

# CIMT 475—Critical Thinking and Ethics in Education

Ethics and Social Responsibility Elective

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## Office Hours:

## Course Description:

CIMT 475 This Ethics and Social Responsibility course examines current ethical and social issues related to public education. As citizens and for those students who are or will become parents of children who will be educated through public education, students must understand the ethical and social responsibility associated with public education—this is done in the context of the times and the generation to which the students belong. Enabling emphases include a review of *critical thinking* and *information literacy* and the subsequent application of both to the analysis of a current education issue. Topics include but are not limited to such areas as NCLB, public education reform, school performance, home schooling, charter schools and standardized testing.

**Foundational Studies Credit: Ethics and Social Responsibility.** Students who successfully complete *Critical Thinking and Ethics in Education* will meet the 2010 Foundational Studies Ethics and Social Responsibility requirement.

Beyond preparing you for your profession, a central goal of higher education is to assist you in understanding the world in which you live and to help you navigate it effectively. The primary learning objective of Critical Thinking and Ethics in Education is to apply ethical decision-making and the tenets of social responsibility as you engage your role as citizen, tax payer and consumer of public education.

*NOTE: This course is supported by a BlackBoard website, used primarily for distribution of course materials, including online readings, and discussion board activity.*

## Textbook

Paul, R. and Elder, L. *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools*. Foundation for Critical Thinking. 2008

Barnet, S. and Bedau, H. (2010). *Current Issues and Enduring Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking and Readings*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martins.

Online readings related to ethics and social responsibility in education provided by the instructor via the course website.

**Course Technical Support:** The Information Technology (IT) Division provides technical support for web-assisted courses and students. Direct ALL technical and access problems to them: 1-888-818-5465 or [IT-Help@indstate.edu](mailto:IT-Help@indstate.edu) or <http://ithelp.indstate.edu/>.

## Course Objectives / Foundational Program Outcomes:

This course along with others in the Foundational Studies array will help ensure that upon graduating from Indiana State University you will have the knowledge base and skills to be successful professionals, consumers, and citizens (see the foundational studies website: <http://www.indstate.edu/fs/> for a listing of the Foundational Studies objectives).

Specifically, this course will move students toward competence in the following Foundational Studies learning outcomes.

- ✓ Locate, critically read, and evaluate information to solve problems.
- ✓ Critically evaluate the ideas of others.
- ✓ Apply knowledge and skills within and across the fundamental ways of knowing (natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences, arts and humanities, mathematics, and history).
- ✓ Demonstrate the skills for effective citizenship and stewardship.
- ✓ Demonstrate an understanding of diverse cultures within and across societies.
- ✓ Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical implications of decisions and actions.
- ✓ Express themselves effectively, professionally, and persuasively both orally and in writing.

Though conveyed more fully through the articulated course objectives below, you will use the lens of responsible citizen and taxpayer to research, critically consider, form and present cogent arguments for a considered position relative to social, political, economic and ethical influences of initiatives in education. You will demonstrate proficiency through various class discussions, papers, and a culminating group research project and presentation. When you successfully complete this course, you have experientially\* engaged in critical thinking and problem solving by accessing and validating reliable resources from the natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences, arts and humanities, mathematics, and history. You will be able to do the following:

1. Understand the historical and philosophical bases of ethical decision-making and social responsibility;
2. Use independent thinking, critical analysis, and reasoned inquiry when assessing personal, professional, and societal issues;
3. Demonstrate the ability to make personal and professional decisions by applying knowledge and skills obtained from the study of ethics and theories of social responsibility; and
4. Articulate how one's ethical framework and understanding of social responsibility shape one's actions.

Most importantly, you will gain confidence in your ability to understand and make reasoned arguments as you actively and critically fulfill your role as citizen in your local and national community.

### **\* Experiential Learning Definition**

Experiential learning, at its core is operationalized by engaging students in learning through sequential exposure to challenging, compelling, and enriching activities conducted in appropriate settings. It integrates development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and fosters application of methods of critical inquiry. It engages students in personal reflection in order to organize, interpret, and bring meaning and coherence to their learning experience.

