

PHIL 1050: The Art of Critical Thinking and Writing Syllabus

Course Information

Zoom option for class meetings

This is an in-person class, and I plan to be physically in the classroom for each session. If able to do so, students should try to attend in person as well. However, if, for any reason, it would be difficult for a student to attend a given session in person, they are welcome to attend via Zoom (with video turned on). In order to do so, they must email Professor at least one hour prior to the start of class. There is no cap to the number of sessions a student can attend via Zoom; just try to attend in person when possible. Students attending via Zoom will have the same participation responsibilities as other students. Alternatively, students are welcome to just listen in (and watch) to a session via Zoom (prior notice still required) with video off, but full participation credit will not be received. I will do my best to make the quality of instruction for Zoom students meet the same standards as those attending in person, but please know there may be technical issues and challenges to teaching simultaneously in both an in-person and virtual environment.

Credit Hours

This is a three-credit-hour course. This course meets the Course Credit Hours Expectation outlined in the Course Catalog. Generally, each student should expect, on average, to spend six hours each week outside of class completing work for this course.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will communicate with clarity, focus, organization and originality for specific purposes and audiences by reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Engage in effective critical inquiry to address complex topics (UNIFI SLO 1: Critical Thinking)
- Write effectively (UNIFI SLO 2: Written Communication)

Course Description (from the Course Catalog)

The course aims to develop fundamental skills of critical thinking and writing academic essays at the college level and enable students to make the most of their college education. As part of their coursework, students will use the skills they develop in the course to think critically and write with skill, clarity, and rigor on a range of issues that are meaningful to them and relevant to their lives as college students and as citizens. Class sessions will combine lecture and discussion, including small group work.

Course Requirements and Evaluation Methods

Required Texts and materials

- Students do not need to purchase any texts for this class. All assigned texts are available via Blackboard.
- Students should acquire a notebook designated exclusively for our course; this should be used during class, as well as outside of class while reading assigned texts and watching assigned videos, and while outlining papers.

Instructional Methods and Evaluation of Performance

The weighted value of each assignment is as follows and adds up to **100 possible points/percent for the course**:

- Small Assignments (top 20), 2 points each: **40% of overall course grade**
- Response Paper: **15% of overall course grade**
- Compare/Contrast Paper: **15% of overall course grade**
- Argumentative Essay: **15% of overall course grade**
- Research Paper: **15% of overall course grade**
- Attendance and Participation: **factors in borderline cases**

The following is a more detailed overview of each of the major assignment types.

- **Small Assignments**

There will be at least 23 opportunities to complete "Small Assignments" over the course of the semester. These are in-class or out-of-class assignments designed to be completed for a single session and to support larger class projects. Some examples of small in-class assignments include conferencing with Professor, presenting excerpts from papers, participating in a debate, and taking quizzes. Small out-of-class assignments include sending a professional email to Professor, developing margin notes for an assigned reading, completing workbooks, and developing reasons lists. Each student's top 20 Small Assignments will each count for up to 2 points (2% of the overall course grade); the remaining (lowest or "0" scores) will be dropped. Late work on Small Assignments will not be accepted for credit, though in some cases (e.g. the "writing sample" assignment), they will still need to be completed. If fewer than 23 Small Assignment opportunities are offered (due to canceled assignments or sessions), each student will automatically be given full credit for one assignment for each opportunity fewer than 23 offered. Small Assignments will count for 40 points (40% of the overall course grade).

- **Response Paper**

Each student will develop a response paper to the Billy Collins' poem "Schoolsville." The minimum length for this assignment is five paragraphs and 650 words. A "Response Paper Handout" providing details and a rubric for this assignment will be made available on Blackboard within the "Course Content" folder. Due dates for this assignment are included in the "Course Schedule." The first submitted version of this assignment will be worth five

points (5% of the overall course grade); the updated version will be worth 10 points (10% of the overall course grade).

- **Compare/Contrast Paper**

Each student will develop a paper comparing and contrasting two music videos in terms of the lyrics, music and visual elements. The minimum length for this assignment is five paragraphs and 750 words. A "Compare/Contrast Paper Handout" providing details and a rubric for this assignment will be made available on Blackboard within the "Course Content" folder. Due dates for this assignment are included in the "Course Schedule." The first submitted version of this assignment will be worth five points (5% of the overall course grade); the updated version will be worth 10 points (10% of the overall course grade).

- **Argumentative Essay**

Each student will develop an argumentative essay arguing in the affirmative or in the negation of a proposal determined by students during class. The minimum length for this assignment is seven paragraphs and 1250 words, plus an annotated list of at least four works cited. An "Argumentative Essay Handout" providing details and a rubric for this assignment will be made available on Blackboard within the "Course Content" folder. Due dates for this assignment are included in the "Course Schedule." The first submitted version of this assignment will be worth five points (5% of the overall course grade); the updated version will be worth 10 points (10% of the overall course grade).

