**IST 120 Fall 2014**

# Connections I

Meeting Time: M/W 3:00 – 4:15pm

Classroom: ML Commons

Instructor: Rick Gage

Email: gager@marshall.edu

Office: 105 Morrow Lib

Office Hours: M: 1:00-3:00 & 4:30-5:30

 T: 11:00-12:00 & 2:00-4:00

**Course Description and Objectives**

From Course Catalog: “A Critical Thinking course that makes connections among science, technology, and society. Students learn to do research, summarize popular and scientific articles, and design an experimental or observational study.”

In this class, we will examine change and progress in terms of science and discovery, communications and technology, and society and culture, paying particular attention to risks and consequences of development and change. Drawing on Critical Theory and a variety of other philosophies, we will evaluate a host of cases from diverse fields by identifying our assumptions, checking them for evidence or support, and applying that information to making thoughtful decisions. We will draw connections across disciplines and examine how involving multiple perspectives presents a more clear picture of a problem, allowing us to make more informed decisions about how to solve it.

This should be a fun, but challenging class. You will be asked to step outside of your comfort zone, challenge your deeply-held assumptions about controversial issues, and see things from a variety of different perspectives. You will *not* be expected to agree with me (or anyone else in the class) on every issue, or change your ideals. All that is expected is that you think critically, examine evidence and support for your claims, and be able to defend your positions. There is rarely a definitive right or wrong side to complex issues, and that is precisely why it is important to develop skills in critical thinking.

By the end of this course, students should have an understanding of the following domains of Critical Thinking: Integrative Thinking; Inquiry-based Thinking; Information Literacy; Ethical and Civic Thinking; Creative Thinking; and Communication Fluency.

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| **Course Student Learning Outcomes** **Students should be able to:** | **How students will practice each outcome in this Course** | **How student achievement of each outcome will be assessed in this Course** |
| Develop cohesive oral, written, and visual communications | In-class writing assignments, in-class discussions, debate activity | Zine assignment, debates, research presentation |
| Tailor communications to specific audiences | In-class writing assignments, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Critical reading assignment, debate reflection, zine assignment |
| Revise search strategies to find appropriate research tools | Teacher modeling, in-class activities, in-class writing assignments | Critical reading assignment, debates, research paper  |
| Integrate relevant information from reliable sources | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Critical reading assignment, debates, research paper |
| Question and evaluate the complexity of the information environment | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Critical reading assignment, debates, research paper,  |
| Use information in an ethical manner | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Critical reading assignment, debates, research paper, zine assignment |
| Outline multiple divergent solutions to a problem | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Research paper and presentation |
| Develop and explore risky or controversial ideas | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Zine assignment, critical reading assignment, debates |
| Synthesize expertise to generate ideas | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Research paper, debates |
| Make connections and transfer skills among disciplines, domains of thinking, experiences, and situations | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Critical reading assignment, zine assignment, research paper, debates |
| Determine the origins of core beliefs and ethical principles | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Critical reading assignment, in-class activity reflection papers, debate reflections |
| Evaluate the ethical basis of professional rules and standards | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Zine assignment, critical reading assignment, reflection papers |
| Evaluate how academic theories and public policy inform one another | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Critical reading assignment, zine assignment, research paper, debates |
| Analyze complex ethical problems to address competing interests | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Critical reading assignment, research paper, debates |
| Formulate focused questions and hypotheses | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Research project, debate reflections, zine assignment |
| Evaluate existing knowledge and draw justifiable conclusions | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Critical reading assignment, debates, research paper |
| In the development of a research project, students will scientifically analyze data, evaluate and incorporate relevant research, and describe potential implications | Teacher modeling, critical reading, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Critical reading assignments, debates, research paper |
| Students will effectively communicate in relating findings and recommendations resulting from projects | Teacher modeling, critical reading exercises, in-class discussions, in-class activities | Reflection papers, zine assignment, research presentation and paper |

**Required Readings**

No text book will be required for this class.

However, handouts, text chapters & other readings will be assigned throughout the semester as needed. **Students are expected to read these articles** and be prepared to discuss them during the assigned class period. Additionally, students are encouraged to bring articles, websites, news clippings, or other relevant media to class to further in-depth discussions.

**Course Requirements**

**In-Class Activities: (15% of semester grade)**. We will spend a lot of class time working individually or in small groups to develop skills in critical thinking. You are expected to not only be present for these activities, but actively participate in them. Many in-class activities will have a short written reflection assignment associated with them. Quizzes on assigned readings or other materials may be given without notice if it is deemed necessary.

