

TAMALPAIS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
Larkspur, California

Course of Study

Critical Thinking
Contemporary Strand

I. INTRODUCTION: COURSE DESCRIPTION

- A. The purpose of Critical Thinking is to help students develop their ability to think, read, speak and write clearly, logically, and effectively.
- B. The course contributes to attainment of the following District student learning outcomes:
- #1. communicate effectively and persuasively when speaking and writing;
 - #2. read and analyze materials in a variety of disciplines;
 - #3. analyze and propose solutions to contemporary issues using a variety of perspectives;
 - #4. demonstrate knowledge, skills and self-discipline necessary to achieve and maintain physical and emotional well being.

Critical Thinking will contribute to the attainment of the following Tam 21st Century Goals:

- acquire, manage and use knowledge and skills;
 - think critically and creatively;
 - develop respect and understanding for the diversity of our community;
 - understand individual and cultural differences;
 - take responsibility for self and community.
- C. Critical Thinking is designed to help students learn to use their critical thinking skills in all other classes. Although it is considered an English course, it will help students not only in other English classes but in social studies and science courses.

D. Goals of Critical Thinking

1. identify and analyze styles of communication; demonstrate an awareness of effective and ineffective communication by analyzing a variety of styles; describe the thinking processes used to solve the communication problems suggested by literature, and media, and direct observation;
2. know the difference between fact, inference and judgment;
3. recognize the complexity of viewpoints and learn to address that complexity through techniques taught in the class;
4. compare and contrast the way several periodicals cover a particular political event;
5. analyze the way a student's world view on a particular subject has been changed by examining several arguments on the topic;
6. analyze the ways the American public is influenced by advertisers, the media, or textbooks.
7. identify and formulate problems, as well as propose and evaluate ways to solve them;
8. identify, recognize, and use inductive and deductive reasoning,
9. recognize fallacies in reasoning;
10. draw reasonable conclusions from information found in various sources, whether written, spoken, tabular, or graphic, and to defend one's conclusions rationally;

II. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Writing:
 - a. use the stages in the writing process, especially responding, revising, and editing;
 - b. apply basic grammar and appropriate vocabulary in the context of their writing;
 - c. write well-developed essays using the thesis statement effectively to focus the essay, and practice patterns of organization, such as chronology, classification, and steps in a process, with appropriate transitional techniques, language and form to suit purpose and audience;

- d. draw generalizations from recorded observation and experience--e.g., from stories, poems, journal entries, autobiographical and biographical pieces, descriptions and accounts--and support them with convincing evidence and examples;
- e. use deduction and induction, understand logical fallacies, know what constitutes evidence and authority, while distinguishing between primary and secondary sources;
- f. develop an interpretation that uses convincing textual evidence for support and explain the interpretation rationally to convince the reader of its soundness;
- g. examine ideas and information from a variety of sources and draw conclusions about the point and purpose of that information and to evaluate the conclusions and determine whether or not they are sound;
- h. analyze information from various sources through systematic notetaking, integrate material from outside sources into their own work, and acknowledge those sources.

2. Literature/Reading:

- a. understand and use the language of literary criticism, such as setting, characterization, foreshadowing, symbolism, and metaphor; consult sources to enrich understanding; recognize the relationship of specific incidents to theme; understand an author's method of narration, i.e., who tells the story and how far the narrator is from the action; be aware of and understand shifts in point of view;
- b. put ideas in one's own words through such devices as paraphrase, précis, modeling, unscrambling sample passages, reading and interpreting maps, charts, and graphs; recognize that rereading enhances the reader's understanding and appreciation;
- c. determine the author's point of view and distinguish his or her bias from established fact;
- d. recognize the importance of reading beyond the assigned works and use outside sources of reference; refine the use of research techniques;
- e. develop a greater understanding of the contributions of ethnic groups by studying their traditions, their cultural stance, their similarities and differences.

