



# Critical Thinking

A Proposal for an Interdisciplinary Course

# CONCERNS

## Does a Critical Thinking Course:

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- Create a clear central focus (other than “helping students to think better”)?
- Offer strong content?
- Require interdisciplinary connections?
- Improve on the traditional logic course model?
- Encourage focused writing and effective presentations?



# Central Focus



## Systematic Doubt or Skepticism

- Aligns with the Scientific Method.
- Connects with the Western intellectual tradition.
- Challenges students constantly, and encourages analytical judgment.
- Provides clear payoffs, for example, in a consumer-based culture.

# Content



- Investigates the line between science and pseudoscience.
- Examines best theorizing in philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, biology, and other fields to determine how and why we make mistakes in reasoning.
- Researches many contemporary fads, theories, therapies, religions, cults, and other social movements.
- Familiarizes students with essential terms from several fields, including basic statistics.

# Interdisciplinary Connections

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- Bridges the divide between the “two cultures” of sciences and humanities.
- Fosters appreciation of the University community through personal interviews of faculty experts.
- Develops appreciation for potential applications of studies across the curriculum.
- Encourages students to help each other based on developing expertise.



# An Alternative to Traditional Courses

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- Avoids awkward mix of formal and informal logic.
- Applies hard thinking to contemporary problems and examples.
- Connects study of fallacies to research in several disciplines such as cognitive psychology.
- Requires strong Service Learning component so that lessons apply to the real world.



# Focused Writing, Effective Presentations

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## **Students write:**

- Weekly on-line Discussion Board responses that probe readings or report on an exercise.
- Email reports on personal interviews.
- Formal Proposals.
- Hard copy reports on Service Learning projects.
- A Final Exam that encourages exploration and synthesis of course material.

## **Students present:**

- Interview Reports.
- Progress Reports.
- Formal Proposals.
- Final Projects.



# THE SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

## Examples:

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- “Increase critical thinking among high school students about homeopathic medicine, and specifically colloidal silver, by introducing Colloidal Silver as a debate exercise for the Brandon High School debate team.”
- Create a class on Media Awareness at The University of Tampa.
- Create a Facebook website that would help students critically evaluate conspiracy theories.
- Create an art therapy program, “Expressive Arts in the Intensive Care Setting,” that would help families cope with stress in the waiting room.

# THE SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

## Examples:

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- Create a “Critical Thinking Forum” for The University of Tampa’s *Minaret* newspaper.
- Create a student organization at The University of Tampa affiliated with the national Campus for Free Inquiry (CFI).
- Create a class on Cultural Competence, Cultural Sensitivity, and Respect at The University of Tampa.
- Create an introductory Anthropology course at The University of Tampa.