**Critical Reading Assignment: (15% of semester grade)**. Students will select a topic that is relevant or important to them. They will then locate and critically evaluate a variety of written works about the chosen topic in order to determine the validity and reliability of different sources. Students will produce an annotated bibliography about their selected topic. More details about this assignment will be given in class.

**Zine Assignment: (15% of semester grade)**. Communication fluency is more than being able to write a technical academic paper. It is also about producing a message that your intended audience will be receptive to. For this assignment, students will create an independent publication for their peers on campus, rather than the instructor. More details will be given in class.

**In-Class Debates: (20% of semester grade)**. There will be two debates during the course of the semester. Students are required to be in attendance for both. Each student will participate in one debate and serve as a spectator and judge for the other. For each debate, students will be required to write a critical reflection paper summarizing and evaluating the debate. More details, including debate topics and dates will be announced before the 3rd week of classes.

**Research Paper and Presentations: (25% of semester grade)**. Working in pairs or small groups, students will identify a problem or current issue that they find particularly important, conduct research on the issue, and propose a possible solution. They will address the issue with a critical mind, thinking deeply about the underlying assumptions they are working by, the consequences of their proposed solution, and the impact it would have on various individuals or groups. A detailed project outline will be provided around the middle of the semester.

**Class Attendance and Participation: (10% of semester grade)**. **Attendance at each class is mandatory**. However, each student will be allowed one “un-excused class” per semester (except for debate dates or other announced special event dates). Two or more un-excused absences will result in a *significant* reduction in your class attendance and participation grade. Any absences due to illness must be documented according the Marshall University Policy. In addition to attendance, in-class participation will be evaluated at the end of the semester and can contribute *significantly* to this portion of the grade. This portion of your grade is not a given, and you will be expected to earn your grade beyond just “showing up.” This means speaking in class, asking appropriate questions, participating in learning activities, and taking adequate notes during lectures.

**Extra Credit: (Up to 5 points to final grade)**. Throughout the semester, students are encouraged to bring in current events articles, websites, news clippings, political cartoons, editorials, or any other relevant media. At the beginning of each class session, students will be allowed 3 minutes to present their piece before we open the floor to critical discussion of the topic. Each presentation will be worth 1 point toward the final grade, up to a total possible 5 point bonus.

**Student Evaluation**

In-class activities 15%

Critical Reading 15%

Zine 15%

Debates (2) 20%

Research Paper/Presentation 25%

Attendance & Participation 10%

**Grading Scale**

A = 90 or above B = 80-89 C = 70-79 D = 60-69 F = 59 or below

### Grading Policy

All written course assignments (e.g., Course Project) should be **typed in Times New Roman, 12-point font**, **double-spaced, with 1-inch margins and use APA format**. Grading of this assignment will be based both on the quality of the content as well as the style and adequacy of the presentation itself. Written work should be neat, succinct, clear, and use the appropriate terms. Spelling/grammar will be evaluated. In-class assignments are to be neatly written, signed by all group members, and submitted at the end of the class period. **Late submissions will not be accepted.**

**Classroom Expectations**

Please be considerate of the other students in the class. It is up to you whether or not you choose to attend class and if you choose to pay attention. It is unfair, however, for you to negatively impact the ability of others students to learn. Please take care that your actions are considerate and do not detract from the learning environment. **Once class has begun, please refrain from sending text messages, reading newspapers, or otherwise distracting from the class discussion**.

It is also expected that the opinions and backgrounds of all class members will be welcomed and respected. All students are encouraged to participate in class discussion, but please address others with respect.

**Accessing Course Information**

Power-point slides, assignments, and other necessary class information will be posted on Blackboard. The website for Blackboard is marshall-bb.blackboard.com. It is imperative that you have access to Blackboard and that you check your MU email regularly.

**Academic Integrity**

Please be aware that academic integrity is taken very seriously at this university and in this class. Any type of cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism includes citing anyone else’s words or ideas in your own writing without giving credit. Additionally, self-plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. This includes turning in assignments that have previously been used for another class or purpose. All assignments must be completed specifically for this course. More information regarding plagiarism is provided in the Marshall University handbook. However, if you have a question about any academic integrity issues, please contact me.

By enrolling in this course, you agree to the University Policies listed below. Please read the full text of each policy by going to [www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs](http://www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs) and clicking on “Marshall University Policies.” Or, you can access the policies directly by going to <http://www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs/?page_id=802>

Academic Dishonesty/ Excused Absence Policy for Undergraduates/ Computing Services Acceptable Use/ Inclement Weather/ Dead Week/ Students with Disabilities/ Academic Forgiveness/ Academic Probation and Suspension/ Academic Rights and Responsibilities of Students/ Affirmative Action/ Sexual Harassment