

**COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS 4000**  
**Critical Thinking in Communication Sciences and Disorders**  
**SPRING 2008 (rev. 01-17-08)**

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Big heart, small brain clinical practice must make room  
for big heart, big brain practice.

Jenicek (2003)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** The purpose of this course is to introduce students to critical thinking and its role in the scientific understanding of communication and its disorders. The main goals are to (1) explore ways that human thinking can go wrong and lead to erroneous beliefs and bad decisions, (2) describe various factors that play a role in the application of critical thinking, (3) describe a set of strategies for engaging in critical thinking, and (4) identify how critical thinking is important for understanding and managing human communication disorders.

**LEARNER GOALS:**

1. Recognize and describe factors that form flawed beliefs and lead to poor choices.
2. Describe the processes underlying critical thinking.
3. Identify, recognize, and apply strategies that comprise critical thinking.
4. Recognize the relationship between critical thinking and evidence-based practice.

**REQUIRED TEXT:**

Browne, M.N., & Keeley, S.M. (2007). *Asking the right questions: A guide to critical thinking* (8<sup>th</sup> ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

[http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_browne\\_askingquest\\_8/](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_browne_askingquest_8/)

**REQUIRED READINGS:** (Additional readings will be added during semester.)

Dollaghan, C. (2004). Evidence-based practice in communication disorders: What do we know, and when do we know it? *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 37, 391-400.

Finn, P., Bothe, A. E., & Bramlett, R. (2005). Science and pseudoscience in communication disorders: Criteria and applications. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 14, 172-186.

Gambrill, E. (2005). The need for critical thinking. In *Critical thinking in clinical practice: Improving the quality of judgment and decisions* (2nd ed., pp. 3-29). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Nickerson, R. S. (1998). Confirmation bias: A ubiquitous phenomenon in many guises. *Review of General Psychology*, 2, 175-220.

Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2006). *The miniature guide to critical thinking: Concepts and tools*. Dillon Beach, CA: The Foundation for Critical Thinking.

Wade, C., & Tavis, C. (2008). What is psychology? *Psychology* (9th ed., pp. 3-16). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

**TOPICS AND READINGS:**

Week:	Topic	Readings:
Jan. 7 (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course syllabus &amp; orientation</li> <li>• What is critical thinking</li> </ul>	Course Syllabus
Jan. 14 (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking concepts</li> <li>• Ch. 1 – Asking the right questions</li> <li>• Ch. 2 – Issue and conclusion</li> </ul>	Paul & Elder Browne & Keeley Browne & Keeley
Jan. 21 (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 3 – What are the reasons</li> <li>• Fallibility of human thinking</li> </ul>	Browne & Keeley
Jan. 28 (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 4 – Ambiguous words and phrases</li> <li>• Ch. 5 – Value conflicts and assumptions</li> <li>• Fallibility of human thinking cont'd</li> </ul>	Browne & Keeley Browne & Keeley
Feb. 4 (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 6 – Descriptive assumptions</li> <li>• Fallibility of human thinking</li> </ul>	Browne & Keeley Nickerson
Feb. 11 (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 7 – Fallacies in reasoning</li> <li>• Foundations of critical thinking</li> </ul>	Browne & Keeley
Feb. 18 (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 8 – How good is the evidence</li> <li>• Foundations of critical thinking cont'd</li> <li>• Library skills (Guest lecturer: Nadine Cohen)</li> </ul>	Browne & Keeley Aderhold 227 (Feb. 21)
Feb. 25 (8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 9 – How good is the evidence</li> <li>• Foundations of critical thinking cont'd</li> <li>• Information literacy (Guest lecturer: Nadine Cohen)</li> </ul>	Browne & Keeley Aderhold 227 (Feb. 26)
Mar. 3 (9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 10 – Rival causes</li> <li>• Critical thinking concepts - revisited</li> </ul>	Browne & Keeley Paul & Elder
Mar. 10 (10)	Break	
Mar. 17 (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking guidelines</li> <li>• Ch. 11 – Are the statistics deceptive</li> </ul>	Wade & Tavis Browne & Keeley
Mar. 24 (12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 12 – Rival causes</li> <li>• Science and pseudoscience</li> </ul>	Browne & Keeley Finn, Bothe, & Bramlett
Mar. 31 (13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 13 – What is omitted</li> <li>• Ch. 14 – What conclusions are possible</li> </ul>	Browne & Keeley Browne & Keeley
Apr. 7 (14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence-based practice</li> <li>• Critical thinking and clinical practice</li> </ul>	Dollaghan Gambrill
Apr. 14 (15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking and clinical practice cont'd</li> <li>• Student Presentations</li> </ul>	Gambrill
Apr. 21 (16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Presentations</li> </ul>	

If a man is offered a fact which goes against his instincts, he will scrutinize it closely, and unless the evidence is overwhelming, he will refuse to believe it. If, on the other hand, he is offered something which affords a reason for acting in accordance to his instincts, he will accept it even on the slightest evidence.

