



UHCL Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

Applied Critical Thinking (ACT) for Lifelong Learning and Adaptability

I. Applied Critical Thinking Statement:

This course has been authorized by UHCL as an Applied Critical Thinking (ACT) course, which means that in addition to learning about the specific course content, students will be engaged with some or all of the **Elements of Thought** and **Universal Intellectual Standards** of critical thinking. The objective of an ACT course is to develop the student's ability to become skilled at analysis and evaluation by applying a set of intellectual tools that may be effectively used across all disciplines (as well as to the student's personal life). Based on the Foundation for Critical Thinking Model (<http://www.criticalthinking.org/>), critical thinking involves thinking for a purpose, asking questions, using information, applying concepts, drawing inferences and conclusions, identifying assumptions, anticipating implications and consequences, and recognizing points of view. The **Universal Intellectual Standards** that are applied to the **Elements of Thought** or critical thinking in order to develop **Intellectual Traits** include clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, and fairness.

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At the beginning of the subject line on e-mails, list WRIT 3312, followed by the topic (e.g., WRIT 3312 - letter).

Materials: E-mail accessibility; Flash Drive

Skills: Word processing/general typing

Textbook: Kolin, Philip C. *Successful Writing at Work*. 10th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2013. (required)

Elder, Linda, and Richard Paul. *The Thinker's Guide to Analytic Thinking*. Tomales, CA: The Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2013. (recommended)

Paul, Richard, and Linda Elder. *Critical Thinking Concept and Tools*. Tomales, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking Press, 2009. Print. (recommended)

II. Descriptions

Catalog Description: Theory and practices of business communications; preparation of effective letters, policy statements, procedures, reports and related documents.

Course Description: Students will examine communication issues, designed to help them master effective research and writing skills needed to achieve their potential as business leaders and managers. They will develop and organize letters, short reports, memos, original research for a long report, and job search correspondence that apply audience awareness, standard grammar, documentation, ethics, formal language, appropriate formats, and revision techniques. Electronic transfer of some assignments is required.

Primary Critical Thinking Aspect: Communication

The key learning outcomes of the UHCL applied critical thinking plan involve 4 C's: Curiosity, Connections, Creativity, and Communication. In this course, we will focus on one of the four C's: Communication. Critical thinking is the basis of quality written communication and business presentations. The **Elements of Thought** (boldfaced in this paragraph) and **Intellectual Standards** (italicized in this paragraph) encompass all phases of writing from topic selection to research design to information gathering to pre-writing to document development to final presentation. Whether the format is a memo, letter, report, visual, or speech, the content presented is in response to a **problem** with the expectation of responding to an audience by

analyzing different **points of view** and supporting a **conclusion** with detailed factual **information** that covers the *depth* and *breadth* of the topic. The final presentation, whether written or oral, applies the **Intellectual Standards** to include *accurate, precise, relevant, and significant* content that is *clear* and *logical*. Writers, readers, presenters, and listeners use *fairness* to ensure that the senders and receivers examine the message from an unbiased perspective. As students grow in their research and writing ability, they gain the **Intellectual Traits** of confidence in reason, intellectual integrity, and fairmindedness.

III. Student Learning Objectives (SLO)

Overall objective: Clearly and accurately address a **problem or issue** and determine a **solution (interpretation and inference)**, using *significant, relevant* and credible evidence, facts, data and/or observations (**information**), and produce a written or oral presentation that applies audience awareness, standard grammar, documentation, ethics, formal language, appropriate formats, and revision techniques.

Students will learn to:

1. Use **points of view** to produce *clear, relevant, significant, and accurate* business communication.
2. Research a **problem**.
3. **Gather factual information and evidence** that includes both primary and secondary sources, and document information to produce credible and *accurate* business communication.
4. **Interpret information** and then determine the best format to convey *accurate, precise, and relevant solutions* to a specific business audience effectively.
5. Use **models and concepts** to critique business communication from a *fair* perspective and to identify the effective use of *precise, relevant, and significant* evidence to provide a solution to a problem.
6. Write *accurate, precise, and relevant* business communication and reports that are *logical* and *clear* by utilizing revision, editing, and proofreading techniques.
7. Apply computer and information technology to written business communication.

IV. Major Activities

Critical thinking elements will be assessed as part of three assignments: job search, major report, and peer review. Selected samples of these assignments will be forwarded to the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) office as part of the study for re-accreditation by the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The University of Houston Clear Lake may use your work in this class to generate assessment data. Assignments will be used only for educational purposes.

