ABC 301 – SO YOU THINK YOU ARE A CRITICAL THINKER?
UNIQUE NUMBER: 12345

FALL 2021

Class Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM, CDF 212

Instructor: Dr. A. Spock
Pronouns: They/Them/Theirs
Email: Use Canvas to email
Phone: 512.232.0000 (*office*)

Office: GHI 223
Office Hours: Fridays 10:00 – 11:00 am and by appointment

Teaching Assistant: James Kirk
Pronouns: They/Them/Theirs
Email: Use Canvas to email
Phone: 512.232.1234 (*office*)

Office: GHI 223
Office Hours: Fridays 2:00 – 3:00 pm and by appointment

Course Description	Course Requirements	Policies
Course times, location, and instructors University catalog course description What will I learn? Skills and attitudes Learning outcomes How will I learn? Prerequisites for the course How to succeed in this course	Required materials and devices Classroom expectations Description of major assignments Course grades Course schedule including required readings, dates of major assignments and exams	Classroom Statements & Policies University Resources & Supports for Students Safety information University Policies

Course Description

University Catalog Course Description

ABC 301 introduces 1st year students to the university's academic community through exploration of new interests and engagement in college level thinking and learning.

What will I learn?

Critical thinking is that mode of thinking - about any subject, content, or problem - in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them. (Paul & Elder 2008)

Life can be described as a sequence of problems that each individual must solve for one's self. Developing skills to grapple with those problems can be invaluable, both in life and in your university courses. Throughout the course you will be building critical thinking skills that will teach you how to collect, differentiate, analyze, and synthesize information from a variety of sources. You will learn how to process that information to reach decisions with full knowledge of assumptions and consequences in order to build a well-formed argument. As a member of a team, you will use those critical thinking skills to explore a controversial problem or issue and based on your research will develop and communicate an argument based on the issue in a creative and academically sound manner.

Main skills and attitudes to be developed

- Formulate ideas in writing
- Support ideas with effective evidence

- Develop critical thinking skills
- Understand and practice ethical communication
- Effectively collaborate with teams

Learning Outcomes

1. Identify the parts of an argument (including types of evidence, reasoning and fallacies).
2. Compare the quality of two or more competing explanations.
3. Evaluate evidence and make appropriate inferences from that evidence.
4. Create an ethical argument that makes a plausible case for a position on an issue.
5. Demonstrate effective teamwork skills.

How will I learn?

The structure of this course is built around Team-Based Learning (TBL) which is a highly participatory method. TBL will increase your understanding of course concepts by using them to solve authentic, real-world problems and help you develop your workplace learning skills. The primary course goal is to support using course content to solve significant problems; in fact, the bulk of class time will be spent solving problems and making decisions to help you become a critical thinker. It will be done in a way that will hold teams accountable for solving problems that will be shared and subject to cross-team discussion/critique.

Pre-requisites for the course

There are no prerequisites for this course but bringing an inquisitive approach and reflective attitude to what you will learn will allow you to reap maximum benefits.

How to succeed in this course

Focus on Process. This course is primarily about process, not content. We will have texts and videos that you have to read carefully in order to participate successfully in the class sessions where you will be using information to understand important concepts, foster engaging ideas and explore ways of thinking.

Be reflective. The assigned readings provide the backdrop for discussing the critical thinking ideas and concepts. Learning in this class is not just memorizing the material and being able to parrot it back. You will have the opportunity to reflect more deeply on your own and others' perspectives and assumptions, and be expected to draw, articulate, and justify conclusions with solid reasons.

Course Requirements

Required Materials

There are no textbooks that you are required to purchase for this course. Class materials, supplemental resources, grades, and announcements will be posted on the course Canvas site: https://utexas.instructure.com. We recommend bookmarking this course site in your default browser for easy access.

Classroom expectations

Your preparation for discussion and participation is extremely important for you and your team. Here are some ground rules:

- **Respect for others is vital.** You can expect that as the instructor, I am concerned about the educational experience of each student in the class, respectful of individual differences, encouraging of creativity, reasonably open and accessible to discuss material and assignments, thorough in evaluating assignments, and rigorous yet supportive in maintaining high standards for performance.
  As a student, you are expected to work individually and with others, to create an atmosphere that is safe, valuing of one another, and open to diverse perspectives. Everyone is expected to show courtesy, civility, and respect for one another. Comments or postings that degrade or ridicule another, whether based on individual or cultural differences, are unacceptable.
- **Participation/Engagement.** Thinking is not a spectator sport. You need to participate in class by communicating your understanding and testing others' understanding with questions and dialogue. This course requires active participation, which is crucial to your success in becoming a critical thinker. The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. Active participation includes being prepared to discuss readings, assignments, and concepts, engaging yourself in classroom activities and discussion, and putting your best effort in both formal and informal assignments. Regardless of the format we use to conduct class sessions, consider your participation to be the equivalent to a face-to-face class session and be prepared to engage actively and thoughtfully with me and your peers.
- **Have fun!** This course is an adventure in exploring your thought processes, empowering yourself with the ability to evaluate information, and reasoning through arguments that you encounter. Some of what we do may be personally and intellectually uncomfortable. It is OK to express your discomfort as long as you are open to safely exploring beyond those comfort zones. Make the most of it and have fun!