Bertrand Russell

**TEACHING STATEMENT:** Due to the self-correcting nature of science, the evidence base that supports the field of communication sciences and disorders is constantly evolving. As a result, these changes can often lead to uncertainty among clinicians concerning the best course of action for assessing and managing their clients' problems. Therefore, it is essential that prospective clinicians, like you, are equipped with the basic knowledge and skills necessary for evaluating these changing views and the evidence claimed to support them. The basic premise of this course is that your willingness and ability to think critically will be an indispensable foundation for becoming an evidence-based practitioner. That is, someone who is capable of assessing knowledge claims so that you are able to make objective decisions for your clients on the basis of well-supported reasons and evidence, rather than emotion, anecdote, or wishful thinking. However, in order to learn and develop critical thinking skills, it is necessary to understand the components of these skills, how to apply and practice them, and to be able to write and talk about them. This means that much of this course will require you to read, think, write, and discuss. My goal as your instructor is to provide you with as many opportunities as I reasonably can to help you to do these things so that you may become better thinkers and, in the long run, better helping professionals.

**COURSE EVALUATION AND DATES:**

Source	Percent Final Grade	Due Date
Class Participation/Discussion	10%	N/A
Class Presentation	15%	April 17, 22, 24
CSD Critical Thinking Paper	25%	May 1 at 11:00 am
Homework Assignments	25%	TBA
Learning Journal	25%	Each Sunday by 11:55 pm

**CLASS PARTICIPATION/DISCUSSION:** Small group and class discussions will occur frequently during this course. Your participation, contributions, and questions are highly valued and, thus, will be graded. The grading rubric is below:

- A = 10% of grade: Student attended class, genuinely contributed something at every class meeting, and was obviously prepared
- B = 8% of grade: Student attended class regularly, genuinely contributed something at least every other class meeting, and was prepared most but not all of the time
- C = 6% of grade means: Student attended most class meetings, contributions were made but infrequent (e.g., every other week), not always prepared
- F = 0-3% of grade means: Student rarely attended class and was noticeably silent most of the time when attending, and clearly not prepared most times when attending

**CLASS PRESENTATION:** The goal of the class presentation is to present the results of your CSD Critical Thinking paper to an audience (see below). You will have 15 minutes to summarize your findings and 5 minutes for addressing questions from the class. The order of presentations will be randomly assigned and will occur throughout the last 3 three class meetings of the semester. Instructions for giving your talk, as well as the grading rubric, will be posted at WebCT during the latter half of the semester.

**CSD CRITICAL THINKING PAPER:** The purpose of the CSD Critical Thinking paper is to allow you to explain and apply the critical thinking strategies that you have learned during the semester. First, find an assessment or treatment approach in communication sciences and disorders that you find interesting. Next, locate two journal articles that pertain to this approach. Both articles should be reasonably current (i.e., published in the last 10 years or so). Before you begin critiquing them, show them to the instructor for approval by Week 11, which occurs the week after March break. Once the articles are approved, you will critically analyze the articles employing the various concepts and strategies discussed and practiced throughout the semester. For the write-up of your paper, you will be required to identify and define the different strategies you will be employing to analyze the articles. Write this section of the paper as if you were explaining in your own words to a naïve reader, the different elements of critical thinking that you will be using to examine the articles. Then, you will illustrate these elements by applying them separately to each of the articles. Summarize your conclusion about the credibility of each article's findings and, of course, your reasons for arriving at that conclusion. Conclude your paper by acting as if these were the only two articles available to you as a clinician in trying to decide if you should use this assessment or treatment approach with the client for whom it would be most applicable. Based on this assumption, present your reasoned decision as if you are an evidence-based practitioner, to use or not use this approach with this client. Guidelines for writing and organizing your paper, as well as the grading rubric, will be posted at WebCT during the latter half of the semester.

**HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS:** The purpose of the homework assignments is to provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of course readings and to apply some of the main concepts, principles, and strategies related to critical thinking. Readings and related questions will be posted at the course WebCT site. Answers to all homework assignments must be typed, single-spaced, and submitted on paper for grading on the due date at the end of class. You will also be expected to be prepared to discuss your answers to the homework assignment during that particular class.

Homework assignments will be graded according to the quality of your work. Quality will be judged on the basis of evidence that you addressed the questions thoroughly and accurately, when applicable. Grammar and spelling errors, typos, and word omissions will negatively impact your grade.

Homework assignments will be graded using the following 9-point scale:

1 – 3 = Missing most critical information, mostly inaccurate, many spelling/grammar errors

4 – 6 = Some critical information missing, some inaccuracies, few spelling/grammar errors

7 – 9 = Thorough and accurate, minimal-to-no spelling/grammar errors

**LEARNING JOURNAL:** The main purpose of the learning journal is to provide you with an opportunity to write about what you are learning during the course. Consider it a record of your intellectual journey across the semester. For the most part, the journal will be open-ended in that you can write about any aspect of the course that is uppermost in your mind for that particular week. For example, you could write about your reactions to lectures, class discussions, and/or course readings, such as describing what you are learning and how it relates to your own ways of thinking; discussing ideas, concepts, or strategies that you are beginning to understand or

appreciate; or examining questions/problems that relate to specific issues that are emerging from the course material. Other possibilities could be writing about connections you are beginning to see between the course material and other people's ways of thinking; or discussing connections that you are beginning to see between different strands of the course. On occasion, you may be instructed to write about a specific question or problem that the instructor sees as relevant and important for that particular week or topic. The only caveat is that, although you can include in your learning journal short summaries of some element of the lectures, course readings, or class discussions on which you want to focus, it is inadvisable to fill the entire entry with nothing but a summary of this material. Simply echoing the material is not the same as responding to or engaging with it.

Learning journals will be graded according to the quality of the entries. Quality will be judged on the basis of evidence that you are engaging with, thinking seriously about, and responding genuinely to the course material. And it is also evident that you are reacting to specific material from lectures, class discussion, and/or course readings. Unlike a graded exam, you are allowed to make mistakes and reveal misunderstandings. Mistakes and misunderstandings are part of the learning process and, thus, they are appropriate for a learning journal. However, poor paragraph construction, grammar and spelling errors, typos, and word omissions will negatively impact your grade.

Learning journals will be graded using the following 9-point scale:

- 1 – 3 = Mostly echoes course material, many spelling/grammar errors, absence of paragraphs
- 4 – 6 = Responsive, but superficial, few spelling/grammar errors, some paragraph problems
- 7 – 9 = Engaged, thoughtful, serious, minimal spelling/grammar errors, appropriate paragraphs

For the first two learning journal entries, if necessary, you may rewrite and resubmit your journal entries for reevaluation so that you can calibrate your journal with the instructor's expectations. Subsequent entries will be graded based on first submission.

Learning journals must be electronically submitted each week on Sunday by 11:55 pm via the assignment link located at the WebCT site. Your journal must be typed and single-spaced with 1-inch margins, using Times New Roman font style, 12-point font size, and readable using MSWord. At minimum, it is expected that your entry should be approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 page in length. Your journal will be graded with feedback and electronically returned via WebCT before the next journal submission is due.

**ASHA Standards:** Content of this course partially satisfies Standard III-F: The applicant must demonstrate knowledge of processes used in research and the integration of research principles into evidence-based clinical practice.

Only fools are positive.

Moe Howard

## **CLASS POLICIES:**

### **Determination of Class Grades**

A = 95-100 = Excellent

A- = 90-94.9

B+ = 85-89.9 = Good

B = 80-84.9

B- = 75-79.9

C+ = 70-74.9 = Satisfactory

C = 65-69.9

C- = 60-64.9 = Passing

D = 50-59.9

F = 0-49.9 = Failure

All assignments are due during class on the due date, unless otherwise noted. Late papers and assignments are penalized 2 points per day past the due time and date.

**Academic Honesty:** This is an important University of Georgia academic policy and I completely support it.

All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." Each student is responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.

Please see this link: <http://www.uga.edu/honesty/>

**Attendance Policy:** Regular attendance is expected and because the class size is so small it will be evident when someone is not attending.

### **Special Needs and Accommodations:**

Any student who does not understand or accept the contents of this syllabus or who has a disability or condition that compromises his/her ability to complete course requirements must notify the instructor in writing within 2 weeks of receiving the syllabus. Students with disabilities who may require academic adjustments and/or reasonable accommodations in order to participate in course activities or meet course requirements must register with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). If you qualify for services through DRC, bring your letter of accommodations to me as soon as possible.

**Final Note:** The syllabus is a general plan for the course; reasonable exceptions will be announced to the class, when necessary.