- a. Job Search: Use **points of reference** from education, employment, skills, and personal traits to organize, format, and produce a *clear, relevant* and persuasive résumé and application letter that pertains to a specific job, scholarship, or internship announcement. (10%) [SLO 1]
- b. Major Report: Research a local business or personal **question**, considering the *depth* and *breadth* of the **issue**, and determine a **solution** to the **problem**, based on *significant and relevant evidence, data, or observations* that have been gathered through original and secondary sources. Then write a *clear, precise, and logical* major report, using *accurate* documentation. (25%) [SLO 2, SLO 3, & SLO 4]
- c. Peer Review: Following professional standards of tone and grammar and using **interpretation** and **models (concepts)**, write *fair, relevant, and logical* peer reviews of major reports that examine the *clarity, precision, logic, and/or significance* of written communication. (5%) [SLO 5]

V. Assessment

Job Search: Use **points of reference** from education, employment, skills, and personal traits to organize, format, and produce a *clear, relevant, significant, accurate,* and persuasive and application letter and résumé that pertains to a specific job, scholarship, or internship announcement.

<u>Student Learning Outcome</u>	<u>Excellent</u> 90%-100%	<u>Acceptable</u> 70%-89%	<u>Unacceptable</u> 0%-69%	<u>Incomplete Data</u>
SLO#1: Use points of view (reference) to produce <i>clear, relevant, significant,</i> and <i>accurate</i> business communication.	Students use four points of reference (education, employment, skills, and personal traits) to develop an application letter and résumé that accurately follow the requirements of the announcement, using relevant and significant information. Grammar and spelling errors are minimal.	Students use three points of reference (education, employment, skills, and personal traits) to develop an application letter and résumé; content may be missing two or three key requirements of the announcement but still include relevant and significant strengths of the applicant. Some grammar and spelling errors exist but do not detract from the message.	The job announcement is missing. Students use only one or two points of reference (education, employment, skills, and personal traits) to develop an application letter and résumé; applicant information is limited, unclear and/or contradictory and do not match key requirements of the announcement. Grammar and spelling errors are so extensive that the content fails to convey a relevant, significant, and accurate message.	The application or résumé and the job announcement are missing.

Major Report: Research a local business or personal **question**, considering the *depth* and *breadth* of the **issue**, and determine a **solution** to the **problem**, based on *significant and relevant evidence, data*, or **observations** that have been gathered through original and secondary sources. Then write a *clear, precise, and logical* major report, using *accurate* documentation.

<u>Student Learning Outcome</u>	<u>Excellent</u> 90%-100%	<u>Acceptable</u> 70%-89%	<u>Unacceptable</u> 0%-69%	<u>Incomplete Data</u>
<p>SLO #2: Research a problem.</p> <p>SLO#3: Gather factual information and evidence that includes both primary and secondary sources, and document information to produce credible and <i>accurate</i> business communication.</p> <p>SLO#4: Interpret information and then determine the best format to convey accurate, precise, and relevant solutions to a specific business audience effectively.</p>	<p>Through clear and logical writing, students provide evidence to support the solution to a problem that has been thoroughly researched, using at least seven primary and secondary sources. In an accurate, precise, and relevant report, visuals support the results; MLA or APA documentation is accurate in the text and reference page. Formal standard writing is present throughout the text, and grammar and spelling errors are minimal.</p>	<p>Students provide evidence to support the solution to a problem. Four to six primary and secondary sources have been included. Content is relevant and brings the information to a conclusion, and visuals support the results. MLA or APA documentation is used but may have some stylistic errors. Clarity may be limited by incongruent information, lack of coherence, and awkward sentences. Grammar and spelling errors are present but do not detract from the message.</p>	<p>Students provide limited evidence to support the solution or have not analyzed sources to provide relevant and precise evidence. Three or fewer sources are used, and primary sources and/or visuals are missing. The paper uses informal language, is rambling and disorganized, includes awkward sentence structure, and has incomplete documentation, thereby lacking in clarity, logic, and accuracy. Numerous grammar and spelling errors detract from the message.</p>	<p>The report lacks evidence and documentation to support a logical conclusion. Content is based on personal opinion and does not contain the depth and breadth of research to encompass different points of view.</p>

Peer Review: Students will analyze the writing of their peers to determine if precise, relevant, and significant evidence has led to the solution of a problem. The critique will be written in a standard format, using a professional tone and formal written language.

