

Syllabus for HLS-355

CRITICAL THINKING FOR HOMELAND SECURITY

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Critical Thinking for Homeland Security offers an overview of critical thinking and its applications in the homeland security context. The focus is on essential elements of thought, asking the right questions, uncovering fallacies in reasoning and statistical misrepresentations. Evidence evaluation in a homeland security setting is featured with several examples interpreting real-world information.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, you should be able to:

1. Define critical thinking and discuss perceptions and mindsets and their influence on decision making.
2. Examine the eight essential elements of thought and apply them to provided articles.
3. Prepare samples of how the "right questions" can be used in a homeland security setting.
4. Assess how statistics are used to confuse, mislead, and misinterpret seemingly factual data.
5. Evaluate provided scenarios and identify fallacies of reasoning they include.
6. Judge the effectiveness of critical thinking as applied to homeland security scenarios.

COURSE MATERIALS

You will need the following materials to do the work of the course. The required textbook is available from the College's textbook supplier, [MBS Direct](#).

Required Textbooks

- *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking, 10th ed.*, M. Neil Browne and Stuart M. Keeley (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2012).

ISBN-13: 978-0-205-11116-9

- *The Thinker's Guide to Analytic Thinking*, Linda Elder & Richard W. Paul (Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2010).

ISBN-13: 978-0-944583-19-7

Additional Required Textbooks Available Online:

- [*Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*](#), by Richards J. Heuer, Jr. ([Central Intelligence Agency](#), 1999).
- [9/11 Report Executive Summary](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/) (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/>)
- [Overview of the Report – WMD in Iraq](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/wmd/index.html) (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/wmd/index.html>)

COURSE STRUCTURE

Critical Thinking For Homeland Security is a three-credit online course, consisting of **seven** (7) modules. Modular study assignments include text readings, lecture notes, and suggested web sites. You are required to participate in nine graded online discussions and an ungraded "Introductions" forum, which occurs during the first week of the semester. There are seven written assignments, and a final paper. Module titles are listed below.

- **Module 1: Defining Critical Thinking**
- **Module 2: Perception and Mindset**
- **Module 3: The Elements of Thought**
- **Module 4: Asking the Right Questions**
- **Module 5: Lies, Darned Lies & Statistics (Benjamin Disraeli)**
- **Module 6: Common Fallacies of Reasoning**
- **Module 7: Applications: 9/11: A Failure of Imagination and WMD in Iraq: A Lack of Critical Thinking**

ASSESSMENT METHODS

For your formal work in the course, you are required to participate in online discussion forums, complete written assignments, and a final paper. See below for more details.

Consult the course Calendar for assignment due dates.

Discussion Forums

In addition to an ungraded "Introductions" forum, **Critical Thinking for Homeland Security** requires you to participate in nine graded class discussions.

Communication with the mentor and among fellow students is a critical component of online learning. Participation in online discussions involves two distinct assignments: an initial response to a posted question (discussion thread) and subsequent comments on classmates' responses.

You will be evaluated both on the quality of your responses (i.e., your understanding of readings, and concepts as demonstrated by well-articulated, critical thinking) and quantity of your participation (i.e., the number of times you participate meaningfully in the assigned forums). Responses and comments should be properly proofread and edited, professional, and respectful.

Meaningful participation in online discussions is relevant to the content, adds value, and advances the discussion. Comments such as "I agree" and "ditto" are not considered value-adding participation. Therefore, when you agree or disagree with a classmate, the reading, or your mentor, state and support your agreement or disagreement.

For posting guidelines and help with discussion forums, please see the Student Handbook located within the General Information page of the course Web site.

Written Assignments

You are required to complete **seven** (7) written assignments. The written assignments are on a variety of topics associated with the course modules.

The written assignments in the course are built around associated readings in the textbooks. Be sure to complete all relevant readings before answering the written assignment questions.

Your answers to the assignment questions should be well developed and convey your understanding of the course materials. Before you begin to write, you may wish to outline your answers, listing the points you wish to make and the examples you will use to support your ideas. Formulate responses in your own words (do not merely copy answers from your reading materials), and cite text materials where appropriate. Creative thinking and your own wording are important aspects of an effective answer.

Prepare your written assignments using whatever word processing program you have on your computer. Proofread your answers for correct grammar, spelling, etc., and be certain you have answered the question completely. Include your name at the top of the paper, as well as the course name and code and the semester and year in which you are enrolled.

Before submitting your first assignment, check with your mentor to determine whether your word processing software is compatible with your mentor's software. If so, you can submit your work as you prepared it. If not, save your assignment as a rich-text (.rtf) file, using the Save As command of your software program. Rich text retains basic formatting and can be read by any other word processing program.

For help regarding preparing and submitting assignments, see the Student Handbook located within the General Information page of the course Web site.

- Click to review [Grading Rubric for Written Assignments](#)

Final Project

There is no proctored examination (midterm or final) in this course. A 8-10 page final paper acts as your final assessment and is worth 31 percent of your grade. You may begin work on this paper as early as possible during the course, but you must submit the paper itself by the due dates listed in the course Calendar area.

Your objective in writing this final paper is to discuss how the critical thinking model could be used in support of homeland security.

For the requirements and grading rubric of the final paper you may access the Final Paper area of this course web site.

