

CrCrTh 601, Fall 2016, Critical Thinking Students' Synthetic Statements, from the Final Course Evaluation

The synthetic statement is the fourth question on formal course evaluations for the Critical and Creative Thinking Graduate Program. See the text of questions 1-3 by choosing any evaluation from this page: <http://cct.wikispaces.umb.edu/CourseEvaluations>.

Question 4: "Building on your comments from Questions 1-3 in the formal evaluation, compose a synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs) evaluating this course. (Imagine readers who might not be willing to wade through all the answers to Qs 1-3, but are willing to read more than simply the numerical averages of standard course evaluations.) Please make comments that help the instructor develop the course in the future and that enable some third party appreciate the course's strengths and weaknesses. Among other things you might comment on the overall content and progression of classes, the session activities, and the use of mentors to support the learning in the course."

Below are the Synthetic Statements from the 15 respondents who gave permission for these comments to be shared on the web (out of 16 total received).

- This course is an absolute must-take, and Jeremy has lead us in such a way that we seem to agree that our thinking has been sharpened, our interactions have become more purposeful and meaningful, and our writing has become more thoughtful and engaged. Every aspect of my life has been positively effected by what we have learned in this course, and I truly feel it is a strong foundation for all of my future academic work.
- The critical thinking course taught me that my weird patterns of brain activity weren't actually weird, and that I was just thinking critically about situations. I am forever playing devil's advocate and trying to see things from other angles, and that is part of thinking critically. I was unaware that this is not a habit that everyone possesses. This skill, however, needs to be honed and focused into a pattern of thought that is recognizable and able to be picked through and analyzed. The hybrid format of the class allows people from all over the world to participate and share their experiences with each other. This is invaluable. Without the different experiences of the students in the class, we would not have had such a rich experience.
- I really enjoyed the thinking activities we did in class. It's very hard to do something like "question your assumptions" or play the believing game until you know what that feels like to do. It's like swimming, and the more actual critical thinking we can do in class the better, because reading about swimming can only do so much. So my advice is do more thinking activities and/or delve deeper into the cognitive processes that happen when they are undertaken. Applying real-world scenarios to the thinking activities would also be beneficial.
- In most courses, students will walk away thinking "When will I ever use this?" That was not the case for this course. Critical Thinking introduces principles on a gradual level, increasing in importance and complexity, until our thinking has been strengthened. Those principles are learned in the classroom but turned into action in our lives as we improve both our day to day thinking as well as our future endeavors. We centered our thinking not towards a solution but the process, allowing for free range discussion where no one is "wrong." Along the way, we were able to extend our own interests into the class, garnering added enthusiasm through application of principles into our own unique characteristics. There was never a dull moment. Not a wasted thought or opinion. Critical Thinking will do what few other classes have the capability of doing...actually changing the person that you are.

- This class was an engaging, informative, and interactive survey of critical thinking concepts. Very little of what is learned is taught via lecture, but rather through direct experience with the concepts. You will not be taught "about" critical thinking, you will engage in it, and through engaging in critical thinking you will learn what it is. Therefore, participation is key. If you are not willing to do the activities and assignments you will not gain much from this class. At the end of this class you will likely be left with more questions about critical thinking than you had when you started. This is not a bad thing, this is you thinking critically.
- This particular course is based on a sound idea: learn ways to think critically and creatively. While expert work in the field was touched upon, offered, and made available, one must be an independent and free thinker in order to scoop what is useful from the material and apply it to his or her life. Ways to speak, listen, and understand how others understand is presented and discussed, but there are no right or wrong answers. For the open minded free thinker, this course is a brilliant way to learn to express and understand more and better. The more organized learner will come to appreciate a freer way of thought and will take smaller, useful nuggets away from the course. Discussion with classmates is extremely useful!
- I believe that I accomplished my goal of learning about the process and techniques of critical thinking through this course. This course is well structured to allow for both interaction between student and instructor as well as encouraging experiential learning among students. The course created increased "open mindedness" on my part. I also believe that I achieved my own personal goals for the course. As a result, I was able to exercise the principles of critical thinking in my personal and professional life. The instructor created a strong learning environment throughout the course, and this in turn led to the learning goals for the course being achieved.
- I had not been acquainted with any formal concept of critical thinking prior to the course, so my overall goal was to achieve comprehension of what critical thinking is, how one uses it, and what it is useful for. I have definitely achieved those goals, although within the context of critical thinking being a lifelong process, I realize I have only begun to scratch the surface. I find the course to be transformational. I feel sharper mentally, my writing has improved, as has my thinking, in its clarity. In terms of progressing further, I'm looking forward to drafting and adopting the plan for practice. Jeremy is a gifted instructor, the feedback he supplies is always on point, and we had a great group of people. No suggestions regarding how the course might be improved. I understand why Critical Thinking is a core course for the program. Heartily recommended.
- I dove into this course committed to doing all the required AND optional materials. I am glad I did because the spectrum and magnitude of the course material is profound. Also about midway through the course I decided to focus on evolving my writing skills. I exceeded my expectations and have gained a lot of confidence in how I generally communicate. The MicroJournal turned out to be my favourite component in the class as now I am leaving this course having created my very own CT Guiding Principles that I can take with me for the rest of my life. The curriculum is excellent. Lots and lots of reading but very worth it. What adds a whole other dimension to this course is being able to plug in one's life directly into the course. It's very satisfying to move forward in academic, professional and personal aspects. My understanding and experience CT skills have expanded and deepened. My personal manifesto and personal project also represent the cognitive and functional CT development I have undergone. It's truly remarkable! Jeremy is truly an awesome instructor. He led the class with great expertise each week. The hybrid class arrangement is absolutely brilliant. Those of us beaming in from other parts of the world always felt very included. The class sessions were

