

critical thinking

GENI 10-05, Spring 2012
MWF 2:50-3:50 PM
009 Main Hall
Medaille College

3.0 credits | no prerequisites

Catalog Description

As a cornerstone in Medaille's General Education Core curriculum, this course aims to introduce students to the fundamentals of critical thinking. Its coursework integrates basic critical thinking, argumentation, and related written and spoken communication lessons with the exploration and evaluation of significant ideas. Thus, the course specifically addresses some of the most important academic skills required not only for success in college, but also for open-minded and reflective inquiry, substantial understanding, and informed judgment.

Student Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. examine ideas of significance through close reading, class discussion, and writing;
2. recognize and demonstrate key qualities of active learning;
3. recognize and demonstrate key qualities of critical thinking;
4. recognize, analyze, and develop individual claims/propositions;
5. read, recognize, and analyze arguments (including extended arguments);
6. develop, critique, present, and defend arguments;
7. write essays that demonstrate basic critical thinking concepts and skills;
8. apply critical thinking in studying some significant community issue.

instructor: Dr. Gerald J. Erion, 221 Main Hall

office hours

M 4:00-6:00PM, Tu 9:00-9:30AM, 12:35-1:05PM, W 4:00-5:00 PM, and by appointment

e-mail: gerion@medaille.edu | FB: [facebook.com/gjerion](https://www.facebook.com/gjerion) | telephone: 716.880.2174

course web: erion.humanitiesdepartment.com/gen110/

Blackboard course link: <https://learning.dcollege.net/webct/logon/2260256596011>

Course Outline and Tentative Schedule

To participate effectively and succeed in this course, it is *essential* that you complete your assigned work on schedule. When completing your reading assignments, be sure to study your texts *actively* and *carefully*, going over difficult sections more than once if necessary. You should also take notes, both to clarify your understanding of the material and to focus attention on those areas that you are having trouble with, so that you can raise worthwhile questions and comments during class.

date	topic	due
M 1/16	holiday: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	
W 1/18	introductions, course syllabus	
F 1/20	The Medium is the Metaphor	read Postman Foreword read Postman chapter 1, pp. 1-7
M 1/23		read Postman chapter 1, pp. 7-15 NB: drop/add deadline is 1/23
W 1/25	Introduction to Critical Thinking	read McWhorter chapter 2 e-reserve assignment due
F 1/27		read "Introduction to Logic" handout
M 1/30		
W 2/1	Critical Thinking and Knowledge	
F 2/3		
M 2/6	Media as Epistemology	read Postman chapter 2
W 2/8	Typographic America	read Postman chapter 3
F 2/10	The Typographic Mind	read Postman chapter 4
M 2/13	peer review writing workshop	bring draft of summary paper
W 2/15		argument summary paper due
F 2/17	The Peek-A-Boo World	read Postman chapter 5
M 2/20	holiday: President's Day	
W 2/22	The Age of Show Business	read Postman chapter 6
F 2/24	examination I review	
M 2/27	examination I	study for examination
W 2/29	Evaluating Claims	
F 3/2		
M 3/5	holiday: Spring Recess	
W 3/7	holiday: Spring Recess	
F 3/9	holiday: Spring Recess	
M 3/12	Now...This	read Postman chapter 7
W 3/14		
F 3/16	Reach Out and Elect Someone	read Postman chapter 9
M 3/19	The Merchants of Cool	read Gladwell article (on reserve)
W 3/21		
F 3/23	Learning Styles and Teaching Styles	read McWhorter chapter 8 NB: p/f, withdrawal deadlines are 3/23
M 3/26	Teaching as an Amusing Activity	read Postman chapter 10
W 3/28	The Huxleyan Warning	read Postman chapter 11
F 3/30	examination 2 review	
M 4/2	examination 2	study for examination
W 4/4	project workshop	
F 4/6	holiday: Easter	
M 4/9	holiday: Easter	

W	4/11	peer review writing workshop	bring draft of synthesis/evaluation paper
F	4/13	no class meeting (Boston)	
M	4/16	conference/writing day	
W	4/18	student presentations	prepare for presentation
F	4/20	student presentations	prepare for presentation
M	4/23	student presentations	prepare for presentation
W	4/25	student presentations	prepare for presentation
F	4/27	student presentations	prepare for presentation
M	4/30	student presentations	prepare for presentation
W	5/2	conference/writing day	
F	5/4		synthesis and evaluation paper due
M	5/7	final review	
Tu	5/8	final examinations	
W	5/9	final examinations	
Th	5/10	final examinations	

Means of Assessing Student Learning

Assessment activities will include two examinations (for which essay-based make-up examinations will be given only in *extreme, documented* medical or personal emergencies), two papers, a presentation, and participation in class meetings, each weighted as follows.

examination 1	20%
examination 2	25%
summary paper	10%
synthesis and evaluation paper	20%
presentation	15%
participation (includes attendance)	10%

Please note that your class participation will determine a significant portion of your final grade. To do well here, you must not only *attend* class, but also arrive *prepared to raise interesting and relevant questions and comments on the day's assignment*. (On the other hand, students who are chronically unprepared or absent will reduce their participation grades to zero; see below.)

As in any Medaille course, the grading of student writing in this class will reflect standard English usage; thus, in addition to thoroughly addressing the required content, your *papers and essays should be well organized, well written, and properly documented* in MLA or APA style.

Medaille College expects students to fulfill academic assignments independently and honestly. Any cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty at Medaille will be penalized, with sanctions ranging from an F on a specific assignment to expulsion from the College.

Numerical grades will be converted to letter grades with the following table.*

A \geq 94 (excellent)	B 84-87 (high achievement)	C 74-77 (average)	D 64-67 (below average)
A- 91-93	B- 81-83	C- 71-73	D- 61-63
B+ 88-90	C+ 78-80	D+ 68-70	F \leq 60 (failure)

Attendance Policy

See above on the importance of attendance and active class participation; moreover, *chronic unexcused absences (four or more) will reduce your participation grade to zero.*

Textbooks

required: Postman, Neil. Amusing Ourselves to Death. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Copies of this text are available through the Medaille College Bookstore. Additional required readings will be available through the College Library's reserve desk or Blackboard electronic reserve services.

Suggested Reading List

any standard English dictionary

Hacker, Diana. A Pocket Style Manual. Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2004. **Reference PE1408 .H26 2004**

Hacker, Diana. Rules for Writers. Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2009.

McWhorter, Kathleen T. Study and Critical Thinking Skills in College. New York: Pearson Longman, 2008.

Pitts, Byron. Step Out on Nothing. New York: St. Martin's, 2009.

Weston, Anthony. A Rulebook for Arguments. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009. **BC177 .W47 2009**

Other Specifications, etc.

To help create an effective learning environment, we will conduct our class activities in accordance with the following policies.

- You should be in the classroom, seated, and ready to participate at the start of each class meeting.
- Please do not bring food into our classroom; beverages with secure lids are acceptable, though.
- If you must bring a mobile phone to class, kindly turn it off before we begin so that you are not distracting your classmates with text messages, calls, etc.

* Grading guidelines appear in the current Medaille College Academic Undergraduate Catalog.

- Try not to talk out of turn; instead, raise your hand to indicate that you have a question or contribution, and you will be recognized as soon as possible.
- We will ordinarily meet for the entire class period. If you need to leave a particular class meeting early, though, please let me know beforehand.
- In the event of a campus emergency closure, please log on to our Blackboard (Bb) course link at <http://learning.medaille.edu> to continue with our course requirements. You should access this course link early in the semester to familiarize yourself with it. Report any access or usage problems to the course instructor.

Any student with a disability who believes he/ she needs accommodation(s) in order to complete this course should contact the Academic Support Center as soon as possible. The staff in the Academic Support Center will determine what accommodations are appropriate and reasonable under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Academic Support Center is located in 107 Huber Hall and can be reached by telephone at (716) 880-2338.

Need More Help?

Critical thinking is powerful and exciting. But it is also challenging. So if you find yourself needing help – a little or a lot – this semester, consider the following strategies.

- **Raise your hand and ask.** Our class meetings are designed to encourage discussion; indeed, they will work best when students contribute questions (and answers) that can help *everyone* to learn.
- **See your professor after class.** Office hours are great opportunities to get help; you can set up an appointment or just pop in.
- **Meet with classmates after class.** Your peers can be great sources of help, too, whether on specific class material, exam or paper preparation, etc.
- **Visit the Academic Support Center.** The ASC (107 Huber Hall) offers workshops, tutoring, and guidance in a range of skills (studying, test-taking, time management, paper research and writing, etc.) for lots of courses, including this one.
- **Consult the College Library Reference Services desk.** Medaille's outstanding library staff provides reference services during regular Library hours. Online help is also available around the clock via Ask Us 24/7 chat.