Writing and Critical Inquiry

Contact information for professor:
Name: Dr. Carlene Adamson
Tel: 02/ 614 8170
E-mail: cadamson@vub.ac.be

ECTS Credits: 7.5 (P course)

Course Description:
In this course, students will learn to critically analyze the diction, structure, audience and methods of argumentation in a wide variety of texts in order to judge the success or failure of these texts. Other topics include the discernment between fact and opinion, the determination of authors’ motivations, and the recognition and avoidance of logical fallacies. The student is expected to apply these persuasive devices and methods to his/her own writing and to critically evaluate his/her work and the work of other students in the class. Additionally, the students will be asked to engage in graded, oral debates.

Course Prerequisites:
Successful completion of HUM101P

Objectives:

Students who pass Writing and Critical Inquiry should be able to:

• Analyze the basic structure of a given piece of expository writing and determine the goal or agenda of the writer;
• Recognize and avoid logical fallacies in written argumentation;
• Compose original essays building on the basic structures learned in previous courses in the writing sequence, but this time with an eye towards argumentation, by demonstrating their awareness of the issues involved; by distinguishing between opinion and fact; by recognizing opposing points of view and underlying assumptions; by using supporting evidence and by constructing a logical and well-reasoned paper;
• Demonstrate university-level competence in grammar and syntax;
• Use extended definition and cause-and-effect sequences in their writing;
• Demonstrate competence and independence in using the library and abstracting information from research sources, along with the accurate documentation of those sources;
• Compose a research essay integrating information drawn from various sources into a cohesive exposition;
• Participate in academic debates;
• Undertake in-depth analysis and written evaluation/criticism of their own work and the work of other students in the class.

Required Materials:


Recommended:
• A good, collegiate dictionary; English or Your Language/English
• A thesaurus

**Determination of Final Course Grade**

- Presentation of a text 10%
- Summaries (2) 10%
- Essay ONE 15%
- ESSAY TWO 15%
- ESSAY THREE 15%
- 2 In-Class essays 10%
- Midterm 15%
- Final exam 15%

Letter grades will be assigned for the work in this class. In conversion to the 100-point system as required for Flemish accreditation, the grade breakdown will be as follows:

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<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
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<th>GRADE</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-100</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>62-65</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>81-84</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>58-61</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>77-80</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>66-68</td>
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Written assignments will be graded based on the Guidelines for Grading Compositions (see appendices to this syllabus).

**Academic Honesty**

It is assumed that the student will pursue his or her academic endeavours with the greatest integrity and highest standards possible. Evidence of any form of academic dishonesty will result in an F for the affected assignment or exam, with no chance for revision. Cheating and plagiarism cases will be communicated in writing to the academic administration and submitted to the Student Conduct Committee for disciplinary action. Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are described at length in the College Catalogue; please review the examples cited there and note the serious sanctions that can be imposed. If you have questions about what are appropriate scholarly procedures, please come and see me.

For this class, it is assumed that all work is yours and yours alone.

It is also assumed that work submitted for this class cannot have been submitted for any other class, either here or at another academic institution.

**Additional Course Policies**
✓ The general rule of thumb for university studies is that you need to do about **one to two hours of homework for every hour inside the classroom.** You should plan on spending about five-seven hours a week doing homework (reading, writing, preparing presentations…) for this class. If you are taking five classes, your study time, outside of class, will be about 25 hours a week in addition to the hours spent in class; in other words, being an undergraduate student is a “full-time” job. Some students can accomplish the work in less time, some take a bit longer.

✓ **Attendance matters at Vesalius College!** Attendance is a central focus of the first-year courses at Vesalius College. The first time a student is unexplainably absent, a message will be sent to the student’s academic advisor for follow-up; for a second absence, a message will be sent to the Associate Dean. Students who are unexplainably – unexcusedly – absent may be invited to withdraw from the course.

An **unexcused absence** is any absence for which you cannot provide reputable, serious, written evidence (a doctor’s note, an affidavit regarding jury duty, etc.) Appointments with doctors, city hall, the cable guy, for job interviews… are not normally excused, so please make these appointments outside of class time.

