

Saint Leo University

**LBS 201
Critical Thinking in Liberal Studies**

Course Description:

Critical Thinking in Liberal Studies is an online course that develops critical and analytical skills necessary to engage in courses in the liberal studies major. Through readings reflecting representative disciplines included in the major, students will begin to improve their ability to think effectively and express themselves through clear, cogent writing.

Pre-requisite:

ENG122

Textbooks:

Browne, Neil M., and Stuart M. Keeley. *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*. 12th ed. New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2018. Print. ISBN: 978-0-13-443199-4

Smoke, Trudy, and Alan Robbins. *The World of the Image*. New Jersey: Pearson/Longman, 2007. Print. ISBN-13: 978-0-321-38882-7

Course Objectives:

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

1. Formulate clear questions.
2. Assess information and arguments.
3. Improve writing skills.
4. Understand the importance of liberal studies in their intellectual development.

Personal Development: The Saint Leo University core value associated with this course is personal development. Saint Leo University stresses the development of every person's mind, spirit, and body for a balanced life. All members of the Saint Leo University community must demonstrate their commitment to personal development to help strengthen the character of our community.

Evaluation, Course Requirements, and Due Dates:

8 Discussion Postings	30%	Due at the end of each module
4 Critical Analysis Papers	40%	Due at the end of Modules 3, 5, 6, and 7
Learning Logs	10%	Due at the end of each module
Midterm Exam	10%	Due at the end of Module 4
Final Exam	10%	Due at the end of Module 8

For a detailed explanation and more information about each of the assignments, please go to Course Content.

Grade	Score (%)
A	94-100%
A-	90-93%
B+	87-89%
B	84-86%
B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%
C	74-76%
C-	70-73%
D+	67-69%
D	60-66%
F	<60%

To compute your grade at any point during the course, divide the number of points you have received by the number of total points available up to that point.

Discussions

- With each module / once per week / 8 times during the semester, you must log on to the discussion forum for class participation.
- When you get to the discussion link, look for the message and instructions from the instructor. Read carefully so that you are sure exactly what is expected of you. Typically, you will be required to carry out an assignment then respond to an instructor question by Thursday at 11:59 pm EST/EDT and also read the responses made by your classmates and then post a response to 2 of their postings by Sunday at 11:59 PM EST/EDT.
- Please be thorough yet concise and follow the guidelines. Responses that are too brief, have little or no content, or are inappropriate in content will result in 0 (no) credit for participation assigned to that student.
- Any postings that are deemed inappropriate by the instructor / website coordinator will be immediately removed and action will be taken with the student in accordance with Saint Leo University policy.
- Discussion postings **must** be posted within the respective module and no later than the due date. Credit will **not** be granted for late postings or responses.
- For more information please refer to the Discussion Guidelines Info and the Grading Rubric for Discussions.

Explanation of Learning Logs

During the course you will be keeping a learning log in which you will answer a specified number of discussion questions from *The World of the Image*. This anthology includes a wide range of readings on the visual image in culture, from perspectives in science, anthropology, psychology, art, and the media. The anthology will help introduce you to the various disciplines you will study in the liberal studies major and give you practice in assessing arguments. These questions are designed to give you the opportunity to reflect on the readings and make connections between the disciplines represented in the anthology. You will submit this log to your instructor at the end of each Module during the term. As informal writing, the log will be graded based on whether you have entered a response to an assigned question and the clarity of your response. Although writing is relaxed for this assignment regarding cover pages, headings, and line spacing, you still must include information from your readings to meet level four on the grading rubric and clarify your response. Please make sure these reading conclusions are format compliant with in-text citations and with the reference at the end of the log entry.

Explanation of Midterm and Final Exam

You will take two exams for this course, roughly at midterm and at the end of the course. They are open book/open notes and do not have a time limit. Both exams will test your understanding of the principles of critical thinking learned in *Asking the Right Questions*.

