

Critical Thinking

All UG

Course Category: Proficiency Semester

Schedule of Offering: Odd

Course Credit : 1

Contact Hours per week: 1 Hours per week

- **Lecture: 1**
- **Tutorial: 0**
- **Practical: 0**

Course Instructors: R. Venkata Raghavan

1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified a set of psychosocial competencies which help the individual develop “adaptive and positive behaviour that [will] enable [them] to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.” One of the skills is Critical Thinking (the others being Self-Awareness, Empathy, Creative Thinking, Decision Making, Problem Solving, Interpersonal Skills, Effective Communication, Coping with Stress, and Managing Emotions). In contemporary times, where there is an overload of information as well as opinion, it is crucial that we develop an 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, by making them aware of prejudices and stereotypes and teach them to be empathetic to other views points.

2. Course Objectives

- To enhance the students’ critical thinking abilities

3. Pre-requisites

None.

4. Readings

The following books may be used for background reading:

1. M. Neil Browne, Stuart M. Keeley. *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*, 2018, 12th Edition, New York: Pearson.
2. Richard Paul, Linda Elder. *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools*. Foundation for Critical Thinking. Accessible at <http://web.iitd.ac.in/~nkrur/2015-16/IIsem/cml522/CriticalThinking.pdf>

Apart from these, separate handouts will be given for specific topics

5. **Module-wise topics**

- 1) Introduction to Critical thinking (2 Session)
 - i) Tentative Definition of Critical Thinking
 - ii) General features of Critical Thinking

Readings: Paul and Elder. pp. 4-17

- 2) Basics of Reasoning (7 Sessions)
 - i) Basics of Argumentation: Premises, Conclusion and Assumptions
 - ii) Deductive and Inductive Reasoning
 - iii) Analogical Reasoning
 - iv) Interpreting Statistical Data
 - v) Heuristics/Cognitive Biases

Readings:

- Hand out “Basics of Argumentation”
- Browne and Keeley, Chapter 10. Are Any Statistics Deceptive? pp. 133-142
- Browne and Keeley, Chapter 13, Mental Habits That Betray us, pp. 165-168.

- 3) Stereotypes and Prejudice (3 Sessions)

- i) Common prejudices and targets
- ii) The right and wrong use of stereotypes

Readings: Roy F. Baumeister and Brad J. Bushman, Social Psychology and Human Nature, 3rd edition, Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, 2014 (Indian Reprint 2018), Chapter 13, Prejudice and Intergroup Relations, pp.468-486

- 4) Empathy (3 Sessions)
 - i) Cognitive Empathy

6. Pedagogy

The course will be a combination of lecture based learning and seminar based learning. New concepts will be introduced in the form of short lectures. However, reading material and worksheets will be given before hand and the class room will be used for indepth discussion.

7. Evaluation Pattern

Following is the evaluation pattern for this course

- Assignments: 40%
- Class Participation: 30%
- Term Paper: 30%

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If a student is found plagiarising in the assignment, they will get zero marks for that assignment. If the term paper is found to be plagiarised, then the student will not be allowed to sit for the final exam.