**ABC 301 – SO YOU THINK YOU ARE A CRITICAL THINKER?**

**UNIQUE NUMBER: 12345**

**SPRING 2024**

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

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| **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 |

\*Per my right, I prohibit carrying of handguns in my personal office. Note that this information will also be conveyed to all students verbally during the first week of class. This written notice is intended to reinforce the verbal notification, and is not a “legally effective” means of notification in its own right.

| **Course Description** | **Course Requirements** | **Policies & Resources** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Course times, location, and instructors  University catalog course description  Prerequisites for the course  What will I learn?  How will I learn?  How can I succeed in this course? | Required materials  Policies & disclosures  Classroom expectations  Description of major assignments Course grades and grading policies  Course schedule including required readings, dates of major assignments and exams | Classroom Policies & University Resources  Important Safety information |

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| **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.

## 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.

## 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.

*Teaching Modality Information*

This is an in-person course and class meetings will be held in-person throughout the semester.

*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 shared on this syllabus, but I am happy to connect you with a person or Center if you would like.

*University Policies and Resources*

For a list of important university policies and helpful resources that you may need as you engage with and navigate your courses and the university, see the [University Policies and Resources Students Canvas](https://utexas.instructure.com/enroll/TP964H) page. The page includes the language of the University Honor Code and information about how to receive support through the office of Disability & Access.

## How can I 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.

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| **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.

### **Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited**

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class without explicit, written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. The University is aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to [Student Conduct and Academic Integrity](https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/) in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in initiation of the student conduct process and include charge(s) for academic misconduct, potentially resulting in sanctions, including a grade impact.

### **Confidentiality of Class Recordings**

Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

### **Getting Help with Technology**

Students needing help with technology in this course should contact the [ITS Service Desk](https://its.utexas.edu/contact).

## 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!

### **Content Warning**

### Our classroom provides an open space for the critical and orderly exchange of ideas through discussion. Some readings and other content in this course will include topics and comments that some students may find offensive and/or traumatizing. I’ll aim to forewarn students about potentially disturbing content and I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity.

**Artificial Intelligence**

The creation of artificial intelligence tools for widespread use is an exciting innovation. These tools have both appropriate and inappropriate uses in classwork. The use of artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT) in this class shall be permitted on a limited basis. You will be informed as to the assignments for which AI may be utilized. You are also welcome to seek my prior-approval to use AI writing tools on any assignment. In either instance, AI writing tools should be used with caution and proper citation, as the use of AI should be properly attributed. Using AI writing tools without my permission or authorization, or failing to properly cite AI even where permitted, shall constitute a violation of UT Austin’s Institutional Rules on academic integrity. If you are considering the use of AI writing tools but are unsure if you are allowed or the extent to which they may be utilized appropriately, please ask.

## 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.

#### 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)**

#### 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)**

#### 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)**

#### 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)**

#### 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)**

#### 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)**

#### 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)**

#### 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 | 20 | 2% |
| * Unit 1 Reflection | 40 | 4% |
| * Unit 2 Reflection | 60 | 6% |
| Integrated Reflection | 80 | 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 | 20 |  |
| * Mid semester peer evaluation | 30 |
| * Final project peer evaluation | 50 |
| **8. Class Participation** | **50** | **5%** |

#### 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.

### **Religious Holy Days**

### By [UT Austin policy](https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/attendance/), you must notify me of your pending absence for a religious holy day as far in advance as possible of the date of observance. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

#### 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.)*

**Grading Policy**

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

### **Academic Integrity Expectations**

Students who violate University rules on academic misconduct are subject to the student conduct process. A student found responsible for academic misconduct may be assigned both a status sanction and a grade impact for the course. The grade impact could range from a zero on the assignment in question up to a failing grade in the course. A status sanction can include a written warning, probation, deferred suspension or dismissal from the University. To learn more about academic integrity standards, tips for avoiding a potential academic misconduct violation, and the overall conduct process, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>.

**Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT** and is subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course**.**To learn more about what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, see the [**Avoiding Plagiarism tutorial**](https://guides.lib.utexas.edu/c.php?g=539686&p=8083280) developed by the UT Libraries in partnership with the Writing Flag program and Student Judicial Services.

