CORE 201 MASTER SYLLABUS
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 how to recognize, analyze, and evaluate arguments in written and oral communication. Students will continue to develop competency in information literacy as they create their own persuasive 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 common forms of reasoning, such as generalizations, analogies, causal arguments, and basic deduction. Students will also learn to identify common informal fallacies and understand why these represent poor critical thinking.

The course will include projects that require students to research a topic, understand the major viewpoints that surround it, select the most logical viewpoint, and defend that viewpoint in 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 their own 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:
Argument Analysis Essay

In this project, students will analyze arguments on a topic related to the course theme.

Objectives

- Analyze the use of ethos, logos and pathos by sources
- Identify fallacies
- Discern the logical structure of arguments.
- Evaluate an argument’s premises and how they are intended to support a conclusion.

Annotated Bibliography

In this project, students will explain their use of library databases and resources to find and evaluate popular and scholarly sources for their persuasive speech.

Objectives

- Conduct background research related to their topic
- Use subject-specific databases appropriately matched to their topics.
- Use a variety of popular and scholarly sources appropriate to their topic.
- Evaluate the comparative credibility of these sources

Persuasive Speech - 201

Students will prepare and present an oral argument on a topic related to the course theme.

Objectives

- Construct a discussion that positions a variety of sources according to the sources’ viewpoints on a particular topic.
- Cite images correctly
- Use language that enhances the message of the presentation.
- Use nonverbal communication in a way that enhances the message of a speech.
- Create presentational aids to enhance the message of a speech.
- Present the reasons and evidence supporting the argument

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 information literacy.

Goal 1: Radford University students will be able to prepare coherent and well-written essays that effectively integrate material from a variety of sources. By the completion of Core 201, Radford University students will be able to:

- Construct a discussion that positions a variety of sources according to the sources’ viewpoints on a particular topic.
Goal 2: Radford University students will be able to deliver an effective and organized oral presentation and appropriately communicate in interpersonal and small group settings. By the completion of Core 201, Radford University students will be able to:

- Use language that effectively supports the message of the presentation.
- Use nonverbal communication in a way that effectively supports the message of a speech.
- Create presentational aids to effectively support the message of a speech.

Goal 3: Radford University students will learn to distinguish knowledge from opinion, challenge ideas, and develop reasonable strategies for belief formation. By the completion of Core 201, Radford University students will be able to:

Analyze the use of ethos, logos and pathos by sources

- Identify fallacies
- Discern the logical structure of arguments.
- Evaluate an argument’s premises and how they are intended to support a conclusion.
- Present the reasons and evidence supporting the argument
- Respond substantially to objections

Goal 4: Radford University students will be able to locate, evaluate, and cite information. By the completion of Core 201, Radford University students will be able to:

Cite images correctly.

- Use subject-specific databases appropriately matched to the target assignment.
- Conduct background research related to a topic
- Use a variety of popular and scholarly sources related to a topic.
- Evaluate the comparative credibility of these sources.

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

Approved by Faculty Senate, April 25, 2013