THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Metropolitan School of Professional Studies

MID 100 – Critical Thinking
Spring 2017
3 credit hours

Instructor:  Erikk Geannikis (M.A., Ph.D. candidate, School of Philosophy)
904-383-7455 (cell)
36geannikis@cua.edu

Digital Office Hours, available for audio/video conference on Google Hangouts (subject to change):
- Mondays 3:00 – 5:00pm & Wednesdays, 7:30 – 9:30pm
- and by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

From Cardinal Station,
Introduction to techniques of sound reasoning in written and verbal communication, including formulation and testing of arguments, means of identifying and testing fallacious reasoning, and the art of persuasion.

In my own words,

This course offers skills and strategies for how to evaluate written or spoken words in the world—particularly words where some claims to truth are being made, and where reasoning is used to arrive at these claims. (That’s most instances of words in the world). In particular, because this course offers strategies for evaluating thought, it’s a class on how to know your own mind and how it works. This goal is really its own benefit, as it is a good thing to understand yourself— but other incentives toward knowing your own mind is that you’ll be better able to thoughtfully and confidently engage with any sort of other party (a writer, media personality, business, politician, scientist, or a friend, instructor, co-worker, boss) who claims to be presenting the truth to you in some form.

Without critical thinking skills, we are left powerless against anyone telling us that something is true—without critical thinking, we’d have no choice but to simply accept their claims as true. But truth isn’t arrived at magically, it’s brought about by some process of reasoning or method of determining what’s true. If the party you’re evaluating is being authentic and sincere in their efforts to arrive at the truth, their thought process likely involved the activity of reasoning coherently—perhaps even reasoning logically. Other times, it may involve using emotional intuition or appealing to other powers of persuasion that aren’t necessarily logical, or coherent. Sometimes it will come from a specialized or technical method of thinking—such as quantitative analysis, or scientific experimentation. But, no matter what means by which this other party arrived at what they claim to be true, it is up to us to use critical thinking to evaluate these claims on their merits for ourselves.

There are agents who, whether accidentally or deliberately, would like us to believe in the truth of untruths (either falsehoods, or claims whose truth-value is undetermined). When some party gets us to believe that some untruth is true, we’ve been fooled. This is a course designed to arm you against being fooled.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS
1. Learning modules (video “lectures”)
2. Interaction w/ students through online discussion modes (forums, video conference, audio)

COURSE GOALS
The purposes or goals of this course are:
1. To empower students to engage in the skills associated with critical thinking
2. To foster interest in critical thinking as an activity with broad applicability in your education, career & life.
COURSE TEXTBOOKS

   Authors: Nancy Cavender and Howard Kahane
   Publisher: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning
   Amazon link: [http://amzn.com/1133942288](http://amzn.com/1133942288)

2. *Additional material*, to be distributed on Blackboard as needed. I'll be distributing select excerpts from the following texts—you don’t need to acquire them, but here’s their bibliographic info, for reference.
      Author: David Kelley.
      Publisher: W.W. Norton, and co.
      Author: Peg Tittle
      Publisher: Routledge

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I. **Assignments** (45%)
   a. Selected exercise sets (3 total; 5% each; 15%)
   b. Media analysis “case studies” (4 total, 5% each; 20%)
   c. Short reading-response/reaction assignments (10%)

II. **Engagement** (35%)
    Participation in online discussion activity (weekly prompts, mixed media responses, starting on Sat. 1/21) – (20%)
    Participation in web conference discussions – (10%)

III. **Final Project** (20%)
    Critical analysis, audio/video presentation, due by Sat. 5/6.

Detailed assignment information, including instructions/guidelines and assessment rubrics, will be published on Blackboard and made available to you as they are assigned throughout the course.
**GRADING (general)**

Your work will generally be evaluated using this CUA/Metro School grading scale, and my general rubric for performance. Every grade that you'll receive from me will be a letter grade. See separate rubrics, when applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>Excellent Work shows fantastic understanding of the text; proficiency with ideas; uses language artfully and correctly.</td>
<td>93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A-</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>90-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B+</strong></td>
<td>Very Good Work shows good understanding of the text, goes beyond basic familiarity with ideas; uses language correctly; contains minimal errors in usage or format.</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>Good Work shows good understanding of the text, but shows little more than basic familiarity with ideas; uses language correctly; contains few errors in usage or format.</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B-</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>80-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C+</strong></td>
<td>Above satisfactory Work shows moderate understanding of some parts of the text; shows basic familiarity with ideas; contains several errors in language use or paper format.</td>
<td>77-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>Satisfactory Work displays understanding of some parts of the text but contains substantial errors; shows some familiarity with ideas; contains several errors in language use.</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C-</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
<td>Lowest Passing Work shows little understanding of the text; demonstrates an unfamiliarity with several key ideas; contains many errors in language use or formatting.</td>
<td>60-69</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>Failing The student failed to demonstrate an adequate understanding of course concepts.</td>
<td>0-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong>*</td>
<td>Failure The student ceased to participate in the course.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>W</strong></td>
<td>Withdrawal The student withdrew from the course.</td>
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</table>

