This course focuses on the development of critical thinking skills through written argumentation, and analysis of complex issues in the field of psychology. Students will learn about the common fallacies of reasoning, analyzing arguments, questioning opinion versus facts, effective problem solving, and the common errors of human cognition which impede critical thinking. Emphasis is placed on using critical thinking skills to examine contemporary issues involving human behavior, and writing effective logical arguments.
COURSE LEVEL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME(S) Supported by this course:

1. The successful student will:
   1. Identify, differentiate, and apply fundamental critical thinking concepts, such as the scientific method and inductive versus deductive arguments.

2. Examine personal assumptions and biases, demonstrating an ability to recognize specific cognitive errors that impede critical thought.

3. Demonstrate the ability to apply critical thinking skills to analyzing issues in the field psychology, and daily decision making.

4. Produce written work free of formal and informal fallacies, which demonstrates the ability to critically analyze, evaluate, and advocate ideas on important psychological issues.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Define the scientific method, and differentiate between science and pseudoscience.
2. Identify common errors in human cognition which interfere with critical thinking.
3. Evaluate the credibility of sources and claims, including statistical evidence and correlational versus experimental studies.
4. Distinguish matters of fact from issues of judgement or opinion.
5. Analyze contemporary issues in psychology, using critical thinking skills.
6. Evaluate deductive and inductive arguments, and deliberate various forms of each.
7. Recognize fallacies, rhetorical devices, and assess the strengths and weaknesses of an argument.
8. Analyze human decision making systems, including heuristics and biases in memory.
9. Develop critical arguments through the synthesis of credible evidence from various sources.
10. Demonstrate oral communication skills which effectively, accurately, and persuasively present knowledge on important psychological issues.
11. Produce written work that demonstrates the ability to critically analyze, evaluate, and advocate ideas on significant psychological topics.
12. Compose substantial essays which demonstrate appropriate use of research, as well as sophisticated structure, coherence, and style.

COURSE CONTENT:

LECTURE CONTENT:

1. Understanding Critical Thinking
   A. Knowledge vs. Beliefs
   B. Inductive and Deductive Reasoning
   C. Importance of Critical Thinking to Psychology

2. Analyzing Arguments
   A. The Scientific Method versus Pseudoscience
3. Cognitive Errors in Reasoning
   A. Confirmation bias, Post hoc analysis, Hindsight bias, Overconfidence
   B. Impact of Motivation and Emotion
   C. Social Influence: authority, conformity, culture

4. Human Decision Making Systems
   A. Benefits and Risks of Heuristics
   B. Reactive versus Reflective Thinking
   C. Biases in Memory

5. Deductive and Inductive Fallacies
   A. Biases in Perception and Misleading Arguments
   B. Role of Emotions, Memory, and Experience
   C. Fact versus Conjecture

6. Applying Critical Thinking to Issues in Psychology
   A. The Individual in Context: group think, conformity, obedience
   B. Eyewitness Testimony, Recovered Memories, Hypnosis
   C. Superstition, Astrology, Conspiracy Theories, the Paranormal
   D. DSM-5 & the Medical Model, Diagnosis & Treatment of Mental Illness
   E. Current Events, Evaluation of Faulty and Persuasive Information Presented in the Popular Media

7. Developing Understanding and Effective Decision Making
   A. Evaluating Comparative, Reflective, and Ideological Reasoning
   B. Barriers to Logic and Empirical Reasoning: false analogies, either-or fallacies, circular reasoning
   C. Applying Critical Thinking Skills to Analyzing Issues in Psychology and Daily Decision Making

8. Analyzing Linguistic Fallacies
   A. Vagueness, Rhetorical Devices, and Clarifying
   B. Identifying Formal and Informal Fallacies
   C. Role of Context and Emotional Impact
9. Creating Effective Arguments
   A. Presenting Critical Thinking Skills in Writing and Presentations
   B. Audience, Voice, Purpose, and Circumstance
   C. Constructing Sound Arguments and Avoiding Fallacies

10. Writing Analytical and Argumentative Essays
    A. Clearly Articulating Facts, Examples, Data, or Evidence in Support of a Claim
    B. Analyzing Sources and Presenting Sufficient Support for Claims
    C. Using APA Style for Citation and References

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:
   A. Lecture:
   B. Online:

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES:

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:
   Reading Assignments

Assigned Textbook Reading
Analysis of Current Events and Contemporary Issues in Psychology
Verbal/Reading Reasoning Exercises
Analysis of Written Arguments
Evaluation of Faulty and Persuasive Information Presented in the Media

Out-of-class Assignments
Research for course writing assignments, class presentations, and projects.

