University of Massachusetts at Boston
College of Advancing and Professional Studies
Critical & Creative Thinking Graduate Program

Syllabus

CRCRTH 601 Critical Thinking

Fall 2016 hybrid format (Face-to-face students: register for class #14047; online students register for class #6915)
September 15 – December 15, 2016; Thursdays 7:00-9:45pm
UMass Boston, Wheatley Hall 4ᵗʰ Floor, Room W04-170 or online through web video conferencing

Instructor: Jeremy Szteiter
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Office/phone call hours: contact the instructor for an appointment

Key Reference Links

- Course wiki (starting point for all course material):
  http://crcrth601-szteiter.wikispaces.umb.edu/ (log in with your umb.edu account once the course begins)
- Class Meetings – Web Conferencing using Collaborate in Blackboard (online participants):
  https://umb.umassonline.net/ then Web Conferencing -> Main Conference Room
- Fall 2016 academic calendar for College of Advancing and Professional Studies (notes dates for Add/Drop/Withdraw): https://www.umb.edu/academics/caps/credit/fall/calendar

Course Format

Hybrid format, with weekly meetings and assignments. All students attend all meetings either on campus (face-to-face students) on through web-based video conferencing (online students).

Catalog Description

This course explores issues about the nature and techniques of critical thought, viewed as a way to establish a reliable basis for our claims, beliefs, and attitudes about the world. We explore multiple perspectives, placing established facts, theories, and practices in tension with alternatives to see how things could be otherwise. Views about observation and interpretation, reasoning and inference, valuing and judging, and the production of knowledge in its social context are considered. Special attention is given to translating what is learned into strategies, materials, and interventions for use in students' own educational and professional settings.

Course Overview:

This course on Critical Thinking involves a practical emphasis which helps us to move from the concepts of critical thinking to applications that are meaningful to students in their own situations. In

some cases, references to critical thinking emphasize that something is lacking in thinking. This might be in a specific situation (for example, critical thinking being used or absent when someone makes an argument around some issue) or it might be in more general terms (for example, improving the critical thinking within an organization). Sometimes, the teaching and learning of critical thinking then involves mastery of knowing kinds of logical fallacies and then identifying and avoiding the flaws that lead to them.

Our course takes on a wider perspective of how we can contribute to supporting critical thinking across professional, educational, and personal areas. This means that we are looking to explore the breadth of ways that critical thinking is being understood and then start to define practices, strategies, and behaviors that can help ourselves and others build that support and establish environments where critical thinking is more the norm than the exception. We explore specific aspects of critical thinking such as asking effective questions, examining beliefs, and increasing dispositions that get us to seek out and appreciate alternatives.

Because critical thinking itself does not have a single meaning, and because participants in the course come from a variety of backgrounds, the course requirements often involve making connections between individual concepts and your own situations. Many of the assignments provide a general framework, tool, or methodology and ask that you decide how it fits in with your own experiences and needs. The class work involves reading (from both scholarly and popular sources) and writing that helps you to make sense of the varied (and sometimes conflicting) views of what makes "good thinking". Also, activities introduced during class meetings and others to try on your own offer multiple possibilities for increasing the potential for critical thinking. Additionally, you are asked to continue to observe closely in your own settings and notice where assumptions are being made, how questions are used to uncover details and meaning, and ways that evidence is presented in supporting reasoning.

Preparation Assumed for this Course

This course has no prerequisites and is appropriate for a student who has not previously taken a graduate course in critical thinking. Students should generally expect to spend about 8-10 hours per week on course requirements (including time spent in class meetings).

General Expectations

Students should know their umb.edu email address and password and be prepared to use these to sign in to university-supported systems, including the course wiki. Students are required to check their umb.edu email account for messages once the course begins, as messages from the instructor will be sent there. Students may have their umb.edu account set up to automatically forward messages to a personal email address that they use more regularly, if they prefer, but ongoing communications from the instructor will typically be sent only to the umb.edu address.

Please note that you are required to attend in the format under which you registered (it is not permissible to decide week-to-week if you will come to campus or not if you are attending the face-to-face section of the class).

Students are expected to meet all standards specified in the Student Code of Conduct, available here: http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/community/code

Course Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students will have:

1. Explored current understandings of what critical thinking is and examined a number of aspects of critical thinking such as scrutinizing assumptions, developing inquiry, and evaluating thinking.
2. Identified a number of principles that help you to clarify your own beliefs about what amounts to genuine critical thinking.
3. Experienced and practiced a number of critical thinking skills, strategies, and dispositions in order to make connections between theory and applications to real-life work and personal situations.
4. Established plans for carrying your critical thinking strategies beyond the course into lifelong habits and activities in support of your own development and that of others.

Required Texts and Materials

1. Costa, A. L. (2001). Developing minds. 3rd Edition. Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (ISBN-13: 978-0871203793; ISBN-10: 0871203790). Used copies are often available inexpensively from online booksellers.
2. Microphone + webcam for students participating from a distance (a headset-microphone and USB webcam, or a laptop with built-in mic. and video camera, for example). Online participants should have a reliable Internet connection (wired preferred over wireless).
3. Students attending the meetings face-to-face are encouraged to bring their own laptops (because of the hybrid format, some activities work best when everyone has access to certain online materials during the class meetings).

General Course Logistics and Schedule

Course materials are organized on a week-to-week schedule (Thursday to Thursday). Materials for the week are posted on the course wiki by Thursday evening (when we have our class meetings), and in general, assignments for that week are due the following Thursday by the end of the day. Some other assignments extend beyond a single week. All times referenced in course materials and by the instructor should be regarded as Eastern time zone if not otherwise noted.

Assessment & Requirements

Written assignments and presentations (62% of grade):
- **W1:** Critical Reflections on Readings (weekly submissions; total 20 points)
- **W2:** Group Project (presentation to class + brief reflective writing) (6 points)
- **W3 (a, b, c):** Principles Microjournal (submit 3 times) (3 items, 4 points each)
- **W4 (a, b, c):** 3 Briefings (Media Review, Product Evaluation, Manifesto) (total 12 points)

- **W5:** Personal project (plan for practice, exhibits, principles, and in-class presentation) (total 12 points)

Total possible: 62 points
Certain written items may require revisions based on instructor feedback to be considered complete.

Participation Items (31% of grade):
- **P1:** Prepared class attendance, including completion of readings and contributions to discussions (during class meetings) or through independent activities (weeks with no meeting) (14 points).
- **P2:** Completion of weekly brief "homework" exercises (10 points).
- **P3:** Commentaries/evaluations on personal and group presentations (2 items, 2 points each).
- **P4:** Instructor conference (1 point).
- **P5:** Mid-term critical thinking self-assessment (2 points)
- **OPTIONAL P6:** Permission to share pieces of your work as examples for future generations of the course and preparation for sharing (up to 2 points).

Total possible: 31 points (+ 2 optional for P6)

Quality Contributions Rubric (7% of grade):

Beyond the points achieved for the written assignments and participation, additional points come from the following rubric based on the instructor's own evaluation (total points divided by 2):

2 = did this quite well; often exceeded expectations
1 = usually met the minimum expectation, but with some room for improvement
0 = not a particular strength of mine for this course

Quality Statement	0	1	2
1. On-time submission of assignments: no more than one written assignment missed, no more than two individual participation items missed, and where the combined total days late of all other submissions is <= 10)			
2. Critical Reflections on Readings that show thoughtful reflection and strong attention to the development of your own thinking as it builds over the course of the semester, where you seek to make your own reasoning clear and avoid broad or general statements that don't include supporting explanations.			
3. Initiative taken in keeping up with the course, making up for missed sessions, and seeking out clarification around the course process and expectations in a timely way when you are not clear about something.			
4. Commitment to supporting others in the class; includes contributing to the class as a community of learners and offering substantive peer commentary (informally, or formally through written assignment based on observing class activities or presentations) that stimulates thinking beyond superficial praise or reactions.			
5. Personal Project (written items and portfolio) that is well-structured, organized, and serves as a foundation for practical extensions beyond the course term.			

6. Written work is almost entirely free from mechanical, grammatical, formatting, and spelling errors, uses consistent academic standards, and is presented professionally.		
7. Participation in the course shows a constructive spirit toward helping us understand how to improve the running of a hybrid course, and participation includes some willingness to experiment with, and patience for, new or imperfect technologies as we engage in-person and virtually.		

A = 93+, A- = 88-92, B+ =82-87, B = 76-81, B- =70-75, C+ = 64-69, C = 58-63

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY

All work must be submitted as a digital file in either Microsoft Word or PDF format (no printed pages, please, without prior arrangement). Please see specific instructions on the wiki for online submission of files (and note that work should generally *not* be sent as email attachments).

Late policy: Formally, there are no extensions granted for late work. Instead, please submit work as soon as you can if you cannot submit it on time (and note that this affects final grading as indicated by the rubric above). The exceptions are the submissions of the weekly Critical Reflections on Readings and the monthly submissions of the Microjournal, which will not be accepted late.

Weekly Schedule

Over the term, the course moves across some general themes:
1. Critical Thinking Foundations and Controversies
2. Critical Thinking in a Social Context
3. Supporting, Applying, and Extending Critical Thinking

Every week, a set of activities and assignments is planned around enriching our learning as we attend to the current them. In several weeks, we meet at a class to share these activities. During a few weeks, we don't meet at all. New activities and assignments are released on the wiki, but they are completed individually and independently. Please note the following schedule:

- Meetings on Thursdays at 7:00pm ET:
    - September 15, 22, 29; October 6, 20, 27; November 3, 10, 17; December 1, 15
- No Meetings:
    - October 13, November 24, and December 8

Week	Date	Topics or Activities
Theme: Critical Thinking Foundations and Controversies		
1	**September 15** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Course Overview and Introductions; Thinking About Thinking; What is Critical Thinking? Where is Critical Thinking?
2	**September 22** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Creating Cultures of Thinking; Historical Perspectives and Controversies
3	**September 29** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	The Language of Thinking; Mental Management; Thinking and Writing