always and uniformly uplifting and informative. This course FAR exceeded my high expectations! This was truly a first class experience from every point.

- The course helped to grow and evolve my thinking skills. And even beyond that I feel that I've grown and evolved during the course. This class taught me where my strengths and weaknesses are with regards to thinking. I learned that I'm not a patient person and in order to be a critical thinker, I need to slow down and not rush to judgment. I learned that to be effective, one needs to have emotional intelligence as well (i.e. self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy).
- The Critical Thinking course is an excellent introduction to aspects of thinking that we engage in naturally and those that we must adopt or examine in order to understand them more directly. It is not a comprehensive investigation into all facets of Critical Thinking but a foundation to higher thinking. The course is an opportunity to get to know multiple concepts, dispositions, approaches, and applications. While much is covered, much still remains. Someone taking this course might see occasions to dig deeper, push further, or run longer with certain ideas but would need to do so on his or her own.
- Critical Thinking class is like a simultaneous obstacle course and marathon for your mind. I say that because I like fitness, so replace the metaphor if you don't. The pace of this class is rather swift, which not only allows to great exposure to many angles of CT, but increases your cognitive agility skill faster than you may be aware you are learning. The obstacle course aspect is when we stay in a project for a duration of time and practice the practical applications of CT in our lives as related to the project's design. Time management skills are highly useful. The UMB newsletter recommended "Kanban," which I didn't implement, but know that it would've been ideal for this class. The classmates are wonderful resources for inspiration coming from all manner of professions and interests. An interesting feature of this class is the CIQ- Critical Inquiry Questionnaire, where each student reflects on open ended questions anonymously, and the answers are posted the following week. It's fascinating and useful to know what your classmates are experiencing- and that sometimes they are experiencing the same thing as you or surprising, revelatory things, as well.
- I joined this course with the expectation of understanding what critical thinking is and have an overview of its theories. During the semester we had activities such as weekly reflexions, micro-journal, a personal project among others. All those tasks gave me the opportunity to apply the principle in my personal and professional live. The bibliography of this course was diverse and broad an overview of what it means to develop critical thinking and how you should do it. I also understood that is a skill that should be keeping working on it the rest of your life and it will never learn. To become a critical thinker, you need to be able to re.evaluated your biases and assumptions because this evaluation will help you have more points of view on any topic or issue you want to address.
- This course explores current understandings of what critical thinking is and what it means to you as a course participants. The application of course concepts during small group sessions is helpful in observing a different perspective of critical thinking and its application. The instructor gave quick feedback on submitted work and outlined course expectations during course sessions. For prospective students I encourage you to remain open to your thinking becoming expanded and flexible as a result of session activities.
- This course provides a strong baseline for the study and practice of critical thinking. You will come out with a better understanding of your thinking and if you put the effort, you will also come out with practice in metacognitive habits that will improve your thinking and ability to empathise with those that you disagree with. The instructor has an easygoing approach to the topics and by example encourages the habits of listening and reflection. I also found him

available and generous with his time. The course certainly delivers on its goals and along the learning journey you will find yourself having fun.