

## The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

## Subject Description Form

Please read the notes at the end of the table carefully before completing the form.

<b>Subject Code</b>	ELC1A11
<b>Subject Title</b>	Building Critical Thinking Skills and Communication
<b>Credit Value</b>	3
<b>Level</b>	1
<b>Pre-requisite/ Co-requisite/ Exclusion</b>	Nil
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>This subject aims to develop:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. a critical mindset in students by encouraging a healthy scepticism and a habit of questioning rather than immediately accepting conclusions and information;</li> <li>2. students' basic critical thinking skills, including observation, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and reflection;</li> <li>3. students' awareness of the variable nature of information reliability and the need to verify claims;</li> <li>4. students' language ability in clearly expressing their critical thinking in written and oral form.</li> </ol>
<b>Intended Learning Outcomes</b> <i>(Note 1)</i>	<p>Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. display a critical mindset by asking key questions when presented with information, images, arguments, and statistics</li> <li>b. demonstrate a critical approach to media literacy</li> <li>c. use appropriate language to respond critically to evidence and logic in arguments</li> <li>d. evaluate the accuracy of claims about research through critical enquiry</li> <li>e. fulfil English Reading and Writing Requirements</li> </ol> <p>Students should be able to use logical reasoning and conduct critical analysis in evaluating information in its manifold forms, and apply critical thinking skills and language when participating in discussions and advancing arguments.</p>
<b>Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus</b> <i>(Note 2)</i>	<p><i>Synopsis</i></p> <p>This subject aims to develop students' critical thinking skills and their information/media literacy. These skills are not only "a requirement" for critical thinkers which higher education intends to nurture, but also a lifelong need of students "with multiple applications in everyday life" (Machete &amp; Turpin, 2020, p. 237).</p> <p>Underlying the ability to apply critical thinking skills and information literacy is a critical thinking habit of mind that is predisposed to question information and statements</p>

(Facione, 2007) and explore and investigate them further according to perceived importance and relevance to a thinker’s life. This course models an exploratory and questioning approach to a number of topics relevant to students’ lives, such as wealth, physical and mental health, and attitudes to gender differences, to inculcate such a critical thinking mindset in students.

This is closely in line with the University’s mission to “nurture critical thinkers, effective communicators, innovative problem solvers, and socially responsible global citizens” ([PolyU Mission Statement](#))

Below is a week-by-week outline of the syllabus of the course. The first half of the course introduces key critical thinking questions and individual critical thinking skills within the context of a topic relevant to students’ lives. Topics are explored by applying these questions and skills to various sources of information, such as news articles, broadcast reports, blogs, advertisements, editorials and journal articles. Current issues related to fake news, deep fakes, clickbait, and viral social media claims will also be integrated into these topics. The second half of the course gives students opportunities to discuss important issues, gather and evaluate evidence, and apply critical thinking skills and questions in order to arrive at their own considered conclusion.

