**CRITICAL THINKING**

**Philosophy 111-900, Spring 2016, 7B (03/14/16-04/23/16)**

**Distance Education (Online)**

**Community College *of* Philadelphia**

**Dr. Alessandra Stradella**

This syllabus serves as an introduction and a guide to the course. As needed, some non-essential sections may be modified during the term. Contact the instructor if you are unclear about any part of it.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**: From the College Catalog: “Principles of critical thinking and problem solving, deductive and inductive logic and fallacies. Includes the analysis of formal and informal arguments.” Critical Thinking is a course designed to help students develop their skills in the analysis and use of logical arguments and enable them to master both formal and informal argument analysis. You will learn several historical and contemporary critical thinking strategies and logical systems. Upon successfully completing this course you will have enhanced your fundamental reasoning skills, with an emphasis on the areas of logical analysis and argumentation. This will contribute to your improved ability to read, write, and think systematically and rigorously about a wide range of topics.

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Student Learning Outcomes state that successful completion of the course enables you to:

* Identify premises and conclusions using Aristotelian and Modern logic.
* Analyze the relationships among premises and conclusions.
* Reconstruct an argument eliminating irrelevant statements and arranging statements into premises and conclusions.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK and TECHNOLOGY:**

The following textbook is a key component of the course. It contains most of the lessons as well as practice problems that will help you master the material. It is required. The very good news is that the book is available online:

<http://s3.amazonaws.com/engrade-myfiles/4008228113384505/Students_Guide_to_Critical_Thinking.pdf>

If you prefer a hard copy, the book is available for purchase online from various booksellers or directly from the publisher:

Gregory Bassham, William Irwin, Henry Nardone, James M. Wallace, *Critical Thinking: A Student’s Introduction*, 4th Edition, McGraw Hill, 2011, ISBN 13: 978-0073407432

This course is being offered entirely online. Computer literacy is assumed. You are not required to appear in person for any meetings or exams, and you are not required to be online at particular times. However, there are weekly deadlines to be met and you will need access every week to a computer with some minimal system requirements, including internet access and a current internet browser. If you are new to online courses at CCP, become familiar with how the Canvas system works and where to go if you need help. Visit the College’s Distance Education and Canvas sites for details: <http://www.ccp.edu/site/de> and <http://ccp.instructure.com>

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**Activities:**

As you might expect, the value you gain from the course depends directly on the time and effort you put in. This is a **challenging** course. It takes considerable time and effort each week to succeed. The course requires that you spend a significant amount of time reading and studying the assigned lessons and topics. It is also essential that you log in regularly to read all relevant updates, comments, and questions from the instructor and your classmates. You will get support and assistance along the way, but plan ahead and be prepared to commit. If you go more than one week without any activity in the course, you may automatically fail the course for lack of participation.

Each weekly session (or module) will have a similar structure, containing a:

* Description of the weekly topic.
* Assignment Area (see below)
* Discussion Area (see below)
* Practice Quiz (see below)
* Quiz (see below)
* General Discussion (see below)

**Description:** Here you will be notified of your weekly reading and practice exercises. You may be asked to solve a significant number of exercises and yet submit only a portion of it (as indicated in the designated Assignment Area), depending on the weekly topic.

**Assignment Area:** Each week, you will be asked to submit a number of selected exercises from the practice problems (in the textbook) and/or answers to questions the instructor may raise. Exercises will have varying degree of difficulty. Hence, they will be graded accordingly. It is important that you submit your work, even if you are unsure of its correctness. Critical thinking does not happen by passive absorption of the material, but by active engagement with it. And it is only by doing the exercises that you may get and improve your skill. Also, your submission is meant to become the starting point of our weekly discussion, as it would be in a classroom. Submission of assignments is **required** and will account for 10% of your overall course grade.

**Discussion Area:** The course requires that you spend a significant amount of time reading and studying the assigned lessons and topics. It is also essential that you log in regularly to read all relevant updates, comments, and questions from the instructor and your classmates. In addition to the **General Discussion area** available for questions and comments about the overall course content and structure, each unit of focused study has a dedicated **discussion area** where you can and are expected to ask questions about the lesson, post your attempts at solving the practice problems, and participate in a broader philosophical discussion concerning the topic. These discussion areas are an important part of the course. They are used in various ways, but mostly they are used to practice and review the lessons covered in the assigned reading each week. The instructor regularly posts supplementary information on a topic or may suggest some extra content and activities to help you improve your understanding and skill. Participation in each week’s discussion is **required** and will account for 20% of your overall course grade. No particular number of posts is required each week, but you should expect to contribute to the discussion at least **twice** during the week to earn full credit.\*

\*A Note on the Quality of your Participation: The frequency of your posting ceases to be relevant if not supported by the quality of your participation. For example, if you just post ‘I agree with \_’, this post will get no points. Your post has to show that have been putting your best efforts to understand and solve the issue at hand.

