

CORE 201
Topics in Critical Inquiry

1. Catalog Entry

CORE 201
Topics in Critical Inquiry
Three hours lecture (3).

Prerequisite: CORE 102 or CORE 103

Further development of students' skills in critical thinking, including a rigorous introduction to informal fallacies, deductive logic and inductive reasoning. Students will also learn how to recognize, analyze, and evaluate arguments in written and oral communication. Students will continue to develop competency in information literacy as they read and critique persuasive writing and communication and create their own arguments.

2. Detailed Description of Content of Course

This course continues the emphasis of the Core sequence on the composing process, the relationship between reading, thinking, writing, and speaking, and on the rhetorical principles that inform successful oral and written communication. Key concepts in public speaking, such as appropriate language and delivery choices will be reinforced. Students will be introduced to formal deductive logic, common forms of inductive argument, the full spectrum of informal fallacies and the ways in which these are integrated into various forms of discourse.

The course will include projects that require students to research a topic, understand the major viewpoints that surround it, select one viewpoint, and present a persuasive speech. Students will continue to hone their skills in research as inquiry, using both print and digital sources to gather information on a topic which will then be used as evidence to support both oral argument and extended written arguments. Students will continue to develop their skill in the use of sources, learning to integrate source information into the extended chain of reasoning they will create in their projects.

Students will also continue to develop their reading skills by analyzing and critiquing multiple rhetorical texts. In the process of such critique, students will learn how to evaluate differing views on various issues, how to grasp the impact of world-views on claims to truth, and apply the habits of mind required for intellectual objectivity.

3. Detailed Description of Conduct of Course

Each section of the course will be designed around a theme chosen by the instructor that will guide the choice of readings, assignment topics, and other classroom activities. Course themes are selected to promote critical inquiry and develop skills in oral communication, written communication, information literacy and technology literacy.

The University Core A Handbook is a required text. Instructors may choose additional readings in order to develop the theme of the course. Classes will be brought to the RU library for further information literacy instruction.

Required projects for course completion:

Textual Analysis - 201

In this project, students will analyze arguments on a topic related to the course theme. Using the principles of logic and rhetoric, students will develop criteria for strong arguments and evaluate the arguments they've gathered according to that criteria in an essay. The sources will be cited and documented on a reference page.

Researched Argument - 201

In this project, students will use a combination of general interest and scholarly sources derived from library databases in order to conduct research on a topic related to the theme of the course and develop their own line of reasoning in a researched argument essay. Students will prepare an annotated bibliography of sources. In this project they will learn to distinguish between general interest and peer-reviewed sources.

Persuasive Speech - 201

Students will make an oral argument on a topic related to the course theme. Students will support their claims with effective inductive or deductive arguments, appropriate emotional appeals, and development of their own credibility. Speeches will include appropriate presentational aids.

Reading Logs - 201

Throughout the semester students will critically read and respond to a series of texts according to the instructor's guidelines. Reading logs are intended to provide students with opportunities to engage with the texts, encouraging the application of rhetorical principles, inductive and deductive reasoning, and identification of fallacies.

4. Goals and Objectives of the Course.

This course combines the goals and objectives of the four Core A areas, which are to be fulfilled by the entire Core A sequence. Developmental outcomes for each course have been constructed according to these goals:

Upon completion of University Core A, Radford University students will have achieved competency in four key concept areas: written communications, oral communication, critical thinking, and technology/information literacy.

Goal 1: Radford University students will demonstrate competency in critical reading, standard written English, audience-specific writing, clear and effective prose, and other elements of composition.

Radford University students will be able to:

- effectively use standard written English (including grammar, punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure) to construct a thesis-driven essay supported by reasonable arguments
- demonstrate the writing process through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing, proofreading, and presentation
- choose appropriate genres and styles when writing for a variety of different audiences
- describe and evaluate critically a variety of print and other sources, synthesize and document material appropriately, and avoid plagiarism when developing a research paper

Goal 2: Radford University students will be able to communicate orally in clear and coherent language appropriate to purpose, occasion, and audience.

Radford University students will be able to:

- identify and explain components of and influences on the communication process in interpersonal, small group, and public speaking contexts
- demonstrate effective listening and critical analysis skills in interpersonal, small group, and public speaking contexts
- identify and apply communication strategies appropriate to audiences in interpersonal, small group, and public speaking contexts
- identify and demonstrate communication skills appropriate in interpersonal, small group, and public speaking contexts

Goal 3: Radford University students will learn to distinguish knowledge from opinion, challenge ideas, and develop reasonable strategies for belief formation.

Radford University students will be able to:

- apply the processes of deduction, induction, and other key elements of logical reasoning
- create a well-reasoned argument by evaluating the validity of ideas and information, providing evidence and support, and arguing against competing claims when applicable
- analyze issues, solve problems, and apply reasoning to everyday situations
- evaluate written and verbal arguments by discerning any logical fallacies, distinguishing between documented fact and opinion, examining explicit and implicit assumptions, and assessing the use of evidence to draw inferences and conclusions

Goal 4: Radford University students will be able to acquire, analyze, and synthesize digital and print information and explain how digital information is organized and communicated.

Radford University students will be able to:

- explain contemporary technological trends and issues
- utilize industry standard technologies as appropriate for academic purposes
- identify economic, societal, legal, privacy, and ethical considerations for using and sharing digital and print information
- demonstrate the use of basic research techniques to locate information from a variety of electronic and print sources
- apply appropriate modes of inquiry to evaluate digital and print information in terms of credibility, reliability, and accuracy

5. Assessment Measures

Students will produce formal and informal texts, spoken and written, which will be graded according to a set of rubrics designed with the outcomes in mind. For program assessment, a designated set of assignments will be gathered of the students' work to be assessed at the completion of the Core A sequence.

6. Other Course Information

7. Review and Approval

Date Action	Reviewed by
May, 2010	Susan Van Patten