

Critical Thinking

AS Level

OCR Advanced Subsidiary (AS)
Head of Humanities Department – Lee Goredema

You should do this course if.....

You are interested in extending your skills of argumentation and critical analysis. Like reading and writing critical thinking is a fundamental academic competency. This course will allow you to improve your thinking skills – the ability to interpret, analyse, evaluate and express ideas and arguments – by attending to them explicitly and teaching them as skill sets that you can transfer to other subjects and to everyday life.

The course is different to other subjects at AS level in that it is not heavily content based, rather it is about mastering a particular skill set. Critical Thinking is a suitable option alongside any combination of A Levels. This course may particularly support students taking A Levels in History, Law and English.

Skills you will develop on this course

- Understanding and applying the language and different patterns of reasoning.
- Recognising and evaluating special kinds of reasoning.
- Judging the credibility of sources
- Assessing arguments.
- Developing and presenting relevant arguments.
- Recognising and applying basic ideas of logic.

Topics studied

UNIT 1 - (AS)

Unit F491: Credibility of Evidence

Outlines the key criteria for determining credibility using these criteria students are to:

- Assess the credibility of evidence.
- Make reasoned judgements using the insight gained from their assessment.

UNIT 2 - (AS)

Unit F492: Assessing and Developing Argument

Gives students a framework within which they can:

- Analyse the structure of an argument, i.e. break it down into its component parts.
- Evaluate an argument, i.e. judge whether it is a strong or weak argument.
- Develop the ability to formulate effective arguments.

This subject can also be taken at A2 to complete a full A level in Critical Thinking. The units at A2 are Resolution of Dilemmas and Critical Reasoning.

While no prior knowledge is required at AS level, students must successfully complete the AS course to be eligible to enrol in A2. A2 Critical Thinking could be made available to students who succeed at AS Level.

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How will you learn?

You will learn a variety of theoretical principles relevant to each topic and then be given the opportunity to apply these to a range of materials. The subject has a strong focus on practical application of skills and will make frequent use of newspaper articles, current affairs programs and documentaries as resources. You will discuss and analyse the material presented as well as using it to draw conclusions and build arguments. The course uses discussion, both small group and whole class, as a key learning strategy as well as providing opportunities for students to work independently to improve their written communication skills.

Where does the course lead?

The skills learnt are of particular relevance to the Humanities, Social Science, English and Law, however, studying Critical Thinking is useful for all students. It demonstrates that you have reached a national standard in skills which are prized by universities and employers alike. Critical Thinking results are increasingly being used to select students for over-subscribed university courses and are seen as a reliable way of differentiating between students with similar grades in other subjects.

Assessment and Exams

Unit 1: Credibility of Evidence

AS Written exam: 1 hour 15 minutes

This exam has structured questions based on one or more stimulus passages. Candidates are to attempt all questions.

Unit 2: Assessing and Developing Argument

AS Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes

This exam has twenty multiple choice questions and questions based on one or more stimulus passages.

Entry Requirements

5 GCSEs at Grades A-B, including English Language.