

**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.