**Quizzes and Practice Quizzes:** There is no Mid-Term or Final Exam in this course. Instead, every week includes a quiz covering the material assigned that week. Completion of each weekly quiz is **required**. Quizzes account for 70% of your overall course grade. Take care to verify that you are in a secure location with a stable internet connection before sitting down to take a quiz. They cannot be restarted if they are stopped or interrupted. The types of problems on each quiz vary. The number of questions on each quiz may vary also, depending on the types of questions.

The quiz problems will always match very closely the practice exercises and the practice quiz introduced during the week. The practice quiz will give you a sense of your mastery of the material for the weekly quiz. It will have a similar number and kinds of questions as the quiz. Completion of the practice quiz is **optional** and will not be graded. It is available for you to get extra practice and raise questions before taking the quiz (and it will be available until the day before the quiz is due, hence until Saturday, 11PM). Each quiz has a time limit, which may vary. I will set a time for completion (typically 60 minutes) and a deadline for submission (Sunday, 11PM). Failure to post by that time will result in you losing full credit for the quiz. It is therefore best to post early. There are **NO** exceptions.

**General Discussion Area:** As stated above, this area is available for questions and comments about the overall course content and structure. Participation in this forum is **optional**.

**Grading and Standards:**
The following percentage scale is used to determine your quiz grades, and your overall course grade:

0 – 12 = F   13 – 32 = D 33 – 67 = C    68 – 87 = B   88 – 100 = A

Course grades reflect the following guidelines:

**A** is indicative of excellent work. It requires a demonstrated mastery of the material. You must understand and apply the relevant concepts, theories, and analytical skills with a high level of precision.

**B** indicates a strong competency and overall a job well done. However, there are some subtle elements that are missed or not fully developed in your work.

**C** corresponds with a satisfactory, but basic level of demonstrated understanding and analytic ability. There is evidence of some valuable thinking strategies and at least a general understanding of the relevant concepts. Your work is acceptable, but not good or great.

**D** indicates a level of work that is quite minimal. The quality is lacking in all respects. There is only a bare understanding of the issues and usually not more than a superficial attempt at rigorous intellectual activity.

**F** is reserved for situations where no work at all is done or the work is significantly below even a minimal measure of quality. Comprehension and skill application are entirely, or almost entirely, absent.

**DISABILITIES:** If you have a documented disability or other need requiring special accommodations for any courseassignment or activity you should contact the Center on Disability at (215) 751-­8050 and inform theinstructor as soon as reasonably possible. This information is kept strictly confidential.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** All forms of academic dishonesty, namely, cheating on exams, submitting plagiarized work from another person’s book or website, or engaging in any kind of deception will be dealt with in a strict manner (minimally failing the course). Even one violation of academic integrity results in your automatic failure of the course. There are no exceptions. Take this policy very seriously. Ignorance and carelessness are not acceptable excuses. If you are unsure about what is or is not appropriate, please contact the instructor without delay. From the Student Handbook:

**Plagiarism**: “Any written assignment presented by a student in fulfillment of course requirements must reflect his/her won work unless credit is properly given to others. Failure to do so is a form of stealing known as plagiarism, the act of appropriating all or part of a literary composition of another person and passing it off as one’s own. Anyone who assists another in such academic dishonesty is equally responsible. The act of plagiarism will open a student to disciplinary action.”

**Electronic cheating:** “Any student who uses an electronic medium to violate authorial integrity, including plagiarism, invasion of privacy, unauthorized access, and copyright violation, will be open to disciplinary action.”

**Contact:**

The instructor is available to address questions and concerns, but before asking a question it is wise to read the syllabus carefully and completely. Many common questions are answered here. Also, keep up to date by reading the instructor’s posts in the General Discussion area of the course site as well. Questions are often covered there too. If you are still unsure, please ask. Most student questions or concerns are handled within the Discussion areas of the current week. This will be like raising your hand and asking a question in class. Also, this allows students with similar concerns to benefit from the instructor’s answers.

You should contact the instructor through Canvas email if the matter you wish to discuss is private, personal, or confidential. Public posts or private mail messages for the instructor will normally receive responses within 48 hours or less.

All communication with the instructor should be through Canvas. However, if you cannot log into Canvas and need to contact the instructor you may use College email: astradella@ccp.edu. This method of communication should **only** be used if you are unable to access Canvas.