Prepare your final paper using whatever word processing program you have on your computer. Include your name at the top of the paper, as well as the course name and code and the semester and year in which you are enrolled.

For help regarding preparing and submitting assignments, see the Student Handbook located within the General Information page of the course Web site.

GRADING AND EVALUATION

Your grade in the course will be determined as follows:

- **Online discussions (9)**—27 percent
- **Written assignments (7)**—42 percent
- **Final project**—31 percent

All assignments will receive a numerical grade of 0–100. You will receive a score of 0 for any work not submitted. Your final grade in the course will be a letter grade. Letter grade equivalents for numerical grades are as follows:

A	=	93–100
A–	=	90–92
B+	=	88–89
B	=	83–87
B–	=	80–82
C+	=	78–79
C	=	73–77

C-	=	70–72
D	=	60–69
F	=	Below 60

To receive credit for the course, you must earn a letter grade of D or higher on the weighted average of all assigned course work (e.g., exams, assignments, discussion postings, etc.).

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

First Steps to Success

To succeed in this course, take the following first steps:

- Read carefully the entire Syllabus, making sure that all aspects of the course are clear to you and that you have all the materials required for the course.
- Take the time to read the entire Online Student Handbook. The Handbook answers many questions about how to proceed through the course, how to schedule exams, and how to get the most from your educational experience at Thomas Edison State College.
- Arrange to take your examination(s) by following the instructions in this Syllabus and the Online Student Handbook.
- Familiarize yourself with the learning management systems environment—how to navigate it and what the various course areas contain. If you know what to expect as you navigate the course, you can better pace yourself and complete the work on time.
- If you are not familiar with Web-based learning be sure to review the processes for posting responses online and submitting assignments before class begins.

Study Tips

Consider the following study tips for success:

- To stay on track throughout the course, begin each week by consulting the course Calendar. The Calendar provides an overview of the course and indicates due dates for submitting assignments, posting discussions, and scheduling and taking examinations.
- Check Announcements regularly for new course information.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students at Thomas Edison State College are expected to exhibit the highest level of academic citizenship. In particular, students are expected to read and follow all policies, procedures, and program information guidelines contained in publications; pursue their learning goals with honesty and integrity; demonstrate that they are progressing satisfactorily and in a timely fashion by meeting course deadlines and following outlined procedures; observe a code of mutual respect in dealing with mentors, staff, and other students; behave in a manner consistent with the standards and codes of the profession in which they are practicing; keep official records updated regarding changes in name, address, telephone number, or e-mail address; and meet financial obligations in a timely manner. Students not practicing good academic citizenship may be subject to disciplinary action including suspension, dismissal, or financial holds on records.

Academic Dishonesty

Thomas Edison State College expects all of its students to approach their education with academic integrity—the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception. All mentors and administrative staff members at the College insist on strict standards of academic honesty in all courses. Academic dishonesty undermines this objective. Academic dishonesty takes the following forms:

- Cheating
- Plagiarizing (including copying and pasting from the Internet without using quotation marks and without acknowledging sources)
- Fabricating information or citations
- Facilitating acts of dishonesty by others
- Unauthorized access to examinations or the use of unauthorized materials during exam administration
- Submitting the work of another person or work previously used without informing the mentor
- Tampering with the academic work of other students

Academic dishonesty will result in disciplinary action and possible dismissal from the College. Students who submit papers that are found to be plagiarized will receive an F on the plagiarized assignment, may receive a grade of F for the course, and may face dismissal from the College.

A student who is charged with academic dishonesty will be given oral or written notice of the charge. If a mentor or College official believes the infraction is serious enough to warrant referral of the case to the academic dean, or if the mentor awards a final grade of F in the course because of the infraction, the student and the mentor will be afforded formal due process.

If a student is found cheating or using unauthorized materials on an examination, he or she will automatically receive a grade of F on that examination. Students who believe they have been falsely accused of academic dishonesty should seek redress through informal discussions with the mentor, through the office of the dean, or through an executive officer of Thomas Edison State College.

Plagiarism

Using someone else's work as your own is plagiarism. Although it may seem like simple dishonesty, plagiarism is against the law. Thomas Edison State College takes a strong stance against plagiarism, and students found to be plagiarizing will be severely penalized. If you copy phrases, sentences, paragraphs,

or whole documents word-for-word—or if you paraphrase by changing a word here and there—without identifying the author, then you are plagiarizing. Please keep in mind that this type of identification applies to Internet sources as well as to print-based sources. Copying and pasting from the Internet, without using quotation marks and without acknowledging sources, constitutes plagiarism. (For information about how to cite Internet sources, see Online Student Handbook > Academic Standards > "Citing Sources.")

Accidentally copying the words and ideas of another writer does not excuse the charge of plagiarism. It is easy to jot down notes and ideas from many sources and then write your own paper without knowing which words are your own and which are someone else's. It is more difficult to keep track of each and every source. However, the conscientious writer who wishes to avoid plagiarizing never fails to keep careful track of sources.

Always be aware that if you write without acknowledging the sources of your ideas, you run the risk of being charged with plagiarism.

Clearly, plagiarism, no matter the degree of intent to deceive, defeats the purpose of education. If you plagiarize deliberately, you are not educating yourself, and you are wasting your time on courses meant to improve your skills. If you plagiarize through carelessness, you are deceiving yourself.