**ONLINE RESOURCES**

- **Blackboard** ([http://blackboard.cua.edu](http://blackboard.cua.edu)) is where you'll find all vital course documents, including all handouts, rubrics, paper assignments, and an electronic copy of the syllabus.
  - Panopto (link on Blackboard, “Links to Supplementary Course Material”)
  - YouTube (link on Blackboard, “Links to Supplementary Course Material”)
  - Google Hangouts (link on Blackboard, “Links to Supplementary Course Material”)

- **Technical Assistance:**
  - with Blackboard: [http://instructionallearning.cua.edu/bb/student/index.cfm](http://instructionallearning.cua.edu/bb/student/index.cfm)
  - with Panopto: [http://instructionallearning.cua.edu/panopto/usage/students/downloading-and-recording.cfm](http://instructionallearning.cua.edu/panopto/usage/students/downloading-and-recording.cfm)

- **Cardinal Mail:** You must please check your CUA e-mail account regularly. Once a day at least. This is the primary way in which I will communicate any information with the class in between class meetings.

- My e-mail address is **36geannikis@cua.edu**.
CAMPUS RESOURCES

The university’s primary academic support resources are located on the 2nd floor of the Pryzbyla Center. These affiliated offices and services include:

Kenneth Killiany is MSPS’s internal writing tutor who provides individualized writing support. He can be reached at killiany@cua.edu. Please put “Metro SPS Writing Help” in the subject line.

The Center for Academic Success provides academic support services for all students through a broad base of programs and services, including Tutoring Services, Workshops, Academic Coaching, Individual Skills Meetings, Peer Mentoring, and more.

Phone: (202) 319-5655  Email: cua-academicsuccess@cua.edu  Web: success.cua.edu

The Writing Center provides free, one-on-one consultations with trained graduate instructors for writing projects across all disciplines at any stage of the process, from brainstorming to revising. Appointments in the main location, Mullen 219, can be scheduled in advance online (http://english.cua.edu/wc/). Drop-in appointments are also welcome based on availability (see website for days and hours).

Phone: (202) 319-4286  Email: cua-writingcenter@cua.edu  Web: english.cua.edu/wc/

The Math Center is staffed with Math Faculty and Tutors who are trained to assist students struggling in areas ranging from the basics to complex problems in calculus and statistics. Any student who feels he or she may need assistance in this or any other math class is welcome to visit the Math Center in Pryz 202 Monday through Thursday between the hours of 4:00 and 10:00pm. No appointment is necessary and services are absolutely free.

Phone: (202) 319-5655  Email: cua-academicsuccess@cua.edu

Disability Support Services provides programs and services designed to support and encourage the integration of students with disabilities into the mainstream of the university community.

Phone: (202) 319-5211  Email: cua-disabilityservices@cua.edu  Web: dss.cua.edu

The Counseling Center provides free individual and group counseling services, psychiatric consultation, alternative testing, and emergency services to CUA students. In addition, we provide consultation services and outreach programs to the CUA community. Appointments can be scheduled in person in 127 O’Boyle Hall, or by phone.

Phone: (202) 319-5765. Web: counseling.cua.edu

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

By and large, all assignments in MID 100 are asking for your own original thoughts and/or analysis, and any reproduction of other material in lieu of this will be considered plagiarism. In some specific cases you may be assigned to report on material contained in published sources, but this will be made explicit to you. In general, do not lift other pre-existing material and pass it off as your own, at any time, or for any reason.

Academic honesty is expected of all CUA students. Faculty are required to initiate the imposition of sanctions when they find violations of academic honesty, such as plagiarism, improper use of one’s own work, cheating, and fabrication. For undergraduate students the presumed sanction for academic dishonesty will be failure for the course. Circumstances may warrant a more serious sanction, such as suspension or expulsion. In exceptional cases, mitigating circumstances may warrant a lesser sanction than the presumed sanction. For the complete texts of the University policy and procedures regarding Student Academic Dishonesty, including requirements for appeals, see integrity.cua.edu.
## COURSE SCHEDULE (as of 1/18/17; subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Reading from <em>Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric</em> (our textbook)</th>
<th>Supplementary Reading (available as .pdf on Blackboard)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction, What is critical thinking? Classification</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kelley ch. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kelley ch. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Intro to arguments</td>
<td>Ch. 1, sec. 1-7 (pp. 1-17)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Induction vs. Deduction, Deductive validity, Intro to syllogisms</td>
<td>Ch. 2, sec. 1-3 (pp. 33-38)</td>
<td>Kelley ch. 4, sec. 4 (pp. 82-86)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Syllogisms, Deductive Logic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Inductive arguments, Inductive generalizations</td>
<td>Ch. 2, sec. 4-8 (pp. 38-47)</td>
<td>Kelley ch. 12, sec. 1-2 (pp. 417-425)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Fallacies pt. 1</td>
<td>Ch. 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fallacies pt. 2</td>
<td>Ch. 4 selections from ch. 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Impediments to Reason, Irrationality, Intro to rhetoric</td>
<td>Selections from ch. 6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Evaluating truth, Evaluating sources</td>
<td>Selections from ch. 8</td>
<td>Tittle ch. 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Advertising principles</td>
<td>Ch. 10</td>
<td>Critical Theory essay &amp; Advertising essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4/8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Critical theory &amp; culture</td>
<td>Selections from Ch. 7</td>
<td>Critical Theory essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>The media</td>
<td>Selections from ch. 11</td>
<td>McLuhan essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>News &amp; “Fake news”</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>More on news &amp; the media, Political power</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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