*Indicative Syllabus*

<b>Week</b>	<b>Lecture (1 hour)</b>	<b>Tutorial (2 hours)</b>
1	Introduction: Why is critical thinking important in life?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Key critical thinking question 1: What does it mean?</li> <li>➤ Critical thinking skill: observation</li> </ul> Topic: Can I get rich quick?
2	Developing a critical mindset Language focus: asking questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Key critical thinking question 2: What information might be missing?</li> <li>➤ Critical thinking skill: analysis</li> </ul> Topic: What should I eat?
3	Identifying trust biases Language focus: noun phrases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Key critical thinking question 3: What is the purpose?</li> <li>➤ Critical thinking skill: interpretation</li> </ul> Topic: Is it worth buying organic food? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ EWR briefing</li> </ul>
4	Checking sources and evidence Language focus: hedging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Key critical thinking question 4: How do I know this is true?</li> <li>➤ Critical thinking skill: evaluation</li> </ul> Topic: What medicine can I trust?
5	Evaluating logic in arguments Language focus: linking ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Key critical thinking question 5: Who are the stakeholders?</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Critical thinking skill: identifying logical fallacies</li> <li>Topic: Why are some people against vaccinating their children?</li> <li>➤ Assessment 2 first draft submission (EWR)</li> </ul>
	6	Bias and questioning one's assumptions Language focus: sentence structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Key critical thinking question 6: What are the possible biases?</li> <li>➤ Critical thinking skill: reflection</li> <li>Topic: Are men and women really so different?</li> </ul>
	7	Assessment 1 practice evaluation: applying the rubric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Assessment 1 (Critical oral discussion)</li> </ul>
	8	Leveraging GenAI in preparing a draft Reliability of information (1)  Language focus: academic style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mental health in the media: investigations and discussions</li> </ul>
	9	Reliability of information (2)  Language focus: verb tenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Marriage and divorce in the media: investigations and discussions</li> <li>➤ Assessment 2 second draft submission (EWR)</li> </ul>
	10	Healthy skepticism  Language focus: cause and effect words and phrases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Artificial intelligence (AI) in the media: investigations and discussions</li> </ul>
	11	Creating an effective video presentation 1: audience engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Features of engaging oral presentations</li> </ul>
	12	Creating an effective video presentation 2: evaluation of examples according to rubric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Assessment 3 Critical Self-reflection presentations</li> </ul>
	13	Writing critical reports  Leveraging GenAI for final draft improvement  Language focus: word forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Assessment 3 Critical Self-reflection presentations</li> <li>➤ Assessment 4 Self-access English enhancement completion</li> </ul>
	14	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Assessment 2 final draft submission (EWR)</li> </ul>
<b>Teaching/Learning Methodology</b> <i>(Note 3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Lectures</i> (13 hours) The lectures introduce basic theories, frameworks, and language use related to critical thinking skills and practice. All the lectures are problem-based (based on documents such as media reports, social media posts, and journal articles) and employ a cognitive modeling approach to applying critical thinking to texts, information, and arguments.</li> <li>➤ <i>Tutorials</i> (26 hours)</li> </ul>		

In the tutorials, students work together to practise applying the ideas and language from the lectures to media, information, and arguments related to a specific life-related topic. These sessions provide students opportunities to:

- a) conduct critical reasoning analysis on the reliability of given information;
- b) engage in discussions in which they practise expressing their critical thinking orally;
- c) practise applying critical thinking questions and skills on authentic texts;
- d) reflect on their views and on the development of their critical thinking ability

The class-based activities in the tutorials will largely stem from Visible Thinking Routines created by Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education to promote critical thinking skills and dispositions through the asking of questions key to critical enquiry.

Through the use of instructor-provided and student-sourced media objects, both synchronous and asynchronous discussion-based learning will be fostered.

Initially, critical analysis and evaluation of the media objects will be demonstrated through cognitive modelling (for instance, the instructor modelling the thinking process of evaluating the claims in a broadcast report) and Socratic enquiry by the instructor, with students gradually taking the lead in analysing and evaluating as the semester continues. Collaboration and sharing of ideas among students will be emphasized.

Such approaches will provide students with initial scaffolding to give them the requisite skills and confidence to independently analyse and evaluate from a critical perspective.

They will also provide students with numerous opportunities to express their critical thinking in oral and written form through interaction with peers and instructors.

This subject takes a problem-based approach. It contains three parts, weekly lectures (1-hour), weekly tutorials (2-hour) and independent learning (e.g., pre-lecture reading, post-tutorial writing, and other related activities).

Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes <i>(Note 4)</i>	Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)				
			a	b	c	d	e
	1. Critical oral discussion	25%	✓	✓	✓		
2. Critical response writing (EWR and ERR)	45% (35% + 10% EWR)	✓	✓	✓		✓	

3. Critical self-reflection oral presentation (ERR)	25%	✓	✓		✓	
4. Self-access English enhancement	5%			✓		
Total	100%					

Explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes:

**Assessment 1 Critical oral discussion**

Students will discuss, in groups of four, a comic on critical thinking, raising key critical questions and putting forward a critical perspective on the information and how it is presented in the comic. In preparing for and completing this assessment, students will develop language that is critically appropriate for discussions of a variety of issues. Instructors will observe and record each discussion group and evaluate the performance of each student according to criteria related to the use of language demonstrating a critical thinking mindset (e.g. asking questions, exploring issues more deeply, hedging statements).

**Assessment 2 Critical response writing (EWR and ERR)**

Students will analyse an opinion piece/editorial provided by the subject teacher and write, through multiple drafts, a 1500-word critical evaluation of the author’s viewpoint, including logic in argumentation, ending with a report on their own use of online tools to improve their writing, to fulfil the English Writing Requirement. In doing so, students will apply key critical thinking questions and skills learned in the course to an analysis of the relative strength of an argument and the evidence provided to support it. They will also display their ability to write clearly and logically in English in an appropriately academic style. They are required to cite information from the ERR book in their writing.

