

# General Education Course Proposal Guidelines

## Critical Thinking—Institutionally Designated Area 2

Approved by FHSU General Education Committee 6 April 2023

### Objective:

Students will recognize, analyze, criticize, evaluate, and formulate arguments in ways characterized by intellectual courage and reflective self-criticism.

### Outcomes:

1. Systematically evaluate arguments of various kinds.
2. Write a formal paper that uses a standard form of reasoning to argue in support of a controversial thesis and then defend this reasoning from a significant objection.

### KBOR General Education Framework:

Critical Thinking is one of the two Institutionally Designated Areas for the program. This area allows each Kansas public institution to define requirements for societal issues, local needs, and institutional priorities.

### Definitions:

“Formal Paper”: a researched paper citing credible sources in a discipline-appropriate documentation style.

### Course Prerequisite:

Students must complete ENG 102: English Composition II prior to taking this course.

### Guiding Principles:

1. **Subject Matter:** Critical Thinking is a well-established discipline, with a well-defined subject matter: the identification, construction, and evaluation of arguments of various kinds. Although instructors will employ different pedagogical approaches and may choose to emphasize different aspects of the subject, the topics covered should not deviate widely from those covered in standard Critical Thinking textbooks -- e.g., Lewis Vaughn, *The Power of Critical Thinking* (Oxford), David R. Morrow and Anthony Weston, *A Workbook for Arguments* (Hackett), or Brooke Moore and Richard Parker, *Critical Thinking* (McGraw-Hill).
2. **Essential Skills:** Learning to think critically involves acquiring skills through practice. Essential skills include: (1) determining whether a passage contains an argument, (2) identifying the parts of particular arguments, including assumed premises, (3) distinguishing different kinds of deductive and inductive arguments, (4) evaluating the validity of deductive arguments, (5) evaluating the strength of inductive arguments, (6) recognizing and avoiding common fallacies, (7) composing a written argument of one's own, (8) identifying and formulating the strongest objection to one's own argument, and (9) replying to that objection.
3. **General Applicability:** Any course designed to satisfy these outcomes should provide students with fundamental reasoning skills applicable to any major.

Instructors may devote more time to argument types relevant to their own disciplines, but the primary focus of the course must be the general reasoning skills applicable to the construction and evaluation of arguments in any discipline.

**Sample Course Outline:**

- Week 1-2 kinds of claims, recognizing arguments, identifying conclusions and premises
- Week 3-4 analyzing and evaluating kinds of deductive arguments
- Week 5-8 analyzing and evaluating kinds of inductive arguments
- Week 9 recognizing common fallacies
- Week 10-12 discipline-specific arguments
- Week 13-15 the formal paper: constructing, critiquing, and defending an argument