

Midwestern State University

Core Curriculum Course Proposal and Documentation

Course Information

- **PHIL 1533: Critical Thinking and Reasoning Skills**
- Course credit hours: 3.0
- Proposing the course for inclusion under the Foundational Component Area (FCA)
Language, Philosophy & Culture

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1. Core Curriculum Course Proposal

Document how the proposed course meets each of the following requirements.

Content: *Courses in the Language, Philosophy & Culture FCA focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience.*

This course provides a conceptual and problem-based introduction to critical thinking and reasoning—the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information in order to think through a problem clearly and communicate a solution effectively. Thus defined, critical thinking is an essential condition for understanding and appreciating “how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience.”

Skills: *Courses in the Language, Philosophy & Culture FCA involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.*

Students will learn to recognize, analyze, evaluate, and compose arguments—the primary instruments of critical thinking and reasoning—and will investigate the various forms arguments take, addressing both formal and informal methods of argumentation and distinguishing between good arguments and bad arguments. Particular attention will be paid to analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of arguments as they occur in ordinary, nontechnical writing and speech, with emphasis on the informal fallacies.

Assessment of Core Curriculum Objectives: Assessments should be authentic, intentional and direct. The four Core Objectives must be addressed in each course approved to fulfill this category requirement. Provide the title of the assessment/assignment that will be used to measure if the objective is met. The complete assignment description/instructions are to be included in Section 3, Assessment of Core Objectives.

Each student will write a 6-page final essay that will be evaluated according to the assessment rubric described in section 4 below. This essay will be the basis for determining whether the objectives for this FCA (communication, critical thinking, social responsibility, and personal responsibility) have been met. (For a detailed explanation, please see section 3 below.)

2. Common Course Syllabus

PHIL 1533 CRITICAL THINKING AND REASONING SKILLS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides a conceptual and problem-based introduction to critical thinking and reasoning—the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information in order to think through a problem clearly and communicate a solution effectively. Students will learn to recognize, analyze, evaluate, and compose arguments—the primary instrument of critical thinking and reasoning—and will investigate the various forms arguments take, addressing both formal and informal methods of argumentation and distinguishing between good arguments and bad arguments. Particular attention will be paid to analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of arguments as they occur in ordinary, nontechnical writing and speech, with emphasis on the informal fallacies.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

On the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Recognize and implement basic critical thinking and reasoning skills
- Identify arguments and understand the basic rules of argumentation
- Evaluate arguments by analyzing reasoning and evidence
- Construct sound arguments in support of their points of view
- Communicate their points of view, as well as the arguments in support of their points of view, clearly and effectively
- Understand other peoples' points of view and engage them in thoughtful, constructive, and mutually respectful dialogue
- Apply critical thinking and reasoning to ethical decision-making
- Appreciate the relevance of critical thinking and reasoning in national and global affairs

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

All students enrolled in this course are expected to:

- Maintain regular attendance;
- Come to class on time;
- Complete all assignments, including course readings, on time;
- Participate regularly and productively in class discussions;
- Refrain from engaging in rude, inconsiderate, or disruptive behavior (e.g., sleeping, whispering, using cell phones or laptops, etc.);
- Treat the instructor and fellow students with respect and courtesy;
- Observe proper etiquette when communicating with the instructor, especially by email;

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- Notify the instructor in the event of absences, whether planned or unplanned;
- Ask questions about course policies, course assignments, and course material, including readings;
- Seek the instructor's help when needed;
- Communicate concerns to the instructor in an open, honest, and constructive way;
- Take themselves seriously not just as students but also as *scholars* and *philosophers*.

ATTENDANCE

- Regular attendance is mandatory. It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor in a timely fashion regarding any planned or unplanned absences. In order for an absence to be excused, the absentee must provide a reasonable explanation for his or her non-attendance as well as any documentation (e.g., a doctor's note) that the instructor requests. Failure to do so will result in a penalty.
- Students are allowed maximum of 2 unexcused absences without penalty. For each unexcused absence beyond the first 2, the instructor will reduce the absentee's final grade by 5%.
- Students with 3 or more unexcused absences beyond the first 2 are required to attend a conference with the instructor. Students with 5 or more unexcused absences beyond the first 2 will automatically fail the class.
- Tardiness will not be tolerated. Students who are 15 or more minutes late for class will be considered absent. It is the student's responsibility to communicate with the instructor regarding any planned or unplanned tardiness.

PARTICIPATION

Participation in class discussion is mandatory and accounts for approximately 15% of the final grade (40 points). Examples of participation include, but are not limited to:

- Asking questions about assigned readings or lectures;
- Answering questions posed by the instructor;
- Expressing and defending a point of view regarding the philosophical issue(s) under discussion;
- Responding constructively to other students' points of view regarding the philosophical issue(s) under discussion.

ASSIGNMENTS

Final grades for this course will be based on the following:

- Weekly quizzes: 15%
- Attendance and class participation: 15%
- 3 in-class examinations: 20%
- 6-page final essay (6 pp.): 50%

GRADING POLICY:

The 6-page final essay will be evaluated according to the following criteria, each of which corresponds to a core objective for the Philosophy, Language, and Culture Foundational Option:

- Communication (effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication)
 - The essay uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.
 - The essay demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing
 - The essay uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.
 - Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable and is skillful and makes the content of the presentation cohesive.
 - Language choices are imaginative, memorable, and compelling, and enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.
 - A variety of types of supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that significantly supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.
 - The essay's central message is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported.)
- Critical Thinking (creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information)
 - The issue/problem to be considered critically within the essay is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.
 - Information in the essay is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. The essay thoroughly questions the viewpoints of experts.
 - The essay's conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.
- Personal Responsibility (ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making)
 - The essay identifies and adequately explains theories or theoretical concepts relevant to the issue(s) under consideration.