- **Research Paper**

Each student will develop a research-driven narrative of a famous historical event of their own choosing. The minimum length for this assignment is six pages (1500 words) plus an annotated list of at least eight works cited. A "Research Paper Handout" providing details and a rubric for this assignment will be made available on Blackboard within the "Course Content" folder. Due dates for this assignment are included in the "Course Schedule." The first submitted version of this assignment will be worth two points (2% of the overall course grade); the updated version will be worth 10 points (10% of the overall course grade; presentation of a portion of the paper during the final examination period (mandatory) will be worth 3 points (3% of the overall course grade).

- **Attendance and Participation**

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class session. Participation will be determined subjectively based on Professor's perception of the quality and consistency of engagement with in-class activities and discussions and attentiveness to class speakers. Deductions will be marked on Blackboard with both tardies and insufficient participation listed as "late" (equals .5/1) and an absence listed as "absent" (equals 0/1) for the given session. Attendance and participation will factor as part of the overall course grade in the following way. In borderline cases between two final course grades (e.g. 89%), students who have two or fewer deductions and have active

participation records in class will have their final class score rounded up by as much as 1% (2% if excellent).

- **Late Papers Policy**

Late papers, without advance correspondence, are subject to an immediate 10% score deduction. There is a grace period for all students related to each paper deadline in cases where the student communicates with Professor prior to the deadline and remains in regular communication. Grace periods are not possible in cases involving paper presentations or paper conferences.

If a late analysis paper is not turned in by the start of the following class session, Professor will work with the student to arrange an in-person 60-minute make-up session in which the student will complete the assignment in a closed-book, closed-note format with an additional deduction of 25%. Any required make-up assignment must be completed within ten days of the original due date.

Strategies for Formative Assessment

In the middle of the semester students will be asked to complete a formative assessment in which they reflect upon how the course is going and provide feedback. This will be completed via a quick survey ("What's going well? What's not going well?"). These reflections will be anonymous and are intended to enable the instructor to better guide students through the learning process for the rest of the semester.

Evaluation Methods

Students will receive a weighted score for each paper at least one week prior to the due date for the next paper. Student scores on attendance/participation and Small Assignments will typically be made available within one week of completion (if an exception to that expectation should arise, an explanation will be posted on Blackboard announcements). Individual and total category scores will be posted in the "My Grades" tools link on the Blackboard website. Students are expected to monitor their own grades on Blackboard and save all graded work.

Determination of Grades

Final grades will be reported using the following scale:

Grading scale		
92-100% = A	80-82% = B-	68-70% = D+
90-92% = A-	78-80% = C+	62-68% = D
88-90% = B+	72-78% = C	60-62% = D-
82-88% = B	70-72% = C-	< 60% = F

Other Important Course Information

Diversity and Inclusion Statement:

Diversity is valued very highly in this course. In our class interactions such as in discussion board activities, we will greatly benefit from our different perspectives and ideas as well as from differences with regards to race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, religion and disability. This is particularly the case as we will be focusing on philosophical and religious ideas in our course. It is expected that everyone will be included and be treated with respect.

Professional Email Standards

When emailing Professor, I ask that you use a professional email model.

The professional email model includes use of a subject, a greeting line, and a signature. If you are unsure of whether the person you are addressing will know which course you are in without having to look it up, you should provide the course name and section number as well. Also, keep in mind that Professor typically has many students in four or more courses each semester. Before emailing, depending on the issue, try to find the answer yourself or ask a peer. At that point, of course Professor is very happy to help (I really want you to succeed!). But make sure you write a careful email to make it as easy as possible to respond.

If Professor emails you, he expects a response within two business days; Professor holds to the same standard for responding to students.

Also, during any online interactions associated with this class, please remember to present yourself in a professional manner, such as you plan to do at your job after you begin your career following graduation. Visit [this website](#) for Netiquette tips.

Academic Integrity

To ensure academic integrity and to follow [UNI policies on Student Academic Ethics](#) (see: IV. Academic Ethics Violations), students will not plagiarize, misrepresent, fabricate, or cheat. Unless otherwise instructed and approved by the instructor, students will take quizzes and exams individually, without collaboration with other parties and/or using notes or other texts. Similarly, students will submit work (papers, presentations, and other assessments) that is their own work (in regard to violations of these ethics policies, see: V. Academic Ethics Sanctions). (<https://policies.uni.edu/301>).

Important UNI Policies and Statements

For other important UNI Policy statements relevant to our course, please open the "Panther Resources" folder included at the bottom of "Content" on our Blackboard Ultra site. Topics include:

- Free Speech Syllabus Statement
- Essential Elements/ Best Practices for Course Syllabi
- Office of Civil Rights Compliance Statement
- Student Accessibility Services Information
- The Learning Center @ Rod Library Information