### **CIMT 475 Course Objectives**

- Locate, critically read, and evaluate information to solve problems— Students will demonstrate their skills in this area through class discussions of assigned readings and in-class videos, and through the research, analysis and synthesizing processes associated with locating and using information resources

relevant to course topics, particularly the major group presentation. For more specifics, please see the section of this syllabus entitled *About the Specific Assignments*. Course readings and activities will support your growth in this area, and specific feedback from the instructor will provide guidance for your personal growth.

- Critically evaluate the ideas of others— Students will demonstrate their skills in this area through reasoned debate in class discussions; analysis of information resources relevant to course topics, particularly a major group presentation; and assessment of other teams’ presentations using an assessment rubric developed by the instructor. For more specifics, please see the section of this syllabus entitled *About the Specific Assignments*. Course readings and activities will support your growth in this area, and specific feedback from the instructor will provide guidance for your personal growth.
- Apply knowledge and skills within and across the fundamental ways of knowing (natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences, arts and humanities, mathematics, and history)— Students will demonstrate their abilities and understandings of these areas through class discussions on assigned readings, reflective essays and through evidence as seen in their group project. The selected texts and class activities for this course provide specific direction and practice in judging and marshaling valid research resources to reach reasoned conclusions and upon which to develop substantiated rationales for conclusions or actions. For more specifics, please see the section of this syllabus entitled *About the Specific Assignments*. Course readings and activities will support your growth in this area, and specific feedback from the instructor will provide guidance for your personal growth.
- Demonstrate the skills for effective citizenship and stewardship— Students will demonstrate their abilities in these areas through class discussions of specific topics (e.g. strengths/weaknesses of NCLB, strengths/weaknesses of home schooling as an alternative to public education, etc.) and through their active participation in a team project that examines a current issue in public education. The culminating public presentation or blog provides “real world” practice and feedback on knowledge and skill development. For more specifics, please see the section of this syllabus entitled *About the Specific Assignments*. Course readings and activities will support your growth in this area, and specific feedback from the instructor will provide guidance for your personal growth.
- Demonstrate the skills to place their current and local experience in a global, cultural, and historical context— Students will demonstrate their understanding of these areas through an examination of the Millennial Generation (aka Generation Y) within the context of the other generations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The culminating public presentation or blog provides “real world” and feedback on knowledge and skill development. For more specifics, please see the section of this syllabus entitled *About the Specific Assignments*. Course readings and activities will support your growth in this area, and specific feedback from the instructor will provide guidance for your personal growth.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical implications of decisions and actions— Students will demonstrate their understanding of these areas within the contexts of critical thinking, information literacy and the consequences of not thinking for themselves. Specifically, critique of various initiatives in education (e.g. strengths/weaknesses of NCLB, strengths/weaknesses of home schooling as an alternative to public education, etc.) will focus on the influence those have held on the lives of citizens.
- Communicate effectively, professionally, and persuasively both orally and in writing— Students will demonstrate their abilities in these areas through observable behaviors such as classroom discussion, reflective essays on assigned readings and participation in a major group project. The culminating public presentation or blog provides “real world” and feedback on knowledge and skill development. For more

specifics, please see the section of this syllabus entitled *About the Specific Assignments*. Course readings and activities will support your growth in this area, and specific feedback from the instructor will provide guidance for your personal growth.

### Foundational Studies Learning Objectives Addressed/Reinforced

- Composition— activities will include reflective essays in response to assigned readings, responses to essay questions on exams (midterm and final) and development of supporting materials for a major group project.
- Communication— activities will include active participation in class discussions on assigned readings and videos; cogent responses/reactions found in reflective essays and test essay questions; development of a Power Point and supporting materials for a group project presented to the entire class.
- Social or Behavioral Sciences—activities will include in-class discussions governed by the rules of collegiality in academic discourse, collaborative/cooperative participation in a group project involving a class presentation.
- Ethics and Social Responsibility—all course activities and indeed the overall course emphasis is on being an informed citizen and parent in matters related to public education.