**Assessment 3 Critical self-reflection presentation (ERR)**

Students will orally present a reflection on their learning of critical thinking during the course, noting any progress they have made, with examples, and highlighting important skills gained from both the course and the ERR book. They will illustrate their learning by describing a past action or opinion that they now view differently due to any critical thinking principles they have presented.

**Assessment 4 Self-access English enhancement**

Students will complete an online 10-module game that requires them to order words and phrases into correct sentences on a given topic and language focus. The game gives them practice in language accuracy, sentence structure, and academic vocabulary. The game is embedded in a website that provides students with input and further practice with the language and skill objectives.

Notes:

- 1) This subject applies for the eligibility for Writing (“W”) and Reading (“R”) designations in which students are required to engage in in-depth reading and analytical writing for learning and assessment purposes.

	<p>2) To fulfil the “R” requirement, students need to read extensively (at least 200 pages which includes journal articles, book chapters, and media reports) throughout the semester. The core book for the subject is <i>Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your professional and personal life</i> (Paul &amp; Elder, 2014). The text is readable and accessible for undergraduate students, even those for whom English is not a native language. An electronic version of this book is available via the PolyU Library website.</p> <p>To qualify for the “W” designation, students need to complete a written assessment, an analysis of an opinion piece/editorial ending with a reflection on their own thinking processes (1,500-2,500 words). The assessment requires that students go through the draft submission process with the ELC which provides feedback on student writing and assesses the progress made by students.</p>		
<b>Student Study Effort Expected</b>	Class contact (within 13 weeks of study in a semester):		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lectures</li> </ul>	13 Hrs.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tutorials</li> </ul>	26 Hrs.	
	Other student study effort:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discussion and self-reflection on critical thinking related issues</li> </ul>	26 hrs.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Critical reading and writing</li> </ul>	26 hrs.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Self-study</li> </ul>	26 hrs.	
	Total student study effort		117 Hrs.
	<p><b>English Reading Requirement</b></p> <p>Nardi, P. (2017) <i>Critical thinking: tools for evaluating research</i>. University of California Press</p> <p>Paul, R., &amp; Elder, L. (2014). <i>Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your professional and personal life</i>. Pearson Education.</p> <hr/> <p>Chang, Y. T., Yu, H., &amp; Lu, H. P. (2015). Persuasive messages, popularity cohesion, and message diffusion in social media marketing. <i>Journal of Business Research</i>, 68(4), 777-782.</p> <p>Facione, P. A. (2011). Critical thinking: What it is and why it counts. <i>Insight assessment</i>, 2007(1), 1-23.</p> <p>Kopp, C., Layton, R., Sillitoe, J., &amp; Gondal, I. (2015). The Role of Love stories in Romance Scams: A Qualitative Analysis of Fraudulent Profiles. <i>International Journal of Cyber Criminology</i>, 9(2).</p> <p>Machete, P., &amp; Turpin, M. (2020). The use of critical thinking to identify fake news: A systematic literature review. In <i>Conference on e-Business, e-Services and e-Society</i> (pp. 235-246). Springer, Cham.</p> <p>Nardi, P. (2017) <i>Critical thinking: tools for evaluating research</i>. University of California Press</p>		

	<p>Shah, A. (2020). A Study of Online Scams: Examining the Behavior and Motivation Factors of Scammers and Victimization Consequences. <i>Leveraging Consumer Behavior and Psychology in the Digital Economy</i>, 81-90.</p> <p>Sanders, J. (2021). <i>Perspectives on Critical Thinking</i>. New York: Nova Science , Incorporated.</p> <p>Sinprakob, S., &amp; Songkram, N. (2015). A Proposed Model of Problem-based Learning on Social Media in Cooperation with Searching Technique to Enhance Critical Thinking of Undergraduate Students. <i>Procedia, Social and Behavioral Sciences</i>, 174, 2027-2030.</p> <p>Trout, R. (2020). <i>Social Media And Critical Thinking: A Hermeneutic, Phenomenological Study Of Business Professors</i> (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Southwest).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Reading List and References</b></p>		

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