<u>Student Learning Outcome</u>	<u>Excellent</u> 90%-100%	<u>Acceptable</u> 70%-89%	<u>Unacceptable</u> 0%-69%	<u>Incomplete Data</u>
SLO#5: Use models and concepts to critique business communication from a fair perspective and to identify the effective use of precise, relevant, and significant evidence to provide a solution to a problem.	Students write a fair and objective peer critique, analyzing the effectiveness of the evidence in the major report to solve a problem, as well as comment on report requirements. The tone is professional yet adequately addresses improvements, if needed. Students follow a standard format and use formal language. Grammar and spelling errors are minimal.	Students write a fair and objective critique in a professional tone, but their analysis of the research and requirements may miss some details that are not precise, significant, or relevant to the problem and its solution. Students generally follow the format, but their language may be more informal. Grammar and spelling errors are present but do not detract from the message.	Students follow the standard format, yet their analysis misses the strengths or weaknesses of evidence as it pertains to the problem and its solution. The tone may be insensitive, talking about the writer(s) rather than to them, or admonishes the writer (s) rather than state ways the research and report can be improved. Language is informal, and numerous grammar and spelling errors detract from the message.	The content of the peer critique is generalized and does not directly address a specific report.

Course Policies and Requirements

Attendance: Your grade will benefit most by class attendance since lectures pertain to assignment criteria, collaborative assignments are started, and in-class assignments **cannot** be made up outside of class. Even if you don't have an outside assignment completed, coming to class will prepare you for the next assignment. While you are in class, you will gain the most information by putting your cell phones away.

Reading Assignments: The chapters identified in the schedule will help you understand the lectures and complete the assignments. You will profit most by reading chapters before class.

Writing Assignments: Begin all assignments by reading the description included in the syllabus; this will help you focus on the main objectives. For most assignments, MLA will be used for documentation. In-class assignments will be completed in a computer classroom. For writing formats that do not require your name, type your name in the upper right hand corner. Label all succeeding pages with a header or footer notation with your name. *Keep a hard copy and disk copy or computer file of all work until the end of the term, including graded assignments.*

Collaborative Assignments: Some assignments will use a team approach. Professional conduct is expected when working with peers.

Grades: It is to your advantage to complete all assignments. Papers will be graded on a numeric system with 100 points possible for most assignments. One to two points will be deducted for grammar and spelling errors with one point for apostrophe and spacing; four points will be deducted for major grammatical errors,

such as comma splices, run-on sentences, and inappropriate fragments. Six points will be deducted for poor syntax or lack of sentence sense. For assignment objectives, point deductions will vary (see Writing Assignments and Values on pages 4 and 5 of this syllabus). Occasionally during class there may be a quiz or an assignment for extra points.

Grading Scale at UHCL Grading System:

A	(4.000)	93-100	C	(2.000)	73-76
A-	(3.667)	90-92	C-	(1.667)	70-72
B+	(3.333)	87-89	D+	(1.333)	67-69
B	(3.000)	83-86	D	(1.000)	63-66
B-	(2.667)	80-82	D-	(0.667)	60-62
C+	(2.333)	77-79	F	(0.000)	below 60

Late Papers: Fifteen points will be deducted for late papers unless you have an emergency, such as illness, funeral, business trip, etc. Documentation (e.g., obituary, copy of ticket) should be attached to the late assignment.

Make-up Day: If you have missed in-class assignments, the make-up day is **April 29**.

UHCL Academic Honesty Policy: You are responsible for knowing and understanding the current policy regarding academic honesty, which is available on-line. Plagiarism is using another's work or ideas, either paraphrased or written verbatim, as your own and not giving the author credit or not using accurate documentation and required punctuation; **review Chapter 8 of the text carefully**. Students caught plagiarizing will receive a "o" for the assignment, and the dean's office will be notified as outlined in the procedure.

Disabilities: If you have a disability and need special accommodation, consult first with the Coordinator of Health and Disabilities Services and then discuss the accommodation with me.

Use of Class Products in Assessment

The University of Houston – Clear Lake may use your work in this class to generate assessment data. Assignments will be used only for educational purposes.

Assignments marked with CT will use elements and standards of critical thinking for assessment.

