



HOW TO THINK CRITICALLY THROUGH LITERATURE, FILM AND ART

SELF, IDENTITY and COMMUNITY

COURSE SYLLABUS DRAFT

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Maia Lamarque

Office Location:

Office Hours: TBA

Office Phone: none

University Email Address: maia.lamarque@etamu.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: email

Communication Response Time: 24 hours

THIS COURSE IS DESIGNED AS A HYBRID OR ONLINE COURSE.

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description

XXY 2000: Thinking Critically through Literature, Film and Art introduce students to humanities-based inquiry by guiding students through an exploration of their own thinking across a variety of texts. Through the deep focus on critical thinking, students will engage in holistic discussions of topics addressing fundamental questions about their own discernment, interactions, to proactively develop the skills of humanistic inquiry of themselves as individuals and as professionals. Students in this class learn to apply the theoretical knowledge of critical thinking to their personal, professional, and academic goals through art, literature and film.

Career & Self-Development: Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one's organization.

This course is the foundational course for any student to not only develop their own thinking skills, but analyze their strengths and weaknesses as well as how to potentiate them. This class intentionally connects the identity of a critical thinker, its development, research, ethics, morals, cultural awareness within the professional and personal realm. The last part of the class is the service model where students will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge for a bigger and broader purpose. Through an array of texts and media, we will process and engage in learning, unlearning, relearning and work

toward an inter and intrapersonal connection. The course proposes to create an engaged community of critical thinkers that will benefit themselves, their communities, nations and beyond.

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook: Thinking Critically through Literature, Film and Art (August 2026) by Maia Lamarque

Additional course readings available via our D2L course shell

Adobe Creative Cloud (FREE for ETAMU students)

A valid, working leomail email address that you check EVERYDAY.

At least two storage methods such as cloud storage, flash drive, folder, etc.

Student Learning Outcomes

- 1. SLO Connect**
 - a. Career & Self-Development**
 - b. Communication**
 - c. Professionalism**
- 2. SLO Create**
 - a. Critical Thinking / Problem Solving**
 - b. Technology**
- 3. SLO Contribute**
 - a. Leadership**
 - b. Teamwork / Collaboration**

This class is divided into modules. Each module develops and assesses one of two SLOs. SLOs are not assessed in isolation but there are embedded and combined in each module.

By integrating psychology, literature, and philosophy, this course aims to link academic examination and aesthetic expression, using critical thinking not simply as an academic “mantra” but as an effective tool for understanding social engagement and the human experience at a personal and social level. The class envisions literature and the arts as essential "laboratories" to examine how language, identity, and learning evolve in a globalized world, drawing on a diverse range of textual sources.

This course goes deep into critical thinking and refutes myths and misconceptions through analyzing how cultural, social, academic, and ethical identities interplay in the texts. By developing metacognitive skills, the aim is to empower students to develop their own thinking strategies as they engage in detailed stories and discussions. The course uses art to highlight social conditions and ethical responsibilities that pertain to all humans, promoting global understanding and cultural engagement.

Module 1 offers the various definitions and the myths about critical thinking starting with the history of what is to think critically first used by Socrates and recorded by Plato (360 BCE). The module also presents research studies in the studies of critical thinking and social justice and critical thinking and literature as well as theoretical support from Cognitive and Evolutionary Psychology. In this section, the production of language or rhetoric and its reception from readers

are key for the themes of the chapter. Finally, the textual input for this module is folktales, legends, short stories, and myths, short films from various parts of the world, pictorial art and prehistoric caves. **SLO: critical thinking, communication, self-development.**

Module 2 explores the concept of identities and Learning (cultural, social, academic, and ethical) through the lens of global literature and film by addressing research on common misconceptions, evidence-based learning methods and approaches, and how identities and "learning" are portrayed in literature, film, and art, as well as how characters "learn" or relearn in various aspects of their lives. Excerpts of Saramago's *Blindness* (1995), *I Who Have Never Known Men* by Jacqueline Harpman (1995), *Still Alice* (Glatzer 2014), and Mo Yan's *Frog* (2019) are some of the works that would serve as input for this analysis. Students will learn about their own identities and learning. This module will define and apply metacognitive skills, or "thinking about your thinking," while reading these selected international stories and films. In these texts, the characters need to learn or relearn how to live in a different geographical (dystopian world), physical (inability to see), emotional (Alzheimer's disease), and social (new condition in the community) context. Students create practice exercises and quizzes as they develop their own assessment and learning strategies and skills. **SLO: Team collaboration, critical thinking, self-development.**