3. Speaking and Listening

When speaking, students will:

- a. function effectively in class discussion by answering and asking questions coherently and by clarifying responses with clear explanations; conceive and develop ideas that are soundly reasoned and well supported;

- b. become more proficient in the various roles in editing and response groups; learn new roles: for example, panel chair, panel member, large group discussion leader, recorder, resource person;
- c. learn argumentation techniques that allow both sides of a question to surface; learn skills in logic and reasoning to support arguments on conflicting sides of a question;
- d. give careful attention to preplanning a speech; develop a regard for the audience with respect to gaining attention, sustaining interest, making efficient use of time; learn skills in organizing for various modes of presentation: analysis, persuasion, explanation, interpretation, direction, and comparison.
- e. practice oral interpretation of literature, using the techniques of emphasis, expression, dramatic pause, inflection; practice parts in dramas, attempting realistic character identity, fluency in reading dialogue, and appropriate tone and mood.

When listening, students will:

- a. develop techniques that promote supportive, polite concern for the speaker, and learn the skills necessary to offer tactful, constructive criticism.
- b. identify main and subordinate ideas presented in lectures and discussions, and evaluate them for sound reasoning and convincing support; take into account the nuances, the subtle shades of meaning.

C. Student Assessment

Students will be assessed through a variety of indicators including homework, group work, oral presentations, visuals related to the reading, quizzes on the literature, essays and other writing assignments.

Students will be expected to take an essay examination that requires them to apply the thinking and writing skills they have developed in order to synthesize and analyze material from three to four major works covered during the semester. Students will be expected to support their main ideas with specific examples from the works under discussion.

D. Course Assessment

Critical Thinking will be assessed through formal and informal surveys of the students. Course and unit goals will be reviewed by teacher on a regular basis.

III. METHODS AND MATERIALS

A. Methods:

Students will complete a variety of interrelated writing assignments adapted from the James Moffet writing sequence. More than one paper may be required for each assignment. In addition to four process papers per semester, minor papers will be assigned regularly.

Eight different writing types have been identified as the focus for the upper division writing program: observation, reflection, controversial issue, interpretation, evaluation, report of information, autobiography, and speculation.

B. Literature

Every teacher of Critical Thinking will teach a selection of the following titles to guarantee consistency throughout the district. Each student will read at least four major works per semester.

Core Selections

Olson, Carol Booth. *Thinking Writing: Fostering Critical Thinking Through Writing.*

BOOKS

Faulkner, William.	<i>Intruder in the Dust.</i>
Fleishman, Alfred.	<i>Dialogue with Street Fighters.</i>
Hayakawa, S.I.	<i>Language in Thought and Action.</i>
Hayakawa, S.I.	<i>Through the Language Barrier.</i>
Johnson, Kenneth, et.al.	<i>Nothing Never Happens.</i>
Kahane, Howard.	<i>Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric.</i>
Keyes, Kenneth S.	<i>How to Develop Your Thinking Ability</i>
Koestler, Arthur.	<i>Darkness at Noon.</i>
Lakoff, Robin.	<i>Language and Woman's Place.</i>
Lee, Irving and Laura.	<i>Handling Barriers in Communication.</i>
Minteer, Catherine.	<i>Words and What They Do to You.</i>
Morain, Mary, ed.	<i>Classroom Exercises in General Semantics.</i>
Morain, Mary, ed.	<i>Teaching General Semantics.</i>
Orwell, George.	<i>Politics and the English Language</i>
Potter, Robert.	<i>Making Sense.</i>

Rank, Hugh.
Shrank, Jeffrey.
Twain, Mark.

The Pitch.
Understanding Mass Media.
Mark Twain on the Damned Human Race.

PLAYS

Giraudoux, Jean.
Harnick, Sheldon.

Apollo of Bellac.
The Apple Tree.

STORIES

Doyle, Arthur Conan

"A Scandal in Bohemia" (importance of inference making)

Jackson, Shirley

"After You, My Dear Alphonse." (examining stereotypes)

Shulman, Max

"Love is a Fallacy" (looking at logical fallacies)

IV. GENERAL INFORMATION

Critical Thinking is a 5 credit course open to juniors, seniors and second semester sophomores.

A. Prerequisites. There are no course prerequisites

B. Requirements Met.

This course may be used in partial fulfillment of the English graduation requirement.

This course is accepted toward the "b" or "g" requirement for US admissions. It is also accepted for the CSU English requirement.