Writing Assignments
1. A series of substantial essays demonstrating an increasingly sophisticated structure, coherence, and style.
   A. Essays which develop critical arguments through the synthesis of credible evidence from various sources.
   B. Essays analyzing the written arguments of others, demonstrating the ability to distinguish matters of fact from issues of judgement or opinion.
   C. Research based essays, written in APA format, which evaluate the credibility of sources and claims.
   D. Reflective essays which examine personal assumptions and biases, demonstrating an ability to recognize cognitive errors which interfere with critical thought.
2. Critical thinking writing assignments which require:
A. Constructing sound arguments.
B. Avoiding logical fallacies.
C. Supplying sufficient support for claims.
D. Using outside sources, and evaluating the suitability and appropriateness of sources.
E. Refuting arguments by recognizing fallacies and utilizing appropriate sources.
F. Demonstration of the ability to critically analyze, evaluate, and advocate ideas.
G. Appropriate use of APA style for citation and references.

3. Essay questions on exams, requiring application of critical thinking skills to the analysis of psychological issues.

4. A total of 6,000 to 8,000 words in substantial essay assignments (not including revisions) will be required of each student. Written work will be evaluated for both content and form.

METHODS OF STUDENT EVALUATION:
Short Quizzes
Written Assignments
Essay Examinations
Objective Examinations
Report
Projects (ind/group)
Problem Solving Exercises
Oral Presentations
Skills Demonstration

Demonstration of Critical Thinking:

1. Assessments critiquing the arguments of others, demonstrating an ability to analyze the argumentation presented on opposing sides of an issue in psychology.

2. Assessments which identify, differentiate, and apply critical thinking concepts, such as the scientific method and inductive versus deductive arguments.

3. Assessments requiring the analysis of human decision making systems, including heuristics and biases in memory.

4. Assessments requiring application of critical thinking skills to analyze issues in the field of psychology and daily decision making.

5. Writing assignments free of formal and informal fallacies, demonstrating the ability to critically analyze, evaluate, and advocate ideas on important psychological issues.

6. Reflective writing assignments examining personal assumptions and biases, demonstrating an ability to recognize cognitive errors which impede critical thought.

7. Substantial essay assignments evaluating acceptability and consistency of premises, use of fallacies and other rhetorical devices.

8. Substantial research-based essay assignments, evaluating the credibility of sources and claims.

9. Class presentations demonstrating oral communication skills and the ability to effectively, accurately, and persuasively present knowledge on important psychological topics.
Required Writing, Problem Solving, Skills Demonstration:

1. Assessments requiring an examination of personal assumptions and biases, demonstrating an ability to recognize specific cognitive errors that impede critical thought.

2. Assessments demonstrating the ability to apply critical thinking skills to analyzing issues in the field psychology, and daily decision making.

3. Assessments requiring the ability to identify, differentiate, and apply fundamental critical thinking concepts, such as the scientific method and inductive versus deductive arguments.

4. Assessments requiring application of critical thinking skills and analysis of psychological issues.

5. Writing assignments free of formal and informal fallacies, which demonstrate the ability to critically analyze, evaluate, and advocate ideas.

6. A series of substantial essays demonstrating an increasingly sophisticated structure, coherence, and style.
   A. Essays which develop critical arguments through the synthesis of credible evidence from various sources.
   B. Essays analyzing of the written arguments of others, demonstrating the ability to distinguish matters of fact from issues of judgement or opinion.
   C. Research based essays, written in APA format, which evaluate the credibility of sources and claims.
   D. Reflective essays which examine personal assumptions and biases, demonstrating an ability to recognize cognitive errors which interfere with critical thought.

7. A total of 6,000 to 8,000 words in substantial essay assignments (not including revisions) will be required of each student. Written work will be evaluated for both content and form.

TEXTS, READINGS, AND RESOURCES:

TextBooks:


LIBRARY:

Adequate library resources include: Online Materials

Comments:

Student research will be required for papers, presentations, and course projects

Attachments:

Attached Files