Module 3 introduces the relationship between critical thinking, cognitive biases, and their impact on social engagement. Ethical behavior supports social engagement, as it implies the understanding of decision-making in all areas of life, from everyday actions to government businesses and corporate policies. This module illustrates how critical thinking skills and awareness of our cognitive biases foster self-awareness of ethical behavior that impacts yourself and the community you belong to through a variety of texts. **SLO Self-development, Professionalism, critical thinking.**

Module 4 explores recent research on critical thinking and storytelling within the fields of evolutionary and social psychology, analyzing the texts and the human experiences they contain. The focus will be on the Cinderella myth and its various adaptations across different geographic and historical contexts. As such, the different versions of Cinderella from various cultures and traditions will serve as the core material for this module, given that the story is a universal narrative. Students will build on their existing knowledge of the tale by engaging in close reading and analyzing Cinderella adaptations and rewrites through Socratic discussions and written assignments, which will include practice exercises and quizzes. **SLO: critical thinking, team work, communication.**

Module 5 focuses on how technology has affected our thinking and well-being. The chapter offers strategies on how to cope with Social influence in Social Media with methods from self-leadership and mindfulness. Students will gather their own samples from Social media outlets to discuss them in class. Analysis, quizzes, and group written exercises are part of the chapter's assessment.

Final assessment consists of applying the notions learned in this class to serve a community. Students will choose a non-profit organization, a school, a hospital, a community group, etc. to offer a workshop, a class, or any other activity, which will serve the community, applying the idea of social engagement through critical thinking using any kind of text and/or activity of their choice. **SLO Technology, critical thinking, self-development**

Exercises will follow theory and will use texts as input to develop and polish critical thinking abilities as well as civic engagement. Every chapter has a glossary of terms and an assessment.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional Methods and Assessment

This course will be centered on classroom discussion of assigned works, using small group and large group discussions, with short reflections writing and reflection that scaffold to a final service and professional project. The final Project showcases student learning and development of critical thinking skills, including information literacy, biases, self-leadership, unlearning, learning, cultural awareness among other themes.

Students will read, discuss, watch, analyze, and develop an understanding of the assigned texts and their connections to their own experience, goals, and beliefs through literature, film and art. Students will conduct research and communicate their ideas. In engaging with the core learning objectives of critical thinking, communication, social responsibility, self-development students will gain a greater appreciation of the complexities of the world through these texts. Critical thinking skills provide a key foundation for the college experience, self-development and will bolster students' employability after graduation encouraging reflection and sense of purpose, and honing reading, writing, and communication skills.

Weekly Deadlines and Participation

To support collaboration and community-building in our asynchronous online course, each week (with the exception of Week 1) will have the following base structure and deadlines:

Mondays	New content area on D2L. Make sure any work from the previous week has been submitted. Begin reading/viewing/engaging this week's assigned texts and keep notes/thoughts in your process(ing) journal (ongoing) and due at the end of the semester.
Tuesdays	Continue reading, viewing, engaging, processing this week's texts. Quiz, if assigned this week, will be due on Sunday. No make-ups
Wednesdays	Discussion Board assigned peer responses due for posts from previous week. (Ex. Week 3, you will read and respond to your peer's post from Week 2)
Thursdays	Continue reading, viewing, engaging, processing this week's texts. Quiz, if assigned this week, will be due on Sunday. No make-ups
Fridays	Complete required weekly writing (often this will be a discussion board post, but sometimes you will submit a draft or activity). Note: you may take the weekend if you need to complete the week's required writing/activity. They will always be due at Sunday midnight.

Assessments

Module Writing Assignments

At the end of each module, you will have a required short writing assignment that asks you to engage with that week's assigned content. This writing might be a discussion board post, short, essay, student success module, or short-form visual or audio response using tools in Adobe Creative Cloud.