Assignments

Assessment of your learning will occur through a variety of venues including the final project, reflection journals, homework assignments, quizzes, application activities, content synthesis, and class/team participation.

1. **Final Project** *(Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)*
   For your final project your team will choose a controversial issue and build a well-developed argument. You may **choose** to present this argument in a standard presentation format, a documentary (digital storytelling), a skit, or another means approved by me in advance. Regardless of how you and your team choose to present this project, you will each individually write a 1-page synopsis of the argument and a 1-page reflection on the process of building that argument. Complete instructions will be found on Canvas. (30% of your grade)

2. **Reflection Journals** *(Outcomes 1 and 2)*
   You will have a series of four reflections to submit for this course, **submitted as a Canvas Journal entry**. You may **choose** to submit these reflections as written entries, audio recordings, or video diaries. *These reflections will be graded on use of critical thinking vocabulary, personal relevance, and depth of thought and self-analysis.* Each reflection will be outlined in detail on Canvas. In anticipation that your reflection thinking will improve over time as you incorporate the feedback you are given, each reflection journal counts for more points than the previous one. (20% of your grade)

3. **Homework Assignments** *(Outcomes 1 and 2)*

After your team in-class activities you be given assignments to show you understand and can use the concepts on your own. Your lowest two scores at the end of the semester will be dropped from the grade book. (10% of your grade)

4. **Readiness Assessment Quizzes** *(Outcomes 1 and 2)*
   There are no formal exams in this course. There will be weekly Readiness Assurance Quizzes based on the assigned reading; these will ensure that you are prepared to discuss the material in class and apply the information to your other activities. Your lowest two scores at the end of the semester will be dropped from the grade book. (10% of your grade)

5. **Application Activities** *(Outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 5)*
   Part of our time in class each week will be spent applying the concepts and skills that are being explored. These are strategic opportunities for individuals and their teams to apply various aspects of critical thinking. Grades will be generated based on individual and/or teamwork depending on the particular format of the in-class exercise. Your lowest two scores at the end of the semester will be dropped from the grade book. (5% of your grade)

6. **Content Synthesis** *(Outcome 1)*
   Each week you will be given resources to give you information to be used in the next class. To help you analyze the content more thoughtfully you should fill out the chart given you each week and post it in Canvas by 5:00 p.m. each Wednesday. (5% of your grade)

7. **Team Participation** *(Outcome 5)*
   Participating as a productive team member is crucial to this class, therefore, part of your grade will come from you evaluating other team members and them evaluating you. There will be two team evaluations where you give written feedback to your team members and a final evaluation that is a quantitative assessment. (10% of your grade)

8. **Class participation**
   For the purposes of this class, **participation** means *obvious* engagement. We understand that folks "engage" in different ways – some like to talk it out, some like to listen and absorb, some write it down for later digestion. When we say "obvious engagement", we mean being punctual, alert and attentive. Just to be clear, clues to us that you are not engaged and participating include head down on the desk, texting or generally having a mobile device in your hand, not being a contributing member of small team work we do in class, or talking amongst your classmates about something not related to what we're discussing. (10% of your grade)

Grading for this Course

The following table represents how you will demonstrate your learning and how we will assess the degree to which you have done so.

Assignments	Points possible	Percent of Total Grade
1. Arguing an Issue Project	**300**	**30%**
2. Reflection Journals	**200**	**20%**
• Preliminary Reflection • Unit 1 Reflection • Unit 2 Reflection Integrated Reflection	20 40 60 80	2% 4% 6% 8%
3. Homework Assignments	**100**	**10%**
8 assignments, top 7 count	Points vary with assignment	
4. Readiness Assessment Quizzes	**100**	**10%**
11 quizzes, top 10 count	10 points each quiz	10 X 1%
5. Application Activities	**50**	**5%**
Given for in-class activities at various times		
6. Content Synthesis	**100**	**10%**
11 charts, top 10 count	10 points each assignment	
7. Team Participation	**100**	**10%**
• Preliminary peer evaluation • Mid semester peer evaluation • Final project peer evaluation	20 30 50	
8. Class Participation	**50**	**5%**

Course Schedule

All instructions, assignments, readings, rubrics and essential information will be on the Canvas website at https://utexas.instructure.com. Check this site regularly and use it to ask questions about the course schedule.