**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 | Day | Class Topic | Out of class activities |  | Assignments due | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 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** | | |  |  |  | |
| 1 | T | Human tendencies in thinking | Reading 1, see Canvas for details | Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight | | |
| 2 | TH | RAP 1 on human tendencies in  thinking |  | Preliminary Reflection  Journal (1) due | | |
|  | T | Ways of knowing and sources of  information | Reading 2, see Canvas for details | Completed reading chart due  Wednesday before midnight | | |
| 3 | TH | RAP 2 on ways of knowing and  sources of information |  | Homework assignment 2 due  Monday before midnight | | |
|  | T | Use and evaluation of sources of  information | Reading 3, see Canvas for details | Completed reading chart due  Wednesday before midnight | | |
| 4 | TH | RAP 3 on use and evaluation of sources of information |  | Homework assignment 3 due Monday before midnight | | |
|  | T | Critical thinking as an assessable  skill | Reading 4, see Canvas for details | Completed reading chart due  Wednesday before midnight | | |
| 5 | TH | RAP 4 on critical thinking as an assessable skill |  | Homework assignment 4 due Monday before midnight | | |
|  | T | Critical thinking in model situations | Reading 5, see Canvas for details | Completed reading chart due  Wednesday before midnight | | |
| 6 | TH | RAP 5 on critical thinking in model situations |  | Homework assignment 5 due Monday before midnight | | |
|  | T | Critical reading | Reading 6, see Canvas for details | Completed reading chart due  Wednesday before midnight | | |
| 7 | TH | RAP 6 on critical reading |  | Homework assignment 6 due  Monday before midnight | | |
| **Unit 2: Tools of the Thinker** | | | | | | |
| 7 | T | Argument as a platform for critical  thinking | Reading 7, see Canvas for details | Completed reading chart due  Wednesday before midnight | | |
| 8 | TH | RAP 7 on argument as a platform  for critical thinking |  | Unit 1 Reflection Journal (2)  due | | |
|  | T | Developing and building arguments |  |  | | | |
| 9 | TH | RAP 8 on developing and building  arguments | Reading 8, see Canvas for details | Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight  Monday before midnight | | | |
|  | T | Methods of persuasion | Reading 9, see Canvas for details | Homework assignment 7 due | | | |
| 10 | TH | Spring break: No class |  |  | | | |
|  | T | Spring break: No class |  |  | | | |
| 11 | TH | RAP 9 on methods of persuasion |  | Homework assignment 8 due  Monday before midnight | | | |
|  | T | Critical evaluation of arguments and methods of persuasion | Reading 10, see Canvas for details | Completed reading chart due Wednesday before midnight | | | |
| 12 | TH | RAP 10 on Critical evaluation of  arguments and methods of persuasion |  | Overview of argument for  documentary due start of class | | | |
|  | T | Counter arguments and devil’s  advocate arguments. | Reading 11, see Canvas for  details | Completed reading chart due  Wednesday before midnight | | | |
| 13 | TH | RAP 11 on counter arguments and  devil’s advocate arguments. |  | Unit 2 Reflection Journal (3) | | | |
| **Unit 3: Being a Critical Thinker** | | | | | | | |
| 13 | T | Developing team documentaries | Work on team documentary |  | |  | |
| 14 | TH | Presenting documentaries | |  | |
|  | T | Presenting documentaries |  | Final project due, documentary and written paper, start of class | |
| 15 | TH | Presenting documentaries |  |  | |
|  | T | Reflection on presented  arguments |  | Integrated Reflections (4)  due, start of class | |
| 16 | TH | Closure and evaluation; return final papers |  |  | |

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| **POLICIES & RESOURCES** |

There are several policies and resources listed throughout this document, including some below. In addition, for a central list of UT policies and resources that you may need to refer to as you engage with and navigate your courses and the university, including the University Honor Code, Disability & Access support, and Title IX legal requirements for Texas employees, see the [University Policies and Resources Students Canvas](https://utexas.instructure.com/enroll/TP964H) page.

# Additional University Resources and Supports for Students

*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](http://wellnessnetwork.utexas.edu/BeVocal).

*Wellbeing Resources*

[Longhorn Wellness Center](https://www.healthyhorns.utexas.edu/healthpromotion.html) resources for self-care

[Virtual Mindfulness and Stress Reduction Activities](https://cmhc.utexas.edu/stress-reduction.html)

*Undergraduate Writing Center*: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

*UT Libraries*: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/>

# Important Safety Information

*Carrying of Handguns on Campus*

Please be aware of the following university policies:

* Students in this class who hold a license to carry are asked to [review the university policy regarding campus carry](https://www.utexas.edu/campus-carry#ac).
* Individuals who hold a license to carry are eligible to carry a concealed handgun on campus, including in most outdoor areas, buildings and spaces that are accessible to the public, and in classrooms.
* It is the responsibility of concealed-carry license holders to carry their handguns on or about their person at all times while on campus. Open carry is NOT permitted, meaning that a license holder may not carry a partially or wholly visible handgun on campus premises or on any university driveway, street, sidewalk or walkway, parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area.