

University of Cyprus
Department of English Studies

ENG 279: Introduction to Critical Thinking

Instructor: Evi Haggipavlu (PhD)

e-mail: haggipavlu.evi@ucy.ac.cy

ECTS: 5

Office Hours: M 12-4

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims at helping students acquire the analytic, critical and reflective skills necessary for their development as discriminating readers and effective writers. Through the careful analysis of a wide range of texts (journalistic, scientific, philosophical, literary) and cultural artifacts (photographs, videos, films, artworks) the students will learn the basics of inductive and deductive reasoning and will develop the ability to select and evaluate information, analyze genre, style and tone, interpret and engage with ideas, draw informed conclusions and formulate persuasive arguments.

BIBLIOGRAPHY Selections were made from the following texts:

Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Descartes, Renee. *Selected Philosophical Writings*. Trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch. Cambridge: C.U.P., 1988.

During, Simon (ed.). *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*. Trans., Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1977

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, An Introduction: Volume I*. Trans., Robert Hurley, New York: Vintage Books, 1978

Plato. *Republic*. Trans., G.M.A. Grube. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992.

Singer, Peter (ed.). *A Companion to Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993.

Sample, Ruth J., Mills, Charles W. and Sterba, P., James (eds). *Philosophy: The Big Questions*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004

Sterba, P. James (ed). *Ethics: The Big Questions*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998.

FILMOGRAPHY

Cowperthwaite, Gabriela and Despres Eli B. *Blackfish*, (USA, 2013)

Godard, Jean-Luc. *Alphaville*, (France, 1965).
Guggenheim, Davis. *An Inconvenient Truth*, (USA, 2006).
Stevens, Fisher. *Before the Flood*, (USA, 2016).

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Class Preparation and Participation

I expect everyone to come to class fully prepared to discuss the material. Preparation includes reading the material, taking detailed notes, and noting down questions. As you are reading each of the assignments try to think what the main argument of the reading is and how the author arrives at such a conclusion. Engage with the author in such a way that as you read, try, to also respond in your mind, or by taking notes, to what she or he says. Excellent participation involves regular, thoughtful contributions to discussions: expressing your understanding of the material, and developing and thinking critically about your own positions. Some of the material that we will read makes for a lively class discussion; while disagreement is expected disrespect will not be tolerated.

Attendance

Missing any class, coming in late to class, or leaving early will all detract from the final grade; if you do miss a class, you are still completely responsible for knowing what was covered in class that day and for finding out if there were any assignments given. Please call another student in the class to find out what you missed. **Note: *The use of cell phones is strictly prohibited during class time.*** Your phones must be switched off while you are in class unless there is an extremely serious reason for you to keep them on.

Presentations/In-Class Assignments/Reflection Papers

Further information and specific instructions will be given to you during the semester

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. It involves stealing other people's ideas and presenting them as your own. Some examples of plagiarism are: copying another's work, word for word, and presenting it as your own; "borrowing," without properly acknowledging the source, paragraphs, sentences, ideas, or even key concepts; and paraphrasing another's work and claiming it as your own. Additional information about plagiarism and citation rules will be provided during the semester. Exhibiting a lack of academic integrity in any of its varied forms will result in a failing grade.

Grading

Attendance/Participation/Preparation 10%
Presentations/In-Class Assignments/Reflection Papers 15%
Midterm Exam (in-class) 25%
Final Exam (in-class) 50%

SCHEDULE

Thinking Critically About Criticism...A Question of Logic

Week 1: Sept. 3-6: Introduction: Learning to Think in Terms of Questions.

Week 2: Sept. 10-13: Thinking Critically about Criticism: Negative and Positive Criticism; Some Basic Rules of Logic; Inductive and Deductive Arguments; Common Logical Fallacies and Inconsistencies; and Untested Presuppositions.

Thinking Critically about Knowledge...A Question of Truth

Week 3: Sept.17-20: Plato on the Theory of Forms, the Allegory of the Cave and the Role of Art and the Artist in the Republic

Reading:

- *Republic*, Bk VI (P507b, p.180) - Bk VII (P519b, p. 191); Bk II (P376d p.52) - Bk III (P412, p.88); Bk X (P595a, p.265) – (P608b, p.279).

View:

- Jean Luc Godard's *Alphaville*, (1965)

Week 4: Sept. 24-27: Renee Descartes' Radical Skepticism.

Reading:

- Meditations 1, 2, 3 and 6 from *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings*

Week 5: Oct. 4: David Hume's Radical Empiricism.

Reading:

- from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in Sample et al. (eds.) p. 34-64

Week 6: Oct. 8-11: Foucault on Truth as an Effect of Power.

*******In-Class Midterm Examination Thursday Oct. 11*******

Thinking Critically about Ecology: Humans, Animals and the Environment...A Question of Ethics

Week 7: Oct. 15-18: Animals and the Self/other Logic of Exclusion.

Reading:

- Peter Singer, "All Animals are Equal" in Sterba (ed.), *Ethics: The Big Questions*, p. 377-388

View:

- Gabriela Cowperthwaite and Eli B. Despres Eli. *Blackfish* (USA, 2013)

Week 8: Oct.22-25: The Environment

Reading:

- Robert Elliot, “Environmental Ethics” in Singer (ed.), *A Companion to Ethics*, p. 284-293

View:

- Davis Guggenheim. *An Inconvenient Truth* (USA, 2006).
- James Balog’s TED talk “Time-lapse Proof of Extreme Ice Loss”
- Fisher Stevens. *Before the Flood* (USA, 2016).

Week 9: Oct. 29-Nov. 1st: Eco-Politics

Reading:

- Karen J Warren, “The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism” in Sterba (ed.), *Ethics: The Big Questions*, p. 413-421

Thinking Critically About Reproductive Rights...A Question of Politics

Week 10: Nov. 5-8: The Abortion Debate

Reading:

- Mary Ann Warren, “Abortion” in Singer (ed.), *A Companion to Ethics*, p. 303-315

Week 11: Nov. 12-15: Reproductive Rights

Reading:

- Susan Bordo, “Are Mothers Persons? Reproductive Rights and the Politics of Subject-ivity” in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, p. 71-97

Thinking Critically About Consumerism...A Question of Alienation

Week 12: Nov. 19-22: Advertising

Reading:

- Raymond Williams’ “Advertising: The Magic System” in During (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader*, p. 320-336

Week 13: Nov. 26-29: Gamified Worlds

Reading:

- Links to selected short newspaper and magazine articles will be given to you separately