

Skyline College

Official Course Outline

Date: December 2008

1. TITLE:

English 165--Critical Thinking and Advanced Composition

3.0 units; 3 lecture hours per week.

Pre-requisite: ENGL 100 or 105, or equivalent, with a grade of C or better

2. COURSE CLASSIFICATION:

Credit course applicable to the Associate Degree

3. COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:

Catalog Description:

Through investigative learning in conjunction with nonfiction prose, students will explore multiple points of view of controversial issues, using critical thinking, reading, and writing skills to discuss and manipulate ideas in a progression of argumentative essays more advanced than English 100.

Schedule of Classes Description:

In conjunction with nonfiction prose and a discussion of important ideas, students will use critical thinking, reading, and writing skills to develop argumentative essays. *Transfer credit: UC; CSU (A3)*

4. COURSE JUSTIFICATION:

Applicable to the Associate's degree in three areas: 1) Specific Area/ English; 2) General Education/Humanities; 3) General Education and Rationality. Transferable to CSU in General Education Area A3. Transferable to UC and IGETC Area 1B.

5. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLO'S):

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Overall essay unity/thesis: Write coherent, well organized, analytical essays appropriate to the second semester transfer level based on the study of various advanced argumentation forms. Essays should employ advanced critical thinking strategies as well as conventions of scholarly discourse.
- Critical reading/writing/thinking: Analyze, interpret, evaluate, and discern the arguments and possible fallacies in non-fiction works and in their research materials.
- Critical reading/writing/thinking: Utilize critical thinking and advanced research skills to illuminate various political, social and/or philosophical ideas.
- Metacognition: Demonstrate critical awareness of their abilities as accomplished writers, critical thinkers and scholars engaged in academic discourse in cross-disciplinary contexts.

6. SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:

During the course, students will be asked to:

A. Apply critical reading

skills to the analysis of college-level, non-fiction texts from diverse cultural sources and perspectives:

1. Analyze, interpret, and evaluate a range of college level texts of which two must be book length. At least one of the two books must be non-fiction at the college freshman level or above.
2. Differentiate fact from opinion in critical and scholarly works.
3. Detect prejudice and recognize the tone used by an author.
4. Use deductive and inductive reasoning.
5. Distinguish between and use both denotative and connotative aspects of language.
6. Use sound inferences from data given in a variety of forms.
7. Identify some common formal and informal fallacies of language and thought.
8. Identify and analyze structure of arguments and supporting evidence.
9. Identify assumptions and their effect on shaping interpretations.

B. Apply critical writing skills to the written analysis of college-level texts from diverse cultural sources and perspectives:

1. Create text-based essays, 20 – 30% of which should be in-class essays, such as midterm and final exams. Essays should employ writing strategies that emphasize conventions of argumentation but may include other writing tasks such as causal analysis, advocacy of idea, persuasion, evaluation, interpretation, comparison/contrast, and definition. Students will write a progression of compositions beyond the English 100 level in essays of at least 4 to 5 pages in length, which cumulatively add up to 8,000-10,000 words (32 – 40 pages).
2. In their essays, in and out of class, students will be expected to:
 - a) use the various stages of the writing process to develop interpretations, analyses, and evaluations of the texts read;
 - b) establish and state clearly a unifying claim or thesis;
 - c) construct sound arguments in support of claims;
 - d) organize essays which support and develop ideas;
 - e) avoid logical fallacies in the presentation of arguments;

- f) select relevant examples, details, and other evidence from the texts read to support claims;
 - g) anticipate and refute possible objections to claims and arguments;
 - h) continue to develop greater sophistication in using precise diction, writing varied and complex sentences, organizing coherent paragraphs, and writing for a specific audience.
 - i) integrate quotes into their essays and cite properly.
3. Conduct research which illuminates a given text and which uses effectively quotations, paraphrase and appropriate documentation.
 - a) Rephrase written arguments accurately, producing a faithful distillation of the central meaning of a given text.
 - b) Practice academic integrity and avoid plagiarism.
 4. Use self-evaluation exercises to increase awareness of one's own thinking and learning processes.

C. Apply general critical thinking skills to analytical discourse:

1. Identify and evaluate the unstated premises and hidden assumptions in public discourse including social, historical, cultural, psychological, and/or gender-based contexts from which they arise.
2. Identify and evaluate the pattern of reasoning present in argument and related critical evaluation, including both induction and deduction.
3. Distinguish between fact, inference, and judgment, recognizing that different reasonable inferences and judgments can be derived from the same facts present in critical commentary and public discourse.
4. Recognize intentions, biases, assumptions, inferences, judgments, and fallacies present in a given argument.

7. COURSE CONTENT

Course content may include:

A. Critical reading/thinking strategies.

1. Analytical discussion of readings
2. Study of analytical and argumentative modes
3. Readings which reflect cultural, gender, and ideological diversities.
4. Distinguish between fact vs. opinion and varying assumptions presented.
5. Identification of main idea, author's voice, point of view and veracity of examples.
6. Identification of common fallacies.
7. Small group discussion and group projects in order to enhance a more comprehensive, critical examination of a given issue.