### Course Requirements

*Learning in this course is primarily experiential. Critical, participatory citizenship requires that one be accomplished in the learning objectives listed above in order to best serve the local and national community. In fact, 50% of the grade in CIMT 475 is derived from experiential learning activities.*

Students will be required to

- complete four topic-specific exercises assigned by the instructor—these will be in the form of essays in response to research and in-class discussions of readings and videos [SALR 1 – 7];
- take a midterm exam—tests will be mixed format in terms of objective/subjective components requiring a demonstrated knowledge of key facts and the ability to synthesize a reasoned response to essay test questions [SALR 3];
- complete a group project/presentation on an assigned contemporary issue in public education [SALR 1 – 7];
- complete a public presentation (poster session) or online blog on group project of the assigned contemporary issue in public education [SALR 1-7]
- attend and participate in class regularly, and
- complete *minor assignments*, e.g. webpage exercise, following all course policies and rules related to assignment formatting, etc. [SALR 1 – 7]

### About the Specific Assignments

The assignments in this course are developmentally designed to experientially support your growth as a skilled critical participant in society. While you will be working individually on most assignments you will be required to work with a group for the culminating activity. This is purposeful in that to effect change in many societal

settings, especially that of the United States, one must enjoin the cooperation and service of others to present a strong, reasoned voice in favor of or in opposition to any initiative or state of affairs. Moreover, the social construction of the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in this pursuit are part and parcel of the joint preparation and presentation of the culminating activity.

**Essay 1: Critical Thinking/Information Literacy.** In this essay, you will be challenged to synthesize the various class readings, presentations, and discussions to produce the working definitions you will use as you apply critical thinking and information literacy to the various projects in this course. This document will be used by the instructor to assess your readiness individually, as well as the class as a whole, to tackle the demanding tasks ahead. Count on specific feedback and guidance emerging from this assignment.

**Essay 2: Understanding Perspective.** In this essay, you will pull from the various class readings, presentations, and discussions to compare and differentiate between *your generationally influenced perspective* in relation to the perspectives of past, present, and future generations. You will also consider the influence of political, socio-economic, and culture factors within various generational groups on perspective. This reflective essay will challenge you to consider deeply how various perspectives influence ways an argument must be marshaled in order to be seriously considered.

**Essay 3: School Vouchers.** In this essay, you will be challenged to produce a reasoned argument for a specific position regarding public policy for school vouchers. You must pull from your reading of the texts and class discussion what you have learned about the history and philosophy of ethical decision-making and social responsibility. Knowledge and skills related to critical thinking, information literacy and understanding perspectives must also be applied; moreover, the modes of argumentation that have been practiced through in-class activities and discussions are to be marshaled for this assignment. Your target audience is the general public who would be reading your position paper so consider how best to convince that group of the veracity of your argument.

**Student News/Essay 4:** This assignment comes in two parts. As the course begins, you will select an education-related news topic of interest to you. You will spend a significant portion of the semester researching the topic and developing your informed beliefs about the topic. As your understanding of the topic develops you are challenged to take a reasoned stance for what you believe should occur in relationship to the topic. You might be informing public policy development, or illuminating the plight of subgroups that may be disenfranchised by existing policies, or other – this determined in consultation with your course instructor. The various learning experiences of the course are designed to help you prepare that reasoned stance. The final portion of the assignment challenges you to present your reasoned position and supporting arguments to the class, and then entertain a question and answer period to address divergent views from your classmates. Your essay will reflect your stance, your argument, and provide a final reflection of your perceptions of the effectiveness of your presentation in convincing your classmates of the veracity of your stance.

**Final Presentation:** This culminating activity will challenge you to pull from all the knowledge and skills you have developed over the course but add an additional level of complexity. You will work with a group to research an education-related topic. Together you will present and critique various aspects of the topic using a full range of contributing and opposing views. You will highlight a full spectrum of social, political, economic and ethical considerations relative to the topic in your presentation and use those factors in providing a rationale for a solution or action. As in most groups, there will be variances in conclusions, but your group must work through those to a well-reasoned stance. This will also be necessary to provide an effective question/answer session for your classmates and instructor. Do not preclude the possibility of an outside visitor sitting in on a session as she or he may wish to be aware of your insights (this will be a function of what possibilities are

available on a semester by semester basis). Following the presentation, you will be asked to complete a confidential assessment of your team members’ performance and contributions to the project.

