

Critical Thinking

Preksha: Scholar Development Programme

Course Category: NA

Schedule of Offering: NA

Course Credit: 1

Contact Hours per week: 15

- **Lecture: 5**
- **Tutorial: 0**
- **Practical: 10**

Course Instructors: R. Venkata Raghavan, Saurabh Singanapalli

Course Code: NA

1. Introduction

Critical Thinking is one of the ten life skills recognized by United Nations, World Health Organization (WHO). These life skills help the individual develop “adaptive and positive behaviour that [will] enable [them] to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.”

In contemporary times, where there is an overload of information as well as opinion, it is crucial that we develop a critical attitude when taking decisions or coming to conclusions, especially about issues of social importance.

This course aims to provide the students an opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills by introducing to them the basic tools of argumentation, making them aware of prejudices and stereotypes, and teaching them to be empathetic to other views points.

2. Course Objectives

To introduce the students to critical thinking with a view to getting them to practise it in their own lives.

3. Pre-requisites

None.

4. Readings

There are no prescribed readings or textbooks for this course. The course coordinators will distribute handouts in class to facilitate the lectures.

5. Module-wise topics

- 1) Introduction to Critical thinking:
 - a) Tentative Definition of Critical Thinking.
 - b) Definition of Argument.

Activity:

1. Formulate an argument.
2. Discussion: Can we be objective?

- 2) Analysing Arguments - I
 - a) Basics of Argumentation: Premises, Conclusion and Assumptions.
 - b) Deductive and Non-deductive reasoning.
 - c) Argument and Discussion Vocabulary.

Activity:

1. Reading arguments and identifying premises, conclusion and assumptions.
2. Judging the reliability of the source.

- 3) Analysing Arguments -II
 - a) Non-Deductive Reasoning.
 - b) Analogical Reasoning.

Activity:

1. Evaluating analogies.
2. Formulating an analogy.

- 4) Being Objective
 - a) Biases, Prejudices and Stereotype and how to overcome them.
 - b) Being empathetic and its importance for Critical Thinking.
 - c) The language of objectivity.
 - d) Making acceptable generalisations.

Activity:

1. Step into each other's shoe.
2. Identifying possible bias in text.
3. Writing a critical argument.

6. Pedagogy

The course will be a combination of lecture and activity-based learning. New concepts will be introduced in the form of short lectures and the activity will focus on sharpening the students' understanding of the same.

7. Learning Outcomes

1. The student will be able to identify the main issue of a particular piece of text.
2. The student will be able to identify the conclusion, the premises and the assumptions of the article.
3. The student will be able to provide rudimentary evaluation of the author's opinion
4. The student will be able to propose at least one other point of view about the same issue.
5. The student will be able to identify objective and subjective parts of the text.

8. Evaluation Pattern

The evaluation pattern for this course is as follows:

- **Formulating an argument: 50%**
Students will be required to formulate an argument following the methods learnt during the course. In brief, they would have to clearly set out what their conclusion is, their reasons for arriving at that conclusion, possible objections and alternatives to their conclusion and tentative responses to such objections.
- **Analysing an argument: 50%**
Students will be required to evaluate an argument which is given to them (this could be a newspaper article or any other article). The students must use the concepts taught in the course to identify the conclusion of the argument, the premises supporting the conclusion and the assumptions made by the author. The students must then evaluate the argument for its convincingness.