Process (ing) Journal (ongoing)

Beginning in week 1, you will establish and maintain a space (e.g word or Google doc, slides, blog posts, audio recordings) wherein you process each week's assigned texts. These journal entries also serve as part of the writing process toward developing your own self-development. As you engage each week's required texts, take note of terms, ideas, and quotes that stand out and interest you and reflect. Please include MLA citations for any quotes as well as dates for each entry. You will have to submit your journal entries each week. At the end of the semester you will submit the entire journal.

Quizzes

Most weeks, you will have a quiz on the readings for the week. This quiz will help with knowing your comprehension of texts, semantic memory and will keep you on track of your readings. Practicing what you have saved and retrieved in memory is one key aspect of the learning process.

Weekly Assignment

Discussions, short presentations are part of this assignment. It will be geared to reinforcing the basic premises of critical thinking and to emphasizing students' development of these skills through the art, literature and film encouraging reflection and sense of purpose; and honing reading, writing, and communication skills.

Final Project: The Final Project consists of a service will ask students to take a theme from the course, engage in research about that topic, identify relevant sources, present an argument, and link the outcomes to an issue relevant to their own career or personal trajectory. The Final Project aligns with and assesses all Student Learning Outcomes for the course.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 90%-100%

B = 80%-89%

C = 70%-79%

D = 60%-69%

F = 59% or Below

Weights of the assessments in the calculation of the final letter grade.

Weekly assignments: 25%

Journaling: 20%

Quizzes: 25%

Final Project: 30%

If you turn in your assignment on time, you will get full credit. You can submit your assignment later but 10 points will be deducted each week over 50 points total. There is not late submission on quizzes.

TOTAL 100%

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

WEEK		TOPIC	TEXTS AND ASSIGNMENTS DUE
1		INTRODUCTIONS	Module 1 Critical Thinking Myths Prehistoric Art Practice, Discussions
2		IDENTITY Identity	Module 1 Definitions Critical Thinking Practice, Discussions
3		IDENTITY	Module 1 Short essay Discussion
4		METACOGNITION	Module 2 Identities and Learning Excerpts: Saramago's <i>Blindness</i> (1995), <i>Still Alice</i> (Glatzer 2014),
5		COMMUNITY AND METACOGNITION	Module 2 LEARNING, UNLEARNING Excerpts: <i>I Who Have Never Known Men</i> by Jacqueline Harpman (1995), WORK/COLLEGE ACTIVITY PROCESS (ING) JOURNAL
6		COMMUNITY AND METACOGNITION	Module 2 Excerpts: Mo Yan's <i>Frog</i> (2019) Short essay WORK/COLLEGE ACTIVITY PROCESS (ING) JOURNAL
7		CIVIC and SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT	Module 3 Short film: Vida Maria, Ceará State Government, in Brazil WORK/COLLEGE ACTIVITY

			PROCESS (ING) JOURNAL
8		CIVIC AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT	Module 3 Passing, Nella Larsen (1928) Part 1 and 2 Short essay WORK/COLLEGE ACTIVITY PROCESS (ING) JOURNAL
9		LANGUAGE	Module 4 Folk tales from South America, Asia and Africa WORK/COLLEGE ACTIVITY PROCESS (ING) JOURNAL
10		LANGUAGE	Module 4 Prehistoric Art Folk tales around the world WORK/COLLEGE ACTIVITY PROCESS (ING) JOURNAL
11		BELIEFS	Module 4 Folk tales around the world Short essay WORK/COLLEGE ACTIVITY PROCESS (ING) JOURNAL
12		SELF DEVELOPMENT	Module 5 Technology, Self-Awareness Art WORK/COLLEGE ACTIVITY PROCESS (ING) JOURNAL
13		SELF DEVELOPMENT	Module 5 Technology, Self-Awareness Art WORK/COLLEGE ACTIVITY PROCESS (ING) JOURNAL
14		SELF DEVELOPMENT	Module 5 Short Essay

			WORK/COLLEGE ACTIVITY PROCESS (ING) JOURNAL
15		Last Week of Classes	Reflections WORK/COLLEGE ACTIVITY PROCESS (ING) JOURNAL
16		Finals Week	Last Project Due Journal Due

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here: <https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

[To be determined by the faculty member teaching the course]

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

AI use in course

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there may be legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course. Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of

academic dishonesty (plagiarism). Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructor's guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed. In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel