**Critical Thinking**

**Spring 2016**

**Wednesdays, 4:10-5:40 p.m., and Fridays, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

**Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts—Bratislava, Slovakia**

**Instructor:** James Griffith

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**Office Hours:** Fridays, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

**Course Description**

As a discipline, critical thinking can be approached from different directions, but the focus here will follow Trudy Govier in coming to grips with what constitutes good and bad arguments, mainly according to the category of cogency (i.e., rational acceptability). In this way, critical thinking can be understood as both an introduction to and as broader than formal logic: an introduction because many of the rules of argument with which we will deal are also dealt with in formal logic, broader because cogency is a more general category than logical soundness.

Because critical thinking has this broader aspect to it, it is applicable in more direct fashion to aspects of speech and thought that are sometimes excluded from logic’s scope, especially politico-rhetorical and legal speech and thought. For this reason, we will supplement the textbook’s lessons and exercises with editorials from the New York Times and the Brown v. Board of Education U.S. Supreme Court opinion. We will critically analyze these politico-rhetorical and legal texts for their cogency to determine whether the arguments presented therein can be considered good ones.

**Texts**

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (U.S. Supreme Court).

Govier, Trudy, *A Practical Study of Argument*, 7 ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2014), ISBN: 978-1-133-93464-6.

*The New York Times*

**Course Requirements and Grade Distribution**

30%: The *Final Examination* will be on Wednesday, May 25.

25%: A *Midterm Examination* will be on Monday, April 4.

20%: The *Exercise Sets* found in each chapter will form the backbone of your understanding of how to analyze and construct argument structures.

10%: *Standardizations and assessments* of newspaper editorials and the Brown v. Board of Education opinion will be handed in each week for the first half of the term. The focus of these will depend on the focus of the relevant chapter in Govier.

10%: *Class participation* is encouraged and expected. Attendance does not qualify as participation.

5%: *Attendance* is mandatory. I will allow two unexcused absences for the term. Lateness of more than 10 minutes qualifies as an absence.

**Other Issues and Concerns**

Academic Integrity

BISLA’s Plagiarism and Cheating Policy will be followed strictly if it occurs. This policy can be found in the Google Drive folder for this course.

Expectations in the Classroom

You are all adults and should expect to be treated that way, by everyone in the classroom. You are also expected to treat others like adults. If you have questions, you need to ask them, in and out of class. If you are busy with other aspects of your life, they cannot interfere here—in other words, turn off your cell phones and other such devices, including WiFi access. If you have to use the bathroom, you do not need to ask me, but bear in mind how distracting that can be for others. If you have something to say that does not pertain to the discussion, wait until after class. In short, act like the adult you are and respect the classroom environment.

Writing Expectations

To be able to write clearly means you are thinking clearly. Thus, even your Text Questions should reflect a clarity of thought, a clarity of questioning. This does not mean that you are expected to write publishable papers. What it means is that you are expected to think about the sentences and paragraphs you write, whether they express your thoughts clearly and accurately, and if there may be better ways of expressing those thoughts.

If you are having trouble finding the right words, sentences, or paragraphs—or discover you are having trouble when you thought you were not—you should come see me and/or consult the Writing Tutors.

**\*\*\*\*\*This syllabus is subject to change.\*\*\*\*\***

**Course Schedule**

Week 1—Wednesday, February 17: Introduction

**read for class:** Govier, ch. 1

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 1, Exercise Sets 1:A (all questions) & 2:A (all questions)

Friday, February 19: **read for class:** Govier, ch. 2

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 2, Exercise Set 5 (questions 1-8, 10-16)

Week 2—Wednesday, February 24: **read and standardize for class:** Editorial

**bring to class:** Govier, ch. 1, Exercise Sets 1:A & 2:A, & ch. 2, Exercise Set 5 (questions 1-8, 10-16)

Friday, February 26: **read for class:** Govier, ch. 3

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 3, Exercise Sets 2:A (questions 1-10), 2:B (questions 6-10), and 3:A (questions 2 and 3)

Week 3—Wednesday, March 2: **read, standardize, and note language use for class:** Editorial

**bring to class:** Govier, ch. 3, Exercise Sets 2:A (questions 1-10), 2:B (questions 6-10), and 3:A (questions 2 and 3)

Friday, March 4: **read for class:** Govier, ch. 4

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 4, Exercise Sets 1 (all questions) & 2 (questions 1-11)