**Please note:** An absence is NOT 'excused' simply because you tell a professor that you will not be in class!

We do quite a lot of work during class so it’s important to be prepared and present – both literally and figuratively! You will not be given the opportunity to turn in your assignments late, nor to make-up any assignments without a legitimate, excused absence. **I do not accept retroactive doctor’s notes where the college has not been previously notified; especially when these absences fall on a due date, during the first week of school, on an oral presentation day, or at either end of the Fall Recess or Spring Break.**

- **Being absent on a due date** does not excuse you from handing in your assignments on time. If you know you will be absent on a due date (i.e., a family wedding in Japan, participation in the Model UN in NY, a field trip for another class…), make sure that one of your classmates brings your assignment – as a hard, printed copy – to class, (not to reception; not to my mailbox) and turns it in for you.

- Alternatively, **if you know you will be absent on a due date**, you may contact me well beforehand to organize an alternative, always earlier, submission date.

✓ **I do not accept late papers or assignments.** All written assignments are due in **hard copy at the beginning of class.** I do not accept assignments by email, nor assignments left at reception or left in my mailbox.

✓ **Preparing a reading/transcript of a speech for homework means** – at a minimum – that you will have read and annotated the text, will understand the basic rhetorical situation and will have established the thesis and main points the author is arguing, in order of importance. You will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the argument based on evidence, rather than opinion.

✓ **Typing is required** for all assignments not done in class. Please see the formatting guidelines (in the Course Reader).

✓ **I do not generally make my lecture notes/slides available to students.**

**Class Schedule**  
(Please note: the schedule below is merely representative of the readings and work schedule; actual term schedules will vary from what follows.)

- *Homework is meant to be done for the following class meeting unless otherwise noted.*
WEEK ONE

Homework:
1. Discuss course syllabus to ensure that you understand the rules and expectations of the class. It is your responsibility to know these. Introduce themes.
   Homework: Read Cottrell Ch. 1, "What is Critical Thinking" (first chapter on PointCarré)

2. Discuss critical thinking; opinion vs informed judgement. Diagnostic essay.

WEEK TWO

1. Discuss reading
   Topic: Finding Topics and Arguments
   Instructions: Presentations of Assigned Readings
   Homework:
   ~ Read Cottrell, Ch. 8, “Where’s the Proof: Finding and evaluating sources of evidence”

2. Discuss reading
   Quick review of summary-writing,….
   Amy Webb, “How I Hacked Online Dating”
   Homework:
   ~ Read Cottrell, Ch. 10

WEEK THREE

1. Discuss reading
   Topic: Understanding Persuasion
   In-class exercise: "Why So Much Aid for AIDS?"
   Homework:
   ~ Read Cottrell, Ch. 3
   ~ Read Stokes, “No, You’re Not Entitled to Your Opinion” (handout)

2. Discuss reading + presentation
   Topic: Shaping Arguments
   In-class exercise: "Indian Bones" (handout)
   Homework:
   ~ Read Cottrell, Ch. 4

WEEK FOUR

1. Discuss reading
   Topic: Differentiating Arguments of Position from Arguments of Policy
   Homework:
   ~ Read Swift, “A Modest Proposal” (PC)
   ~ Read Jefferson et al, “The Declaration of Independence” (PC)
   ~ Please bring the Cottrell textbook to class on Thursday

2. Discuss reading + Presentations
   Topic: Underlying Assumptions, Reading What’s Not There
   In-class exercise
Homework:
~ Read Cottrell, Ch. 6

WEEK FIVE
1 Discuss reading
Topic: Addressing Audiences
Homework:
~ Read Orwell, “Politics and the English Language” (PC)
~ Write a 100-word summary of either Orwell OR Swift, your choice.

2 Orwell/Swift Summary is due!
Discuss reading + Presentation
Topic: Using Evidence
Homework:
~ Read Cottrell, Ch. 5
~ Read Darwin, from Natural Selection; or, the Survival of the Fittest (Austin)

WEEK SIX
1 Discuss reading + Presentation
Topic: Establishing Claims, Anticipating Arguments
Homework
~ Read Mencius, “Man’s Nature Is Good” (Austin)
~ Read Hsun-Tzu, “Man’s Nature Is Evil” (Austin)

2 Discuss reading + Presentations
Topic: Testing Claims, Avoiding Fallacies
Homework:
~ Read Okakok, “Serving the Purpose of Education” (Austin)
~ Read Benedict, “The Individual and the Pattern of Culture” (Austin)

WEEK SEVEN – 3-7 March
1 Discuss reading + Presentations
In-class exercise: Defining the Purpose of Education
Homework:
~ Prepare for the Midterm, which will consist of several (fairly) short-answer questions on the reading assigned so far; and one essay question.

