Here is an outline of the new Critical Thinking course starting in the summer term 2020-2021. The new course will essentially focus on five core themes:

Core themes of Critical Thinking

1. Core theme 1: *Me as a knower & thinker*
2. Core theme 2: *My perspectives, biases, and assumptions*
3. Core theme 3: *Where do our values come from?*
4. Core theme 4: *How do we navigate the world?*
5. Core theme 5: *How do we know when we are being manipulated or “spun”?*

Areas in which methods of Critical Thinking will be applied:

* History
* The human sciences (psychology, sociology, philosophy, politics etc.)
* The natural sciences (biology, chemistry, physics etc.)
* Mathematics
* The arts

Based on these five core themes a course in Critical Thinking could be structured in the following way (tentative outline!):

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Name** | **Critical Thinking question** | **Areas of CT** | **Core themes covered** | **Important aspects of CT and useful articles** |
| 1 | Basics | What is critical thinking? What does the term “counterintuitive thinking” exactly mean? | A brief look at the five areas of CT | CT1 + CT4 | An introduction to the aims and structure of the course; the extent to which we can trust our senses and our memory; how we construct reality via subjective experiences.   * Articles: “*Six reasons why you think your memory is stranger than you think!”/ “Why are almost all maps the same way up?”* |
| 2 | Purpose | What is critical thinking for, and how can we assess its value? | The natural sciences | CT3 | The nature of science and what its purpose is; the contrast of how and why indigenous societies produce knowledge about the world; different ways in which the value of knowledge could be evaluated.   * Article: *“When medicine and faith define death differently”* |
| 3 | Spin | How is our understanding of the world affected by the way it is represented? | The human sciences | CT2+3+5 | The purpose of human sciences; pseudoscience and how it is used as “spin”; how our biases shape the way we represent and understand the world; the limitations and the role of language in representing knowledge and ideas.   * Article: *“Scientists show how we start stereotyping the moment we see a face”* |
| 4 | Perspectives | Do our perspectives dictate the way we view and understand the world? | History | CT2+3 | What determines our perspectives, and how they shape the way we think; how history is written by the victors.   * Articles: “*Six reasons why you think your memory is stranger than you think!”/ “Imagining the future is just another form of memory”* |
| 5 | Development | How and why does knowledge develop over time? | Mathematics  Human sciences | CT3 | Why and how knowledge develops over time; whether technology (specifically social media usage) is dumbing down language and the way we use it to understand the world.   * Articles: *“Humankind is unique in its incapacity to learn from experience”/ “Good history takes time, so be patient with the new JFK documents”/”Why the internet isn’t making us smarter – and how to fight back”* |
| 6 | Gurus | What makes someone an “expert”? | The arts | CT1+2+3 | Characteristics of “experts”; whether it is possible to go beyond our own biases and perspectives; ways in which an “expert” should use counterintuitive thinking.   * Article: *“Why so-called experts can’t tell us anything about art”* |

Course Requirements

In order to finish a course in Critical Thinking successfully, students must participate actively, be open-minded, and take part in discussions, which will make up an essential part of the course. Additionally, working collaboratively with fellow students to present group results is an important aspect of a CT course. Students do not need any pre-knowledge or be good at subjects like philosophy, as this is a course in critical or counterintuitive thinking which cannot be linked to any specific subject. Instead, this course “hovers above” all the subjects taught at school!

Assessment

There will be no written exams in this CT course. However, students might be expected to do an exhibition where they will present their individual or the results of a group to a larger audience. This exhibition will be assessed in combination with their overall oral achievements in class.

The language used in the CT course will be English. However, it is important to note that students will not be marked on their language skills. The willingness to use the English language throughout the course is a decisive factor and at the same time allows the student to improve their English language skills.

For additional queries, please contact:

S. Detering (det@esg-guetersloh.de)