

[Topics Course Description] English 200: Writing the Research Paper (CCTH, CILT)

[Required insert for all sections] ENGL 200 is a topics course that develops information literacy and critical thinking skills needed to write a well-reasoned research paper. Satisfies Core Information Literacy (CILT) and Core Critical Thinking (CCTH) requirements. Students must satisfy Core First Year Writing (CFYW) prior to taking this course.

Course Description

Students study selected texts and case studies to learn traits of good critical thinking and ethical, well-reasoned argument. Critical thinking frameworks taught may include: inductive versus deductive logic, deceptive reasoning, different types of arguments and claims common in academic and non-academic contexts, and what counts as adequate supporting reasons and evidence for different types of claims and contexts. Students will also study selected areas of rhetoric, which may include formal argument components (claims, reasons, warrants and assumptions, concession/refutation), logical fallacies, and/or concepts from classical and contemporary rhetorical theory.

Applying this knowledge, students develop an independent research project and write an extended argument. Students come to understand research as a process of open inquiry by articulating an initial research thesis or question, locating and distinguishing between different types of sources, proposing a finding or new interpretation based on collected evidence (CILT), and using sources effectively to support an argument (CCTH). Alongside detailed instruction on locating, vetting, and writing from sources will be instruction on different forms of academic dishonesty and how to avoid them.

Course title will vary to reflect the class topic; selected topics will be approved by the English department and must include assigned readings in both critical thinking and rhetorical or argument theory. Readings to be predominantly non-literary texts.

Learning Outcomes

- Apply concepts from rhetorical and argument theory to critically analyze and interpret arguments, texts, and case studies.
- Compose research-based arguments that demonstrate rhetorical awareness of purpose, audience, and academic discourse conventions.
- (CCTH) Develop and support a credible thesis and conclusion using techniques of analysis in a manner appropriate to an academic discipline.
- (CILT LO1) Use search strategies to identify and access credible and relevant sources of information and use that knowledge for a particular purpose.
- (CILT LO2) Critically evaluate various sources of information by asking strategic questions about origins, context, and suitability for use.
- (CILT LO3) Use sources of information effectively and ethically.

Required texts

This class requires one text for critical thinking, argument, and/or rhetorical theory approved by the English department. Pre-approved class texts include:

- *From Critical Thinking to Argument: A Portable Guide*. Barnet, Sylvan, Hugo Bedau, John O'Hara. 2005
- *Everything's an Argument*, Lunsford, Andrea A., and John J. Ruszkiewicz. 2021.
- *Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing: A Brief Guide to Argument*, Sylvan Barnet, Hugo Bedau, John O'Hara. 2008.
- *A Rhetoric of Argument*. Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor. 2004.
- *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*. Neil Browne and Stuart M. Keeley, 1990.

Other readings on the class topic to be selected by the instructor.

Written Assignment Requirements

This class requires a minimum of two formal papers. One paper must include independent research and engagement of at least five sources of different types. Total formal writing (including revised drafts) to be at least 5,000 words. This class teaches writing as a process that includes pre-writing, revising, and post-writing (reflective) activities, and asks students to produce a final portfolio of selected work at the end of the semester.

Examples of Assignments [Required assignments are indicated. Note that some of these assignments can be designed as in-class exams or activities or presentations]

- *Textual or Case Study Analysis*: An analytical essay applying critical thinking and/or rhetorical concepts to a selected text related to the class topic. This assignment should

give students practice in the methods of analysis to be used in the longer research-based paper.

- *[Required] Formal Research Proposal:* A formal proposal argument that presents a research thesis or question to be investigated. The thesis or research question must propose a process of open inquiry, in which students investigate a topic identifying artifacts, secondary sources, and methods of analysis, and where the resulting new claim or answer to the research question will be driven by analysis of collected evidence. (CCTH)
- *[Required] Initial Draft of References List and Final Annotated Bibliography:* A vetted list of student-located sources for the research project. Resources can include primary texts and artifacts, secondary research, and scholarly, trade, reference, and popular sources. Students must demonstrate awareness of different types of sources and appropriate ways to use each as evidence. (CILT LO1 and CILT LO2)
- *[Required] Extended Research-Based Argument, Analytical Paper, or Case Study:* Extended argument engaging the research thesis or question. The argument can confirm, reject, modify, or identify a future area of deeper research related to the original thesis or research question, based on discussion of available evidence. (CILT LO3 and CCTH)
- *[Required] Critical Thinking Reflection and Portfolio:* Meta-cognitive reflection on the forms of critical thinking evidenced in a students' own process of inquiry, based on a student-selected portfolio of class writing. (CCTH)
- *Findings in a New Genre:* A document that recontextualizes research findings for a different audience and/or in a different genre (an Op-Ed, an informational brochure, a multimedia presentation)

Information Literacy Requirements

Class must include at least one instructional session with Copley Library, and include informal assignments in which students locate (CILT LO1), critically evaluate, and distinguish between different types of sources (CILT LO2), including primary texts, scholarly, and non-scholarly sources.

Research skills will be introduced early and taught throughout the semester, with smaller assignments giving students time to practice skills locating and vetting sources and their containers (CILT LO1 and LO2). As part of the formal research assignment, students must create a reference list of sources, and write annotations that demonstrate each source's merit for supporting or developing a research question or thesis. (CILT LO3)

Critical Thinking Requirements

Students will learn selected skills from critical thinking and rhetorical theory, and apply these skills to analyze arguments and guide their own writing and research. The extended research paper should challenge students to conduct research as a process of *directed open inquiry*, where *directed* means focusing on an identified question and research agenda, and *open inquiry* means initial ideas may be confirmed, rejected, or require revision and refinement based on the evidence collected.

In writing a research paper using rhetorical analysis, a research question, thesis, or hypothesis will be investigated and ideas need to be supported with credible evidence and arguments. Students must also learn to use language to appropriately limit the scope of their own findings. For example, if the formal paper assignment requires a “case study,” students must learn how to qualify generalizations based on the limits of the case. If students are performing a textual analysis, they must learn to hedge or lessen the certainty of their interpretations based on evidence presented, and possibly, consider alternative interpretations that may be possible. Part of the grading criteria should evaluate how well students learn to present the finding and/or answer to their research question, based on evidence located during research. (CCTH)