4	**October 6** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Thinking as Dispositions, Habits of Mind, Intelligences
Theme: Critical Thinking in a Social Context		
5	**October 13** *NO MEETING*	Cultural Perspectives on Thinking; Field-Specific Perspectives
6	**October 20** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Developing Inquiry; Problem-Based Learning
7	**October 27** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Belief and Doubt; Paradigm Shifts; Dogmatic Thinking; Skepticism; Changing a Mind
8	**November 3** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Strong-Sense and Higher-Order Thinking; Dialectical and Dialogical Thinking;
Theme: Supporting, Applying, and Extending Critical Thinking		
9	**November 10** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Empathy, Emotion, and Reason
10	**November 17** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Facilitating and Fostering Thinking; Establishing Thinking Environments; Transfer; Direct and Indirect Approaches
11	**November 24** *NO MEETING*	Critical Thinking and Creative Thinking; Thinking Through Stories and the Arts
12	**December 1** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Assessing Critical Thinking; Authentic Assessment
13	**December 8** *NO MEETING*	Critical Thinking as Lifelong Endeavor; The Thinking Organization/School/Community
Theme: Course Reflections and Evaluation		
14	**December 15** Meeting: 7:00-9:45pm ET	Course Evaluations; Extensions and Applications for Ongoing Practice

Course Evaluation

At the end of the course, you will be asked to complete an anonymous, online course evaluation (http://bit.ly/CCTEval) as required by the Critical and Creative Thinking program and the College of Advancing and Professional Studies. No personally identifiable information is captured from this evaluation; at the same time, the comments made benefit the program as a whole and wider university in continuing to develop the course, and so evaluation responses may be made viewable to faculty, administrators, and future prospective students so that all may learn from the experiences of past students. No responses will be released to instructors until final course grades have been posted.

Reflective Practice Portfolio

This only applies to students in the Critical and Creative Thinking MA Program: selections from your Critical Reflections on Readings, or the Manifesto assignment, are appropriate for inclusion in the program's required Reflective Practice Portfolio. Other items may also be acceptable for inclusion.

Accommodation Statement

Sections 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 offer guidelines for curriculum modifications and adaptations for students with documented disabilities. If applicable, students may obtain adaptation recommendations from the Ross Center (617-287-7430). The student must present these recommendations to the professor by the end of the Drop/Add period if possible.

Instructor Background and Experience

Jeremy Szteiter is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University (Cognitive Science) and University of Massachusetts Boston (Critical and Creative Thinking) and now serves as the Assistant Director of the graduate program in Critical and Creative Thinking at UMass Boston. His work has centered on program and organizational development, particularly in adult education in community-based human services and has involved managing, developing, and teaching programs to lifelong learners, with an emphasis on a learning process that involves the teaching of others what has been learned and supporting the growth of individuals to become nonformal teachers of what they know. Jeremy's work draws upon principles and practices of social change pedagogy, technology-enhanced collaboration, instructional design, and participatory theater.

Extended Bibliography

Some readings will be provided and are drawn from certain selections in the following list.

- Barrett, T., & Moore, S. (2011). *New approaches to problem-based learning: Revitalising your practice in higher education*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Brockman, J. (2009). *What have you changed your mind about?: Today's leading minds rethink everything*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Brookfield, S. (2012). *Teaching for critical thinking: Tools and techniques to help students question their assumptions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S., & Ebooks Corporation. (2013). *Powerful techniques for teaching adults*. (Ebook Library.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S. (1987). *Developing critical thinkers: Challenging adults to explore alternative ways of thinking and acting*. San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass.
- Browne, M. N., & Keeley, S. M. (1986). *Asking the right questions: A guide to critical thinking*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.
- Costa, A. L. (1991). *Developing minds*. Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
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- Davies, M., & In Barnett, R. (2015). *The Palgrave handbook of critical thinking in higher education*.
- Elbow, P. (1998). *Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process*. New York: Oxford University Press.
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- hooks, bell. (2010). *Teaching critical thinking: Practical wisdom*. New York: Routledge.
- Jensen, R. (2013). *Arguing for our lives: A user's guide to constructive dialog*.

- Kida, T. E. (2006). *Don't believe everything you think: The 6 basic mistakes we make in thinking*. Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books.
- Linker, M. (2015). *Intellectual empathy: Critical thinking for social justice*.
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2012). *Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your learning and your life*. Boston: Pearson.
- Ritchhart, R. (2015). *Creating cultures of thinking: The 8 forces we must master to truly transform our schools*.
- Ritchhart, R., Church, M., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Teays, W. (1996). *Second thoughts: Critical thinking from a multicultural perspective*. Mountain View, Calif: Mayfield Pub. Co.
- Thayer-Bacon, B. J. (2000). *Transforming critical thinking: Thinking constructively*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Tishman, S., Perkins, D. N., & Jay, E. (1995). *The thinking classroom: Learning and teaching in a culture of thinking*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Walters, K. S. (1994). *Re-thinking reason: New perspectives in critical thinking*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Syllabus Version

September 2016; This syllabus is subject to change and updated versions may be distributed at the beginning of the course term if adjustments become necessary, but the types of graded requirements noted above will be maintained once the course begins.