Changes to the schedule may be made at my discretion and if circumstances require. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced (although I will do my best to ensure that you receive the changes with as much advanced notice as possible).

Week	Date	Day	Class Topic	Out of class activities	Assignments due
1	8/30	Th	Intro to course: where does information come from?	Read and internalize syllabus and investigate Canvas site	Homework assignment 1 due Monday before midnight
Unit 1: Nature of the Thinker					
2	9/4	T	Human tendencies in thinking	Reading 1, see Canvas for details	Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight
	9/6	TH	RAP 1 on human tendencies in thinking		Preliminary Reflection Journal (1) due
3	9/11	T	Ways of knowing and sources of information	Reading 2, see Canvas for details	Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight
	9/13	TH	RAP 2 on ways of knowing and sources of information		Homework assignment 2 due Monday before midnight
4	9/18	T	Use and evaluation of sources of information	Reading 3, see Canvas for details	Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight
	9/20	TH	RAP 3 on use and evaluation of sources of information		Homework assignment 3 due Monday before midnight
5	9/25	T	Critical thinking as an assessable skill	Reading 4, see Canvas for details	Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight
	9/27	TH	RAP 4 on critical thinking as an assessable skill		Homework assignment 4 due Monday before midnight
6	10/2	T	Critical thinking in model situations	Reading 5, see Canvas for details	Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight
	10/4	TH	RAP 5 on critical thinking in model situations		Homework assignment 5 due Monday before midnight
7	10/9	T	Critical reading	Reading 6, see Canvas for details	Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight
	10/11	TH	RAP 6 on critical reading		Homework assignment 6 due Monday before midnight
Unit 2: Tools of the Thinker					

8	10/16	T	Argument as a platform for critical thinking	Reading 7, see Canvas for details	Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight
	10/18	TH	RAP 7 on argument as a platform for critical thinking		Unit 1 Reflection Journal (2) due
9	10/23	T	Developing and building arguments	Reading 8, see Canvas for details	Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight
	10/25	TH	RAP 8 on developing and building arguments		Homework assignment 7 due Monday before midnight
10	10/30	T	Methods of persuasion	Reading 9, see Canvas for details	Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight
	11/1	TH	RAP 9 on methods of persuasion		Homework assignment 8 due Monday before midnight
11	11/6	T	Critical evaluation of arguments and methods of persuasion	Reading 10, see Canvas for details	Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight
	11/8	TH	RAP 10 on Critical evaluation of arguments and methods of persuasion		Overview of argument for documentary due start of class
12	11/13	T	Counter arguments and devil's advocate arguments.	Reading 11, see Canvas for details	Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight
	11/15	TH	RAP 11 on counter arguments and devil's advocate arguments.		Unit 2 Reflection Journal (3)
Unit 3: Being a Critical Thinker					
13	11/20	T	Developing team documentaries	Work on team documentary	
	11/22	TH	Thanksgiving: No Class		
14	11/27	T	Presenting documentaries		Final project due, documentary and written paper, start of class
	11/29	TH	Presenting documentaries		
15	12/4	T	Reflection on presented arguments		Integrated Reflections (4) due, start of class
	12/6	TH	Closure and evaluation; return final papers		

Policies

Classroom Statements and Policies

Land Acknowledgment
I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the Indigenous lands of Turtle Island, the ancestral name for what is now called North America. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge the Alabama-Coushatta, Caddo, Carrizo &/Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Comanche, Kickapoo, Lipan Apache, Tonkawa and Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas.

Optional follow-up:
Land Engagements and/or Commitments

In recognition of the ongoing and cumulative challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples in Central Texas and globally, we call upon The University of Texas at Austin:

- To repatriate the ancestral remains held by the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory to their Indigenous descendant communities and Native lands.
- To commit to the active recruitment and material support of Native American and Indigenous students, who currently comprise fewer than 0.2% of UT Austin's student body.
- To support the transition of the Program in Native American and Indigenous Studies into a Center.
- To establish a protocol of research and study on Tribal or Native lands, and to foster an ethics and practice of engaged scholarship, with and for Indigenous peoples and communities, locally and internationally.

Statement on Learning Success
Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need to be adaptable because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UT. Many are listed on this syllabus, but I am happy to connect you with a person or Center if you would like.

Statement on Flexibility
In acknowledgement of COVID 19 and its impact on the University of Texas at Austin community, this course will reaffirm one of the core values here at UT Austin: responsibility. Our responsibility to ourselves and each other is to put our humanity in the forefront of our academic pursuits. With that being said, this semester I commit to being adaptable in this time of great need, which is reflected in the course policies below around attendance, grading, and assignments/exams.

If you experience any hardships such as illness, accident, family crisis please know that these policies may be amended and therefore you should communicate with me as soon as you feel comfortable doing so. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing with me, please visit Student Emergency Services. For additional campus resources, please visit protect.utexas.edu.

Personal Pronouns
Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name, unless they have added a "preferred name" with the Gender and Sexuality Center, which you can do so here: http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/publications-and-resources/. I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the gender pronouns you use (she/he/they/ze, etc). Please advise me of any changes early in the semester so that I may make appropriate updates to my records. For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit

https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/profile-pronouns.

Grading Policies

As I hope you can see, flexibility is built into the assignments to support your success in this course. If you miss a smaller assignment or don't do as well on your earlier journal entries, your grade will not be impacted significantly. Consequently, the final grades are firm, and no additional curve is available.

Grade	Cutoff	Points needed
A A-	94% 90%	940 900
B+ B B-	87% 84% 80%	870 840 800
C+ C C-	77% 74% 70%	770 740 700
D	65%	650
F	<65%	<650

Late work and grade periods

No late assignments will be accepted. However, this semester each student will have an "End of the week" grace period for two (2) assignments to be used at your discretion. "End of the week" is defined as Saturday at 9pm, so as long as you submit the assignment before that time, you will have used one of your two allotted "end of the week" grace periods and no points will be taken for lateness.

(For example: The assignment is due Tuesday at noon. If you turn it in that Tuesday at 1:00pm, you will have used one of your "end of the week" grace periods. Similarly, if you turn it in on Friday at 3:00pm you will have used one of these grace periods.)

Absences

Being present is critical to achieving our goals for this course. You are welcome to utilize one (1) class absence during the semester as needed without explanation to me. In this case, you will be allowed to make up assignments or participation points you may have missed during this session. In addition to participating in synchronous meetings, you can earn participation points through assignments and asynchronous discussions. However, please keep in mind that if you miss multiple classes, you will begin to see a dip in your attendance and participation points.

If you are absent on the day that your team meets, you are responsible for providing your team with the necessary information to compensate for your absence. *It is crucial to keep in communication with your team members; you are responsible for letting both us and your team know if you cannot make it to a class*.

Excused Absence: Absences will be considered excused if they are for religious holidays or extenuating circumstances due to medical or family emergencies. If you plan to miss class due to observance of a religious holiday, please let us know at least two weeks in advance. You will not be penalized for this absence, although you will still be responsible for any work you will miss on that day if applicable. Check with us for details or arrangements.

If you have to be absent, use your resources wisely. Ask your team and other classmates to get a run-down and notes on any lessons you miss. If you find there are topics that we covered while you were gone that raise questions, you may come by during office hours or schedule a meeting to discuss. Email specific questions you have in advance so that we can make the most of our time. "What did I miss?" is not specific enough.

University Resources and Supports for Students

Services for Students with Disabilities

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD's website for contact and more information: http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Counseling and Mental Health Center

The Counseling and Mental Health Center serves UT's diverse campus community by providing high quality, innovative and culturally informed mental health programs and services that enhance and support students' well-being, academic and life goals. To learn more about your counseling and mental health options, call CMHC at (512) 471-3515.

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, call the CMHC Crisis Line 24/7 at (512) 471-2255.

The Sanger Learning Center

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

BeVocal

BeVocal is a university-wide initiative to promote the idea that individual Longhorns have the power to prevent high-risk behavior and harm. At UT Austin all Longhorns have the power to intervene and reduce harm. To learn more about BeVocal and how you can help to build a culture of care on campus, go to: https://wellnessnetwork.utexas.edu/BeVocal.

Wellbeing Resources

Longhorn Wellness Center resources for self-care
Virtual Mindfulness and Stress Reduction Activities

Undergraduate Writing Center: http://uwc.utexas.edu/
Libraries: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/
ITS: http://www.utexas.edu/its/
Student Emergency Services: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/
UT University Health Services: https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/

Important Safety Information

COVID-19 Update: While I will post information related to the contemporary situation on campus, you are encouraged to stay up-to-date on the latest news as related to the student experience.
https://protect.utexas.edu/

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCCAL (the Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn't feel right – it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, http://www.utexas.edu/safety/

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency

Title IX Reporting

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university's relevant policies.

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported. **I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX related incidents** that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, including the types of conduct covered under Texas Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.

Emergency Evacuation Procedures

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, http://www.utexas.edu/safety/

University Policies

Academic Integrity

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: "As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity." **Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT.** Therefore, if you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT's Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address: https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/standardsofconduct.php

Q Drop Policy

If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you'll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information about Q drops in general, see: http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop. For

COVID-19 Updates

For the most up to date information on learning during COVID-19, including guidance about safety, cloth masks in classrooms, and classroom guidelines, see https://protect.utexas.edu/learning/.