

THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

ADM 2510: Critical Thinking and Decision-Making

Spring 2008: Friday evenings, 6:30 – 8:30pm

March 28, April 4, 18, 25, May 9, 16, 30

Instructor: Amy Boersema

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Prerequisites: ADM 1510 and/or Sophomore standing

COURSE DESCRIPTION

People are continuously confronted with difficult professional, personal, academic, and civic problems and issues. In this course, students study problem-solving and critical thinking models, and practice improving their approaches to open-ended issues by selecting current issues to research and address. Such current issues might cover public controversies and problems, job-related issues, and personal decisions. Students learn how to avoid common pitfalls that might block their ability to think about issues and choices thoroughly, learn skills for adequately communicating their thinking to others, and are encouraged to explore various ways of thinking and problem solving within a supportive and collaborative classroom environment. In addition, students are encouraged to identify and respond to opportunities that foster continued awareness of issues affecting daily life—personally, professionally, and academically.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Using a problem-solving and decision-making model, students will learn to

- Explain why many current problems have no single correct answer
 - Recognize and monitor effects of preferences, biases, and choices
 - Describe alternative ways of looking at problems and information
 - Critically analyze information from a variety of sources (media, internet, government statistics, academic journals, recommendations from others)
 - Reach well-reasoned conclusions and decisions
 - Effectively communicate thinking to others
 - Recognize and accommodate limitations of even a well-reasoned conclusion and decisions
 - Foster ongoing awareness of, and effective response to, current issues
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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

The Women's College fully endorses the University of Denver's Honor Code and the procedures put forth by the Office of Citizenship and Community Standards. Academic dishonesty—including plagiarism, cheating, and falsification of data and research—is in violation of the code and will result in a failing grade for the assignment or for the course.

As student members of a community committed to academic integrity and honesty, it is your responsibility to become familiar with the DU Honor Code and its procedures (www.du.edu/honorcode).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attendance in all class sessions, preparedness, and active exchange of ideas	20%
2. Homework, in-class exercises and group work	80%
Total Points	100%

96-100 – A	90-95 – A-	80-82 – B-
87-89 – B+	83-86 – B	70-72 – C-
77-79 – C+	73-76 – C	60-62 – D-
67-69 – D+	63-66 – D	

Homework – Each week you will be given both reading and writing exercises for homework. It is very important that you complete the reading and writing assignments prior to the class session. The material in this course is very interactive and participation is required.

In Weeks 2-7 you will be turning in written assignments, some that you complete on your own and some that you will work in with your assigned groups. Each weeks assignment will be given one grade for the entire week's work. This will be graded on a 100-point scale. This will make up 80% of your total grade. All homework must be turned in by the end of each class day (6:00pm). Homework that is late will have 10% (1 point) deducted for each day that it is late. The other 20% is made up by attendance, class participation and in class work.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY:

Attendance is mandatory and active participation in class discussions will be a determiner in your final grade. If an emergency arises, it is your responsibility to leave a message for me and to contact your classmates for missed class work and assignments.

INCOMPLETE POLICY: A grade of incomplete ("I") will be granted only under special circumstances and will not be granted for absenteeism.

READINGS AND COURSE MATERIALS:

There is no textbook to purchase for this course. All readings will be located on Blackboard or in handouts.

Students will be working with materials drawn from "Creating Steps for Better Thinkers" at www.wolcottlynch.com and several other course materials which will be found either online or distributed throughout the class. All online links can be found in Blackboard, under "Websites."

PREPARATION FOR THE FIRST CLASS:

Read the online chapter about Critical Thinking. You will find the link to this passage on Blackboard, under "Websites."

ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE GIVEN IN EACH CLASS SESSION

<u>Class Session</u>	<u>Class Topics</u>
March 28	Introduction to The Women's College; Introduction to the course <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What is critical thinking▪ Introduction to arguments and logic▪ How to begin your argument <i>Online Reading due in class</i>
April 4	Worldviews, Assumptions, and Biases: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do our own preferences interfere with our thinking?• How do we recognize weaknesses in our own and others' reasoning?• How can we recognize and control for preferences, biases, and assumptions? <i>Exercises I(B) Homework Assignment due in class</i>
April 18	Critiquing Arguments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to fallacies• A close examination of inductive arguments <i>Exercises II(B) Homework Assignment due in class</i>
April 25	Critiquing Arguments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fallacies continued

- How can we effectively communicate our thinking to others?
- Exercises III(B) Homework Assignment due in class***

May 9

Ethical Reasoning:

- How can we organize information to help us reach a conclusion or decision?
- How can we use values to help us reach decisions?
- What is ethical reasoning?
- How can we effectively communicate our thinking to others?

Exercises IV(B) Homework Assignment due in class

May 16

Legal and Moral Reasoning: Reasoning by Analogy

- What is legal and moral reasoning?
- Examining statutes and legal arguments

Exercises V(B) Homework Assignment due in class

May 30

Conclusion:

- What did you learn in this course about critical thinking and argument reasoning?

Exercises VI(B) Homework Assignment due in class with final group work.