Week 4—Wednesday, March 9: **read, standardize, and test for cogency for class:** Editorial

**bring to class:** Govier, ch. 4, Exercise Sets 1 (all questions) & 2 (questions 1-11)

Friday, March 11: **read for class:** Govier, ch. 5

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 5, Exercise Sets 1:A (questions 1-8), 2:A (questions 1-7), and 2:C (all questions)

Week 5—Wednesday, March 16: **read, standardize, and assess for acceptability for class:** Brown v. Board of Education

**bring to class:** Govier, ch. 5, Exercise Sets 1:A (questions 1-8), 2:A (questions 1-7), & 2:C (all questions)

Friday, March 18: **read for class:** Govier, ch. 6

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 6, Exercise Sets 1:A (all questions), 2 (questions 1-13), & 3 (questions 1-8)

Week 6—Wednesday, March 23: **read, standardize, and assess for relevance for class:** Brown v. Board of Education

**bring to class:** Govier, ch. 6, Exercise Sets 1:A (all questions), 2 (questions 1-13), & 3 (questions 1-8)

Friday, March 25: Midterm Review

READING WEEK—NO CLASS

Week 7—Wednesday, April 6: **MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

Friday, April 8: **read for class:** Govier, ch. 7, pp. 178-196

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 7, Exercise Sets 2:A (questions 1-5), 2:B (questions 1-5), 2:C (questions 1-5), 3 (questions 1-10), & 4 (questions 1-10)

Week 8—Wednesday, April 13: **bring to class:** Govier, ch. 7, Exercise Sets 1 (questions 1-10), 2:A (questions 1-5), & 2:B (questions 1-5), & 2:C (questions 1-5)

**do in class:** Practice Categorical Logic

Friday, April 15: **read for class:** Govier, ch. 7, pp. 196-215

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 7, Exercise Sets 3 (questions 1-10) & 4 (questions 1-10)

Week 9—Wednesday, April 20: **bring to class:** Govier, ch. 7, Exercise Sets 3 (questions 1-10) & 4 (questions 1-10)

**do in class:** Practice Categorical Logic

Friday, April 22: **read for class:** Govier, ch. 8, pp. 216-228

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 8, Exercise Sets 2:A & 2:B

Week 10—Wednesday, April 27: **bring to class:** Govier, ch. 8, Exercise Sets 2:A & 2:B

**do in class:** Practice Propositional Logic

Friday, April 29: **read for class:** Govier, ch. 8, pp. 228-254

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 8, Exercise Sets 5:A (questions 1-3, 5-7, & 9) & 5:B (all questions)

Week 11—Wednesday, May 4: **bring to class:** Govier, ch. 8, Exercise Sets 5:A (questions 1-3, 5-7, & 9) & 5:B (all questions)

**do in class:** Practice Propositional Logic

Friday, May 6: **read for class:** Govier, ch. 9, pp. 255-270

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 9, Exercise Sets 1:B (all questions) & 1:C (all questions)

Week 12—Wednesday, May 11: **bring to class:** Govier, ch. 9, Exercise Sets 1:B (all questions) & 1:C (all questions)

**read for class:** Govier, ch. 9, pp. 270-285

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 9, Exercise Sets 2:A (all questions), 2:B (questions 1-7), & 3 (questions 1-7)

Friday, May 13: **read for class:** Govier, ch. 10, pp. 286-304

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 10, Exercise Sets 1:A (questions 1-2, 4-6), 1:B (questions 1-6), & 2 (all questions)

**bring to class:** Govier, ch. 9, Exercise Sets 2:A (all questions), 2:B (questions 1-7), & 3 (questions 1-7)

Week 13—Wednesday, May 18: **bring to class:** Govier, ch. 10, Exercise Sets 1:A (questions 1-2, 4-6), 1:B (questions 1-6), & 2 (all questions)

**read for class:** Govier, ch. 10, pp. 304-317

**do in class:** Govier, ch. 10, Exercise Set 3 (all questions)

Friday, May 20: **bring to class:** Govier, ch. 10, Exercise Set 3 (all questions)

**do in class:** TBA

Week 14—Wednesday, May 25: Final Review

Friday, May 27: **FINAL EXAMINATION**