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- The essay's conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) reflect the student's ability to recognize ethical issues when presented in a complex, multilayered (gray) context AND to recognize cross-relationships among the issues.
- Social Responsibility (intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities)
 - The essay demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.
 - The essay proposes informed and responsible action to address ethical challenges and evaluates the local and broader consequences of individual and collective interventions.
 - The essay independently applies ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, accurately, and is able to consider the full implications of the application.

3. Assessment of Core Objectives

The final essay assignment asks students to select one of several argumentative passages drawn from books, newspapers, websites, and other sources. Students are required to write a response to the passage in the form of a 6-page double-spaced essay that (a) identifies and critically evaluates the argument(s) contained within the passage and (b) articulates and defends an original position in support of, or opposition to, the argument(s) contained in the passage.

Essays are evaluated on the basis of the four criteria enumerated in the rubric below, each of which corresponds to a core objective for this FCA:

- Communication
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Personal Responsibility
- Social Responsibility

Essays are awarded 0-4 points for each of the criteria. For purposes of assessment, an overall score of 12 or higher (3 or more points per criterion) implies that the student has met or exceeded the course's core objectives.

4. Rubrics for Core Objectives Assessment

Criterion	Performance/Point Value				
	Excellent/4	Good/3	Satisfactory/2	Unsatisfactory/1	0
COMMUNICATION	<p>The essay uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.</p> <p>The essay demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing</p> <p>The essay uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.</p> <p>Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable and is skillful and makes the</p>	<p>The essay uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.</p> <p>The essay demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.</p> <p>The essay uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.</p> <p>Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable within the presentation.</p>	<p>The essay uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.</p> <p>The essay demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.</p> <p>The essay uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.</p> <p>Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is intermittently observable within the presentation.</p>	<p>The essay uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.</p> <p>The essay demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.</p> <p>The essay uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.</p> <p>Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is not observable within the presentation.</p>	Does not meet benchmark criteria

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	<p>content of the presentation cohesive.</p> <p>Language choices are imaginative, memorable, and compelling, and enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.</p> <p>A variety of types of supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that significantly supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.</p> <p>The essay's central message is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported.)</p>	<p>Language choices are thoughtful and generally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.</p> <p>Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that generally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.</p> <p>Central message is clear and consistent with the supporting material.</p>	<p>Language choices are mundane and commonplace and partially support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.</p> <p>Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that partially supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.</p> <p>Central message is basically understandable but is not often repeated and is not memorable.</p>	<p>Language choices are unclear and minimally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is not appropriate to audience.</p> <p>Insufficient supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make reference to information or analysis that minimally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.</p> <p>Central message can be deduced, but is not explicitly stated in the presentation.</p>	
CRITICAL THINKING	<p>The issue/problem to be considered critically within the essay is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.</p>	<p>Issue/problem to be considered critically within the essay is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.</p>	<p>Issue/problem to be considered critically in the essay is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.</p>	<p>Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description. Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.</p>	<p>Does not meet benchmark criteria</p>

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	<p>Information in the essay is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. The essay thoroughly questions the viewpoints of experts.</p> <p>The essay's conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.</p>	<p>Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.</p> <p>The essay's conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.</p>	<p>Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.</p> <p>The essay's conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.</p>	<p>Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.</p>	
PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY	<p>The essay identifies and adequately explains theories or theoretical concepts relevant to the issue(s) under consideration.</p> <p>The essay demonstrates an ability to recognize ethical issues when presented in a complex, multilayered (gray) context AND to recognize cross-relationships among the issues.</p>	<p>The essay identifies the major theories or theoretical concepts relevant to the issue(s) under consideration and attempts to explain the details said theories or concepts, but has some inaccuracies.</p> <p>The essay demonstrates an ability to recognize ethical issues when issues are presented in a complex, multilayered (gray) context OR can grasp cross-relationships among the issues.</p>	<p>The essay identifies the major theories or theoretical concepts relevant to the issue(s) under consideration but is only able to present the gist of said theories or concepts.</p> <p>The essay demonstrates an ability to recognize basic and obvious ethical issues and grasp (incompletely) the complexities or interrelationships among the issues.</p>	<p>The essay only identifies the theories or theoretical concepts relevant to the issue(s) under consideration. the major theory she/he uses. Student can recognize basic and obvious ethical issues but fails to grasp complexity or interrelationships.</p> <p>The essay demonstrates an ability to apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question with support (using examples, in a class, in a group, or a fixed-choice setting) but not to apply ethical perspectives/concepts</p>	Does not meet benchmark criteria

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				independently (to a new example.).	
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	<p>The essay demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.</p> <p>The essay proposes informed and responsible action to address ethical challenges and evaluates the local and broader consequences of individual and collective interventions.</p> <p>The essay independently applies ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, accurately, and is able to consider the full implications of the application.</p>	<p>The essay demonstrates adequate understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.</p> <p>The essay analyzes the ethical, social, and environmental consequences of global systems and identifies a range of actions informed by one’s sense of personal and civic responsibility.</p> <p>The essay independently applies ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, accurately, but does not consider the specific implications of the application.</p>	<p>The essay demonstrates partial understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.</p> <p>The essay explains the ethical, social, and environmental consequences of local and national decisions on global systems.</p> <p>The essay can apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, independently (to a new example) and the application is inaccurate.</p>	<p>The essay demonstrates surface understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices. Identifies basic ethical dimensions of some local or national decisions that have global impact.</p>	Does not meet benchmark criteria