**Public Presentation or Blog:** Depending on the constraints of the session, or should you be completing the course as an online offering, your final presentation group will host a poster session at the university or online blog about your topic highlighting research processes and findings, your conclusions, and rationale for a solution or action. If hosting a poster session at the university, this will be completed in one class session during the final exam period. If hosting an online blog, the “session” will be completed in a one-week period. Regardless of whether you are hosting a poster session or an online blog, a general announcement about the blog will be posted in the University Communications and other ESR category classes that semester will be notified and encouraged to participate. It is expected that your group will monitor the online blog (if that is the presentation mode selected) daily and provide professional responses where appropriate. Your course instructor will monitor group blogs and will be available for consultation should that be needed for responses BEFORE they are posted. This portion of the assignment is considered the “final exam” for the course and is most certainly performance based!

**Grading Rubric for Individual Assignments**

A	=	90-100	Excellent work
B	=	80-89	Good work
C	=	70-79	Fair work
D	=	60-69	Poor work
F	=	<60	Unacceptable work

NOTE: this scale will also be used in the determination of the final course grade.

**Final Grade Determination:**

Essay 1		10%
Essay 2		10%
Essay 3		10%
Student News	10%	
Essay 4		10%
Midterm		5%
Group Project/Presentation	20%	
Public Presentation or Blog	15%	
Participation/Attendance	10%	
		100%

**Course Policies**

Attendance—required; excused absences require documentation and are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Laptop Not Required for Course: Usage Permitted—students may use their laptops for note taking. Further, in-class group work may be facilitated by the use of a laptop, particularly once team presentation topics are assigned.

Late Work—not accepted without prior arrangement unless documented extenuating circumstances dictate otherwise.

Style and Format of Completed Projects—While this is not a rhetoric and composition class, there are certain expectations with regard to organization, grammar, spelling, coherence, etc. Please remember to use practical tools like Spell Check and Grammar Check; however, remember that they alone will not catch everything. If you know you are not the best writer (and experience has taught that *many people overestimate their writing abilities*), ask a colleague or friend to critique your draft before submitting—if nothing else, they are likely to catch typos, grammatical and awkward sentence structuring that can only improve your work if corrected. If you are near a campus or public library that offers a writing lab, use the service! ISU's Writing Lab is in the main library and they will accept papers from distance education students so anyone may make use of this service! Students whose first language is not English are particularly encouraged to seek writing and editing assistance prior to submitting assignments. *Poorly written exercises/papers will receive a poor grade.* While most of the assignments for the course require no particular "style manual," some may require formal citations (*complete* bibliographic information). In those cases use the APA Manual of Style (6th ed.) available in the main library, any public library or bookstore.

Use Blackboard for Submitting ALL Completed Assignments — this has proven a reliable option so long as you only "drop" files that have the .doc (Word for Windows) or .rtf (Rich Text Format) extensions. If you have difficulty using the Blackboard, contact Technical Support immediately and get the problem solved... keep me posted if you have tech problems (see page 1 of the syllabus for IT Help Desk contact info).

## **Course Accessibility and Learning Accommodations**

Students with disabilities are provided equal educational opportunities at Indiana State University. These services are designed and arranged with individual documented needs in mind. For more information see: <http://web.indstate.edu/sasc/dss/accessibility.htm>

## **Academic Integrity**

This course is governed by the ISU Code of Student Conduct and policies related to academic integrity at ISU. Both are available for your review at <http://www.indstate.edu/sjp/docs/code.pdf> and <http://www.indstate.edu/academicintegrity/>, respectively.

Plagiarism will result in an automatic zero points for any given project or exercise. More than one instance of plagiarism in a course will result in your failing the course. Visit the ISU Library plagiarism tutorial at <http://lib.indstate.edu/tools/tutorials/plagiarism>.

## **Academic Freedom**

According to AAUP's (American Association of University Professors) position statement on Academic Freedom, "Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject." Departmental curricula and courses are determined by the collective departmental faculty. Individual instructors have the right to conduct their classes as they see fit, however, they must adhere to the course content and purpose(s) as established by their departmental faculty.