Module 1: Introduction to Critical Thinking

Objectives: When you complete this module, you should be able to:

- Distinguish between critical thinking and typical ordinary thinking.
- Explain how critical thinking skills help facilitate personal decision-making.
- Differentiate between the panning-for-gold approach, the sponge-approach weak-sense critical thinking, and strong-sense critical thinking, and recognize examples of each.
- Recognize the social dimensions of being a critical thinker and describe how to avoid getting into battles with others when questioning beliefs that may differ from your own.

Assignments:

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Post an introduction to the class	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Read assigned materials	
Post initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Learning Log	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 2: Issues, Conclusions, and Reasons

Objectives: When you complete this module, you should be able to:

- Explain how to identify the issue and the conclusion of someone's reasoning.
- Describe the nature of conclusions and how they differ from opinions.
- Define the word *argument* as it is used in critical thinking and distinguish between making an argument and having an argument.
- Explain and demonstrate how to ask good questions that will solicit reasons that provide support for conclusions.
- Identify weak-sense critical thinking as grounds for a lack of strong support for conclusions.

Assignments:

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read assigned materials	
Post initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Learning Log	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 3: Ambiguity

Objectives: When you complete this module, you should be able to:

- Identify key words or phrases that have more than one meaning when evaluating someone's reasoning.
- Explain how different meanings shape an argument to ultimately identify the precise meaning of the idea being presented.
- Identify key words or phrases that avoid ambiguity and clearly define terms to support your reasoning.
- Explain how ambiguous terms can have an emotional impact on people and how we must be sensitive to this.

Assignments:

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read assigned materials	
Post initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Critical Analysis	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Learning Log	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 4: Value and Descriptive Assumptions and Fallacies

Objectives: When you complete this module, you should be able to:

- Identify and evaluate assumptions.
- Differentiate between the function of descriptive and prescriptive / value assumptions.
- Distinguish between and identify the various types of fallacies.
- Choose whether to accept or reject someone's reasoning based on their use of fallacies.
- Make descriptive assumptions about the causes of the behaviors of others and evaluate the conclusions we make about those behaviors.

Assignments:

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read assigned materials	
Post initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Learning Log	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Complete Midterm Exam	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 5: Evidence

Objectives: When you complete this module, you should be able to:

- Describe, distinguish between, and evaluate the following kinds of evidence:

intuition, personal experience, testimonials, appeals to authority, personal observation, research studies, case examples, and analogies.

- List advantages and disadvantages of the various kinds of evidence.
- Describe how to determine whether or not factual claims are dependable.
- Distinguish between primary and secondary resources.
- Explain how scientific research studies provide the best source of evidence.

Assignments:

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read assigned materials	
Post initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Critical Analysis	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Learning Log	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 6: Rival Causes

Objectives: When you complete this module, you should be able to:

- Identify when a fundamental attribution error to explain the behavior of people.
- Recognize when a communicator is making a causal claim.
- Determine when it is necessary to look for rival causes.
- Recognize when causal over-simplification is being used.
- Distinguish between **a** cause and **the** cause.
- Differentiate between causation and association.

Assignments:

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read assigned materials	
Post initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Critical Analysis	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Learning Log	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

MODULE 7: Are Statistics Deceptive? What Significant Information is Omitted?

Objectives: When you complete this module, you should be able to:

- Identify various strategies that can be used to detect deception by use of statistics.
- Determine when it is better to make judgments based on percentages or on absolute numbers.
- Identify when someone uses statistics concluding one thing but proving another.
- Identify various strategies that can be used to identify omitted information.

Assignments:

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read assigned materials	
Post initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Critical Analysis	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Learning Log	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

MODULE 8: Reasonable Conclusions and Overcoming Obstacles to Critical Thinking

Objectives: When you complete this module, you should be able to:

- Re-word issues in a way that generate multiple conclusions.
- Adopt conclusions that are most reasonable and most consistent with their value preferences.
- Ask questions that require the conclusion to be justified.
- Identify the barriers to critical thinking.

Assignments:

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read assigned materials	
Post initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Complete Final Exam	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT