of a learning community, students, faculty, and staff will be expected to participate in the important process of assessment on occasion. Confidentiality of any data that identify participants is maintained.

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