



# MEDAILLE COLLEGE

## Course Syllabus

Course Number:	GEN 110
Course Title:	Introduction to Critical Thinking
	Learning Community Theme: Freedom and Enslavement
Section:	L02, T R 8:00-9:25 a.m.
Semester:	Spring 2010
Credits:	3.0
Prerequisites:	This course is required of all first-year students.
Instructor:	Dr. Gerald J. Erion
Instructor Availability:	M 9-10:30 a.m. Tu 9:30-10:15 a.m., 1:20-2:20 p.m. Th 9:30-10:15 a.m. and by appointment, 221 Main Hall telephone: 716.880.2174 e-mail: <a href="mailto:gerion@medaille.edu">gerion@medaille.edu</a> course web: <a href="http://erion.humanitiesdepartment.com/gen110/">erion.humanitiesdepartment.com/gen110/</a> emergency Blackboard course link: <a href="https://learning.dcollege.net/webct/logon/901111407011">https://learning.dcollege.net/webct/logon/901111407011</a>

### A. Catalog Description of Course

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.

#### *Learning Communities Addendum*

*GEN 110 serves as a cornerstone course in the Medaille College first-year Learning Community program, introducing vital critical thinking skills and concepts and applying them to substantial issues. Since these tools are revisited and reinforced throughout the Learning Community program, students should expect multiple opportunities to study and employ them not only in this course, but in the concurrent section of ENG 110 as well, and also in more advanced courses during subsequent semesters.*

## B. 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.

## C. Outline of Course Content 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	assignment
Tues. Jan. 19	introductions, course syllabus	
Thurs. Jan. 21	The Medium is the Metaphor	read Postman Foreword and chapter 1 <b>NB: last day to drop or add is Jan. 25</b>
Tues. Jan. 26	Introduction to Critical Thinking	<b>e-reserve assignment due</b> read McWhorter chapter 2
Thurs. Jan. 28		read "Introduction to Logic" handout <b>NB: Prof. Pelton's Write Thing reading is Jan. 28, 7:00 p.m., Huber Hall Library</b>
Tues. Feb. 2		
Thurs. Feb. 4	Critical Thinking and Knowledge	
Tues. Feb. 9	Media as Epistemology	read Postman chapter 2
Thurs. Feb. 11	Typographic America	read Postman chapter 3
Tues. Feb. 16	The Typographic Mind	read Postman chapter 4
Thurs. Feb. 18	The Peek-A-Boo World	<b>hand in paper 1</b> read Postman chapter 5 <b>NB: WNY Leaders Series panel is Feb. 24, 6:00 p.m., Main Lecture Hall</b>
Tues. Feb. 23	The Age of Show Business	read Postman chapter 6
Thurs. Feb. 25		
Tues. Mar. 2	midterm review	
Thurs. Mar. 4	midterm examination	<b>study for examination</b>
Tues. Mar. 9	holiday: Spring Recess	
Thurs. Mar. 11	holiday: Spring Recess	

date	topic	assignment
Tues. Mar. 16	Evaluating Claims	
Thurs. Mar. 18	Reach Out and Elect Someone	read Postman chapter 9
Tues. Mar. 23	Now...This	read Postman chapter 7
Thurs. Mar. 25	library session	<b>NB: class meets in Huber Hall Library</b> <b>NB: last day to withdraw is Mar. 26</b>
Tues. Mar. 30	no class meeting	
Thurs. Apr. 1	holiday: Easter	
Tues. Apr. 6	Learning Styles and Teaching Styles	read McWhorter chapter 8
Thurs. Apr. 8	Teaching as an Amusing Activity	read Postman chapter 10
Tues. Apr. 13		
Thurs. Apr. 15	peer review writing workshop	<b>bring draft of paper 2 for peer review</b>
Tues. Apr. 20	The Huxleyan Warning	read Postman chapter 11
Thurs. Apr. 22		<b>hand in paper 2</b>
Tues. Apr. 27	final review	
Thurs. Apr. 29		<b>study for examination</b>
Tues. May 4	final examinations	<b>study for examinations</b>
Wed. May 5	final examinations	<b>study for examinations</b>
Thurs. May 6	final examinations	<b>study for examinations</b>

#### D. Method of Evaluating Students

Final marks will be determined by midterm and final examinations (for which essay-based make-up examinations will be given only in *extreme, documented* medical or personal emergencies), two papers, and participation in class meetings, each weighted as follows.

midterm examination	20%
final examination	30%
paper 1	15%
paper 2	25%
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 section E below.)

As in ENG 110 or any other 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.

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

A $\geq$ 94 (high distinction)	B 84-87 (above average)	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 (unsatisfactory)

### E. Attendance Policy

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

### F. Textbooks

Postman, Neil. Amusing Ourselves to Death. New York: Viking, 1985.

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.

### G. Suggested Reading List

any standard English dictionary

Hacker, Diana. A Pocket Style Manual. Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2008.

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

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

### H. Other Specifications, Requirements, or Arrangements

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 calls, text messages, etc.
- 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.

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

- Medaille’s faculty and administration expect students to complete their academic work with honesty and integrity. Students who engage in any form of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, forging signatures or College documents, etc.) will be dealt with severely, with penalties ranging from an F on a given assignment to failing a course or even academic suspension. Students should consult the Medaille College Policy Manual Volume VI (available online), paragraph 6.2.2.5, for full details on the College’s policy and procedures for handling formal charges of academic dishonesty.
- *Attendance at presentations and other activities sponsored by the Medaille College Learning Community program may be encouraged and/ or required.*

In the event of a long-term emergency campus closure, please log on to Blackboard (Bb) at <http://learning.medaille.edu> to continue with our course requirements via our course link. You should familiarize yourself with this course link early in the semester, and report any access or usage problems to your 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 the Main Building, room M314, and can be reached by telephone at (716) 880-2338.