SPEECH COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT POLICY ON
CRITICAL THINKING COURSES FOR GENERAL EDUCATION
(Dated October, 1993)

Drafted by Speech Communication Department
Subcommittee with Professors Bright, Coyne,
and Mack

Chancellors Executive Order #338.

Instruction in critical thinking is designed to achieve an understanding of the relationship of
language to logic which should lead to the ability to analyze, criticize and advocate ideas, to
reason inductively and deductively, and to reach conclusions based on sound inferences drawn
from unambiguous statements based on sound knowledge or belief. The minimal competence to
be expected at the successful conclusion of instruction in critical thinking should be the ability to
distinguish fact from judgment, belief from knowledge and skills in elementary deductive and
inductive processes including an understanding of the formal and informal fallacies of language
and thought.

In the firm belief that the discipline of argumentation provides the basis for meeting both
the letter and spirit of the Chancellor's guidelines for critical thinking, our subcommittee
recommends the following policy for all of the critical thinking courses sponsored by the
department:

That the Chancellor's Executive Order #338 describing the nature of critical thinking
courses be placed in a prominent place in the syllabus of each course and each of our
course offerings be designed to meet those guidelines in the eyes of the students taking
the classes, the subcommittee in our department reviewing the courses and any and all
review bodies considering the nature of critical thinking and how it is achieved in
required course offerings in general education offered by our department.

1. That a textbook in argumentation (as opposed to specialized books in
small groups debate, speaking or writing) be selected and utilized in each
course offering.

2. That two thirds of each course be devoted to the discipline of
argumentation as it pertains to rational thought processes in general.

3. That one third of each course be devoted to a practice of argumentation in
a specialized sense. Specifically that small group excursions should
emphasize the aspects of rational decision making processes, and not
psychological or sociological aspects of small group theory, that debate
should be viewed as an outgrowth of solid theoretical argumentative
theory and not an end in itself, and that critical processes in speaking,
listening, and writing be an outgrowth of the theory of argument or logic
and not ends in themselves.

We further wish to measure each of our critical thinking courses by this standard: that
the course(s) in critical thinking are not to be considered speech, debate or small group
speech communication courses but courses in the critical thinking component of general
education offered by the Speech Communication Department.

It is our wish to be true to the letter and spirit of Executive Order #338 and invulnerable
to any implication otherwise from any source whatsoever.