



El Camino College
COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD – Official

Course Acronym:	COMS
Course Number:	120
Descriptive Title:	Critical Thinking Through Argumentation
Division:	Humanities
Department:	Communication Studies (Speech Communications)
Course Disciplines:	Communication Studies (Speech Communications)
Catalog Description:	This course focuses on methods of critical inquiry and advocacy. It also provides instruction in the use of language, argument structure and strategies, types of reasoning, evaluation of evidence, and fallacies in reasoning. Students compose, present, and evaluate oral and written arguments.
Prerequisite:	English C1000 or English C1000H with a minimum grade of C
Co-requisite:	
Recommended Preparation:	
Enrollment Limitation:	
Hours Lecture (per week):	3
Hours Laboratory (per week):	0
Outside Study Hours:	6
Total Course Hours:	54
Course Units:	3
Grading Method:	Letter
Credit Status:	Credit, degree applicable
Transfer CSU:	yes
Effective Date:	prior to 1992
Transfer UC:	yes
Effective Date:	prior to 1992
General Education: ECC	4B - Language and Rationality - Communication and Analytical Thinking
Term:	
Other:	
CSU GE:	A1 - Oral Communication A3 - Critical Thinking
Term:	
Other:	
IGETC:	
Term:	
Other:	
CalGETC:	1B Critical Thinking
Term:	
Other:	
Student Learning Outcomes:	SLO #1 Knowledge of Course Content

	Students will be able to understand and identify fundamental concepts of communication theories that govern argumentation and debate. SLO #2 Logic and Reasoning Students should be able to demonstrate the ability to identify fallacies and argue logically using sound reasoning and credible evidence that support and defend claims. SLO #3 Written and Verbal Skills Students should be able to exhibit competency in written communication and verbal and non-verbal delivery skills.
Course Objectives:	At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to: 1. Compose essays, totaling a minimum of 5,000 words, including a significant research paper that goes through a revision process based on faculty and peer feedback, demonstrating familiarity with research techniques, note-taking, organization, and documentation. 2. Critically analyze arguments for underlying assumptions, valid arguments, logical structure, clear reasoning patterns, sound evidence, logical fallacies, ethical standards, and rhetorical appeals (ethos, logos, and pathos). 3. Evaluate college-level texts from diverse perspectives and sources, such as essays, digital sources and media presentations (e.g., political debates, ad campaigns, and case studies, etc.). 4. Implement research strategies by finding credible sources, differentiating facts from opinion, drawing inferences, validating reliability and use those sources to support the development of their own ideas and logical reasoning. 5. Employ effective verbal and written ethical communication, including appropriateness to the rhetorical context. 6. Evaluate evidence and arguments for implicit and explicit assumptions related to power, ethics, and social justice, considering their implications for equity, critical discourse, and personal reflection and advocacy.
Major Topics:	I. History of Argumentation (8 hours, lecture) A. Introduction to classical rhetoric. B. History of argumentation: Classic Rhetorical Theory, Rogerian Argument, and Toulmin Model C. Contemporary definitions of argumentation. II. Methods of Critical Inquiry and Reasoning (6 hours, lecture) A. Components of deductive and inductive arguments. B. Testing deductive and inductive arguments. C. Composition and interrogation of claims, arguments, and refutation. III. Overview of research methods (8 hours, lecture) A. Choosing source material with attention to intended audience, purpose, and social context. B. Research strategies to find, evaluate, and test the credibility and relevance of evidence and sources. C. How to brief controversial topics, generating complex ideas. IV. Identifying Errors in Logic (6 hours, lecture) A. Types, definitions, and critical analysis of logical fallacies. B. Identifying assumptions upon which particular conclusions depend including

	reflecting critically on one's own thought processes. C. Distinguish knowledge from belief, and fact from inference. D. Critical analysis of cognitive biases. V. Preparation and presentation of oral argument (8 hours, lecture) A. Delivery components. B. Explanation of advocacy and debate format, including case templates. C. Differentiating fact, value, and policy debates; stock issues. D. Effective rhetorical strategies including methods of organization and use of evidence. VI. Analyzing debates and making judgments (6 hours, lecture) A. How to flow debates. B. Critical analysis of sources, argument choice, and audience. C. Evaluating arguments including those representatives of diverse experiences, perspectives, and forms of authority with critical awareness and respect. D. Ethical perspectives of argument, discourse, and the creation and reinforcement of power imbalances. VII. Progressive Writing and the Argumentative Paper (6 hours, lecture) A. Writing convincing arguments using extensive and credible evidence. B. Counter-argument analysis demonstrating understanding of prior lecture material. C. Progressive writing process and incorporation of instructor and peer feedback. D. Composition, presentation, and evaluation of oral and written argument (minimum 5,000 words of revised formal writing). VIII. Team debates (6 hours, lecture) A. Flowing debates. B. Critically evaluating debates. C. Reflect critically on one's own performance, thought processes, and areas in need of improvement.
Total Lecture Hours:	54
Total Laboratory Hours:	0
Total Hours:	54
A.1. Primary Methods of Evaluation (Part 1 - CCN courses only):	
A.2. Primary Method of Evaluation (Part 2)	1) Substantial writing assignments

- all courses; choose one):	
Typical Assignment Using Primary Method of Evaluation:	In preparation for the value debate, students will receive a debate proposition and write a 2500-word argumentative research-based essay with instructor and peer feedback. In this essay, students are expected to analyze stock issues to establish burdens in the debate, research evidence that supports and defends your position, and analyze and prepare to refute arguments opponents may argue. This essay must include a minimum of 10 appropriately cited sources that establish fact and expert opinion and that consider bias and context on both sides of the topic.
Critical Thinking Assignment 1:	Scan contemporary media for arguments containing fallacies, identifying at least 5 different local fallacies. Using academic research and critical thinking, write a 1500-word essay describing the fallacies committed, and analyzing the effect the arguer intended and the possible effect on the receiver.
Critical Thinking Assignment 2:	After watching and flowing a classroom debate, write a 1500 word essay critically analyzing the arguments that were made and explain the following: A) Why some arguments are likely more persuasive to certain audiences based on specific assumptions. B) How the use of fact and knowledge versus belief and inference is more persuasive and reliable. C) Why evidence recency is critical in making solid arguments. D) How the weight of the affirmative and negative arguments compare considering magnitude, probability, and timeframe, identifying the critical arguments and warrants on both sides of the debate.
Other Evaluation Methods:	Written Homework Term or Other Papers Performance Exams Other Exams Quizzes Class Performance Multiple Choice True/False
Instructional Methods:	Demonstration Discussion Lecture Other (please specify)
If other:	Critiques
Work Outside of Class:	Study Answer Questions Skill Practice Required Reading Problem Solving Activities Written Work
If Other:	
Up-To-Date Representative Texts:	Crossman, M. (2022). Burden of Proof: An Introduction to Argumentation and Guide to Parliamentary Debate. 5th Ed.: McGraw Hill. Mills, A. (2025). How Arguments Work - A Guide to Writing and Analyzing Texts in College. OER: LibreTexts.

	Pantuso, T., LeMire, S., Anders, K., & Pattison, K. (2023). Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research. OER: Open Digital Publishing. Dalton, P., & Butler, J. R. (2021). Public Policy Argumentation and Debate: A Practical Guide for Advocacy. 2nd ed.: Peter Lang. Lapakko, D. (2021). Argumentation: Critical Thinking in Action. 5th ed.: Kendall Hunt. Zarefsky, D. (2019). The Practice of Argumentation: Effective Reasoning in Communication. Cambridge University Press. Discipline Standard. Morrow, D. R., & Weston, A. (2019). A Workbook for Arguments: A Complete Course in Critical Thinking. 3rd ed.: Hackett. Discipline Standard. Barnet, S., Bedau, H., & O'Hara, J. (2023). From Critical Thinking to Argument: A Portable Guide. 7th ed.: Macmillan.
Alternative Texts:	
Required Supplementary Readings:	
Other Required Materials:	
Requisite:	Prerequisite
Category:	sequential
Requisite course(s): List both prerequisites and corequisites in this box.	English C1000 or English C1000H with a minimum grade of C
Requisite and Matching skill(s): Bold the requisite skill. List the corresponding course objective under each skill(s).	This course involves reading college level textbooks, developing projects, and incorporating research in argumentative essays. A student's success in this class will be enhanced if they have these skills. ENGL C1000 - Complete a research-based essay that has been written out of class and undergone revision. It should demonstrate the student's ability to thoughtfully support a single thesis using analysis and synthesis. ENGL C1000 - Integrate multiple sources, including a book-length work and a variety of academic databases, peer-reviewed journals, and scholarly websites. Citations must be in MLA format and include a Works Cited page. ENGL C1000 - Demonstrate logical paragraph composition and sentence structure. The essay should have correct grammar, spelling, and word use.
Requisite Skill:	Prerequisite
Requisite Skill and Matching Skill(s): Bold the requisite skill(s). If applicable	
Requisite course:	
Requisite and Matching skill(s): Bold the requisite skill. List the corresponding course objective under each skill(s).	
Requisite Skill:	
Requisite Skill and Matching skill(s):	

Bold the requisite skill. List the corresponding course objective under each skill(s). If applicable	
Enrollment Limitations and Category:	
Enrollment Limitations Impact:	
Course Created by:	
Date:	
Original Board Approval Date:	
Last Reviewed and/or Revised by:	Jason Davidson, Brittany Hubble
Date:	09/14/2025
Last Board Approval Date:	11/18/2025
Effective Term:	FA 2026