Assignments Related to Major Project

Your major project may be completed individually or by a team of 2-4 students.

Proposal for Major Project [Sample pp. 631-634]

5% _____

Write a memo that outlines your topic for the major project that *solves a local business problem or personal concern*. Topic ideas are on pages 613 and 638. Review the proposal handout for details. Include interview questions. If you have chosen a questionnaire for your second original research, attach it to the proposal. Include at least seven potential sources, which include the original sources. The major report will **not** be accepted without an approved proposal. **Turn in a printed copy and an electronic copy via Blackboard on February 4.**

Progress Letter with Interview Responses, Interview Summary, & Annotated Bibliography

[Letter Sample p.659; Interview Responses p. 340]

10% _____

In a letter with headings [including work completed, work in progress, work remaining, and problems] (30 points), identify the progress of your major project. Enclose responses from your interview (30 points) [see p.314-15], a summary of the interview (10 points), and an annotated bibliography (30 points) with at least seven sources, including the interview, additional original source, and other sources. **This assignment is due March 4.**

(CT) Major Project/Report [Sample report pp.389-413, 702-718]

25% _____

This assignment is the capstone for the course, blending the objectives from almost every assignment. It must be based on your approved proposal or revised progress report. Review the major report handout for more details. Signatures of all team members are required on the transmittal letter. See page 2 for Student Learning Objectives that will be applied to the assessment of this assignment. **Turn in two hard copies and post it on Blackboard.** *If a team is preparing the report, turn in a hard copy for each member and one for the instructor.* **The major report is due by the end of class April 8.**

(CT) * Peer Critique of Major Report

5% _____

To develop evaluation skills in relation to business communications, you will read reports and critique them, as well as write an abstract. Your textbook and notes may be used. See page 2 for Student Learning Objectives that will be applied to the assessment of this assignment. **The written peer critique will be April 15.**

Speech

5% _____

Present a speech about your major project that introduces your research, highlights a major finding, or summarizes results. *Use of Power Point software is required.* At the beginning of class, give a copy of your slides (3-6 to a page) to the instructor. Classmates will critique your presentation. **Speeches will be given April 22.**

**indicates in-class assignment; CT = Critical Thinking Assignment*

Writing Assignments and Values

Changes in the number of assignments may be made at the option of the instructor. Other in-class assignments may be completed.

***Abstract/Summary** 5% _____

On **January 28**, write an informative abstract over an assigned article (85 points). Paraphrase the content and document the source correctly with a citation before the paragraph (15 points). See pages 410 and 415.

***Letter(s)** 5% _____

On **February 11**, write a professional letter(s) assigned by the instructor.

***Documented Essay** 5% _____

On **February 25**, write a paper of 350 words or more, paraphrasing and quoting from the sources provided and correctly documenting the paper. Follow the directions in the handout.

(CT) Job Search Assignment 10% _____

On **March 25**, bring to class the skills list, job announcement, identifying six job responsibilities and four personal attributes (10 points); a paragraph describing the company (10 points); application letter (40 points); and résumé (40 points). Five points will be deducted for the first misspelled word in the letter or résumé. See page 2 for Student Learning Objectives that will be applied to the assessment of this assignment.

***Visual Exercise** 5% _____

On **March 18**, develop visuals on computer software and write supporting paragraphs and/or a short report to explain the visuals (100 points). In particular, pay attention to number usage (see pages A-14-15). Turn in a printed copy and post your assignment on Blackboard.

***Company Exercise** 5% _____

On **April 1**, an assigned company exercise selected from material covered this term, which may include letters, visuals, short reports, or a combination of formats.

Instructions 10% _____

Collaboratively develop a set of instructions. You may select your own topic. Ideas are on pp. 598-99 (#3 & #5). Identify your audience (5 points), and include a list of supplies/tools (5 points), numbered steps along with an appropriate introduction and conclusion (45 points), and at least three visuals (30 points). **Make copies of your instructions for each member of your group and one for the instructor and turn in your assignment on March 11.**

***Critique/Peer Review of Instructions:** On the same day the instructions are due, **March 11**, you will write a memo (15 points), critiquing another set of instructions.

***Short Quizzes** 5% _____

Short quizzes will be administered in class over grammar or class content. A quiz is scheduled for **April 1**.

**indicates in-class assignment; CT = Critical Thinking Assignment*