- B. Writing strategies through the practice of written compositions
 1. Freewriting, outlining, idea development exercises
 2. Instruction in sentence correctness and development
 3. Instruction in organizational formats and strategies.
 4. Use of analytical and argumentative modes to examine an issue. This includes effective use of examples, claims, and counterargument.
 5. Critical examination of topics such as government, freedom, justice, equality, wealth, the mind, nature, culture, faith, myths, education, work, the immigrant experience, cultural identity, race, class, and gender.
 6. Use of in class essays, exams, reaction papers, journals.
- C. Editing and revision techniques and practices
 1. Peer editing of written work
 2. Self-evaluation of written work
 3. Rewriting, polishing to final draft.
- D. Research Methods
 1. Library research and evaluation
 2. Internet research and evaluation
 3. Documentation styles

8. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

A variety of methods will be employed, including but not limited to

- A. lecture, demonstration/modeling, discussion, oral presentations, research projects, small group work, computer work, in-class writings, exams, conferences, technology-mediated instruction.
- B. Create substantial, critical, argumentation essays at least 4-5 pages in length which cumulatively add up to 8,000 – 10,000 words (32 – 40 pages); substantial reading from primary and secondary sources
- C. Assign other writings including, but not limited to, drafts, reaction papers, journals, study questions.
- D. Assignments are non-fiction, analytical and/or argumentative, text-based and reflect contemporary/philosophical concerns.

9. ASSIGNMENTS:

Essays-- Essays are written in response to the class readings. Clear and detailed writing prompts should be given with every essay assignment.

Examples of possible essay assignments include:

- A. In *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Book Got Wrong* (1995), James Loewen asserts, “Understanding our past is central to our ability to understand ourselves and the world around us” (13). Yet although history can enable us to better understand our

current predicaments, it is one of the most poorly taught subjects. Many of us associate high school history with boredom, with memorizing and regurgitating an endless number of dates, events, and people for the weekly quizzes. And our high school history textbooks contributed to this boredom, veiling their overly simplistic versions of events as fact, and neglecting to inform us of other key perspectives and even some major events. This historical amnesia, this historical whitewashing, as Loewen points out in his book, can have deleterious consequences.

Adopting a similar critical stance to Loewen, your task in this essay is to examine an event in American history, comparing and contrasting the high school history book's version to the materials you discover during your research process. Provide a larger framework for your research, drawing from Loewen's book about why history is taught in this bland way, and the consequences of history being taught in this bland way.

Consider researching one event within a larger historical context; regardless, sufficiently narrow your topic so that you can examine it in all its glorious detail as opposed to skimming the surface. The best way to determine whether to further narrow your topic is to conduct some research; if your topic has many major themes, each of which warrants more development, focus on those which you are most drawn to, even if that means writing about only one theme.

Using MLA or APA format, draw from no less than 4 primary or secondary sources for your research, and no more than 10. Primary sources vary, from interviews, oral histories, autobiographies, speeches, songs, photographs, newspaper articles, city records, and directories, to diaries and the letters that document times past. In our library, some of these sources may be in the form of print indexes and microfilm. Secondary sources, meanwhile, are based on primary sources. In our library, they may be in the form of Infotrac and books.

- B. Critique an extremist perspective by applying knowledge of logical fallacies and identifying flawed assumptions.
- C. Explain a political cartoon by researching its historical context.
- D. Infer the values of an imaginary "Lost Tribe" from the list of characteristics. (This assignment is found in Cooper & Patten, *Writing Logically, Thinking Critically*.)
- E. Evaluate a website by examining the author's credentials, *etc.* (Check out the library's website at <http://www.skylinecollege.edu/library/evaluate.html#web> for more details.)

10. EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE:

English 165 is a letter-graded course. Multiple methods of evaluating and measuring student performance will be used to arrive at letter grade, including but not limited to

- Essays: Organized, coherent, unified critical essays the majority of which will be text-based and written both in class and outside of class
- Journals: Written critical responses to readings and class discussions
- Oral Participation: Active participation in class discussions demonstrating understanding of and response to the reading.
- Quizzes: Students will be quizzed on comprehension of material.

- Homework: Completed assignments focusing on particular English writing skills, such as freewriting, brainstorming, outlining, answering guided questions, organizing information into charts, practicing skills in English usage and grammar, etc.
- Final Exam: Students will demonstrate competence in text-based essay writing, using standard English.

11. RECOMMENDED or REQUIRED TEXT(S):

Chaffee, John. *Thinking Critically*. 8th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

Cooper, Sheila and Rosemary Patton. *Writing Logically, Thinking Critically*. 4th ed. New York: Longman, 2003.

Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your History Textbook Got Wrong*. New York: Touchstone, 2007.

Other Supplemental Texts

Handbooks/Anthologies/Readers

Cooper & Patten, *Writing Logically, Thinking Critically*

Chaffee, *Thinking Critically*

Goshgarian, Krueger & Minc, *Dialogues: An Argument, Rhetoric & Reader*

Rottenberg, *Elements of Argument*

Fiction

O'Brien, Tim, *In the Lake of the Woods*

Non-Fiction

Conley, Dalton, *Honky*

Frankl, Viktor, *Man's Search for Meaning*

hooks, bell, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*

hooks, bell, *Feminism Isn't for Everyone*

King, Martin Luther, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait*

Kozol, Jonathan, *Savage Inequalities*

Lam, Andrew, *Perfume Dreams: Reflections on the Vietnamese Diaspora*

Loewen, James, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*

Moore, Marijo, ed., *Genocide of the Mind: New Native American Writing*

Pollan, Michael, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*

Postman, Neil, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

Prejean, *Dead Man Walking*

Randall, Robinson, *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks*

Schlesinger, Arthur, *The Disuniting of America*

Schlosser, Eric, *Fast Food Nation*

Tuan, Mia, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites*

Spiegelman, Art, *Maus I*

Spiegelman, Art, *Maus II*

Zinn, Howard, *A People's History of the United States*

Zinn, Howard, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*