

# Intro to Critical Thinking Toolbox

**Professor:** Rob Whyte

**I. Description and Objectives:** This course begins at the intersection of language learning and critical thinking. Most of the course content is aimed at helping trainees improve their capacity to speak, read, and think critically. We'll do that by learning 5 or 6 important concepts and engaging these ideas in thoughtful practice.

A second aim of the course is to bring critical thinking into your classroom. Can we use critical thinking to teach English? Most weeks, we'll spend some time with activities that activate higher order thinking and gamify modest aspects of the language learning process. Not everything will be practical for your unique classroom environment. That's okay because the aim is to introduce new ideas that might stimulate your imagination and creativity.

## Objectives

By the end of this course, participants will:

- find and describe the argument in a given text
- find and name logical flaws given a text or media file
- demonstrate an ability to read and think critically on an exam
- identify main points and interests
- demonstrate an ability to speak intelligently for 10 minutes on a complex and nuanced topic

**II. Texts/Materials:** There is no textbook for this class. All required materials will be provided by the instructor. We will use a variety of materials including printed readings and video.

**III. Instruction Methods:** One does not learn to think critically by reading about it. We learn by doing and reflecting. To maximize learning, a variety of instructional methods will be used. Minimal instructor lectures will introduce topics, assignments, or workshop activities. Trainees will participate in a range of pair work and group work activities. Please note there is required reading; enough time will be provided in class for that work.

During the last week of the course, each student will deliver an in-class presentation. Each presentation will be 10 minutes in length. Quite short by most standards, it will test your ability to define a specific topic and stay focused.

**IV. Evaluation.** There will be a final exam.

- 50% participation
- 10% critical thinking exam
- 40% final presentation

**V. Instructor Requirements.** Please make every effort to minimize tardiness and leaving early. Please bring questions, problems, or concerns promptly to your instructor. Participation means you are in class ready to go and ready to learn. This syllabus is subject to change according to the needs of participants at the discretion of the teacher. Please silence all cell phones, and in the event of an emergency call, excuse yourself from the class.

#### **IV. Weekly Agenda**

##### Week 1

- Arguments
- Fallacies #1
- Article #1 (read, analyse, discuss)

##### Week 2

- Fallacies #2
- Article #2 (read, analyse, discuss)
- Critical thinking classroom activities #1

##### Week 3

- Correlation and Causation
- Article #3 (read, analyse, discuss)
- Critical thinking classroom activities #2

##### Week 4

- Hypothesis
- Critical thinking practice: video analysis
- Critical thinking classroom activities #3

##### Week 5

- Analogies
- Critical thinking practice: Electric car
- Critical thinking classroom activities #4

##### Week 6

- Positions and Interests
- Critical thinking practice: negotiation #1 gas station
- Critical thinking classroom activities #5

##### Week 7

- Critical thinking test
- Outline presentation task (next week)
- Critical thinking classroom activities #6

##### Week 8

- Individual presentations (moral dilemmas)