2 MIDTERM!
Homework:
~ Read Pizan, “The Treasure of the City of Ladies” (Austin)
~ Read Suu Kyi, “In Quest of Democracy” (Austin)

WEEK EIGHT
1 Discuss reading + Presentations
Sir Ken Robinson, “Do Schools Kill Creativity” (+/- 30 mins.)
Homework:
~ Read King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (Austin)
~ Read Orwell, “Pacifism and the War” (Austin)
Discuss reading + (pair) Presentation + Presentation
Bacha, “Pay Attention to Non-Violence”

Homework:
~ Read Paz, “The Day of the Dead” (Austin)
~ Cunningham, “Why Women Smile” (PC)

WEEK NINE
1 Discuss reading + Presentations
Topic: Definition Writing
In-class: Becker on Democracy

Homework:
~ Read Wiesel, “The Perils of Indifference” (PC)

2 Discuss reading + Presentation

Homework:
~ Read Lameck, “Africans are Not Poor” (Austin)
~ Read Naylor, “Mommy, What Does ‘Nigger’ Mean?” (PC)

WEEK TEN – 24-28 March
1 Discuss reading + Presentations
Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story”

Instructions: Definition Essay

Homework:
~ Prepare notes on one side, of one page of A4 paper (font size 12), to use when you write the definition essay.

2 The Extended Definition Essay (in class)

Homework:
~ Take your handwritten essay home and type it up (12-point font, double-spaced, no staples) while revising it. Please note: your handwritten essay serves as a first draft. The handwritten and types essays must be sufficiently similar. You should, of course, also use the spell check and grammar check options on your computers.
~ You MUST turn in the notes, the handwritten and typed copies of the essay: I will not accept one without the others!
~ Read Oe, “The Unsurrendered People” (Austin)

WEEK ELEVEN – 31 March-4 April
1 The Extended Definition Essay is due!
Discuss reading + Presentation
Williams, “A Realistic Vision for World Peace”
Barnett, “Let’s Rethink America’s Military Strategy”

Homework:
~ Read Orwell, “Shooting the Elephant” (PC)
~ Read Williams, “The Clan of the One-Breasted Women” (PC)

2 Discuss reading + Presentations
Topic: Cause and Effect
In-class: Miller, “Learning to Hate Mathematics” (handout)

Instructions for the Cause and Effect Essay (29 April)

Homework:
~ Read Pericles, “The Funeral Oration” (Austin)
SPRING RECESS

WEEK TWELVE

1 Discuss reading + Presentation
In-class: Marvel(lous) to be Gaye? (handout)

Homework:
~ Only mental preparation allowed for this one. Please come to class with two pens, nothing else, and be ready to write an essay in response to the question I give you.

2 The Cause and Effect Essay (in class)
Discuss reading + Presentations

Homework:
~ Take your handwritten essay home and type it up (12-point font, double-spaced, no staples) while revising it. Please note: your handwritten essay serves as a first draft. The handwritten and types essays must be sufficiently similar. You should, of course, also use the spell check and grammar check options on your computers.
~ You MUST turn in the notes, the handwritten and typed copies of the essay: I will not accept one without the others!
~ Read Armstrong, “Faith and Modernity” (PC)

WEEK THIRTEEN – 28 April–2 May

1 Cause and Effect Essay due!
Discuss reading + Presentation
Instructions, final essay
Instructions, Great Debates

Homework:
~ Gather your thoughts and refine your strategy for the debate 😊
~ Begin working on your masterful Essay Three

2 Legal Holiday – VeCo is closed (no class)

Homework:
~ Continue gathering your thoughts and refining your strategy for the debate 😊
~ Continue to work on your masterful Essay Three

WEEK FOURTEEN

1 In-class: The Great Debates

Homework:
~ Finalize Essay Three

2 Essay Three is due!
In-class: The Great Debates, cont.
Final remarks

Homework:
~ Prepare for the final exam.

WEEK FIFTEEN

The date and time for the final exam will be determined by the administration.