

Vanguard University  
School for Professional Studies  
Degree Program

**“CRITICAL THINKING AND  
WRITING FOR MINISTRY”**  
MILD 364

Student Guide

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to teach the student to write well-stated, grammatically correct, thesis-driven essays. Attention is given to academic and professional writing styles, reasonable presentations, the elements of an argument, and means of efficient research. *This course must be passed with a "C" or better to fulfill requirements for graduation. A student receiving a "C-" or lower must retake the course to earn the required grade for graduation.*

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to:

1. Identify the elements of an argument (i.e., claim, evidence, and warrant) as well as common errors in reasoning (e.g., hasty generalizations, post hoc fallacy, and ad hominem arguments).
2. Understand the importance of and strategies for reading and thinking critically.
3. Write well-developed, thesis-driven essays that make effective use of persuasive argumentative strategies.
4. Write in conformity with academic and professional conventions, especially with regard to gender-inclusive language and the documentation of sources according to the MLA style.
5. Use library and information resources to research efficiently.

## TEXTS AND MATERIALS

### **Required texts:**

Barnet, Sylvan, and Bedau, Hugh. Current Issues and Enduring Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking and Argument, with Readings. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.

### **On Reserve in the VUSC Library:**

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.* 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Modern Language Association, 1999.

## STUDENT EVALUATION

In *Critical Thinking and Writing for Ministry*, your grade will depend on your performance in the following five categories:

1. Attendance of classroom sessions (50 points)

You will automatically receive 50 points if you attend every class session from beginning to end. One absence forfeits 25 points. For two or more absences, in accordance with the rules of the Ministry and Leadership degree program, you will not receive any credit for the class. If absent the student must assume that all work will be due when it is due.

2. Reading and textbook assignments (150 points)

You will receive a maximum of 30 points each week, a total of 150 points, for reading the assigned texts and completing the exercises from this syllabus and *Current Issues and Enduring Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking and Argument, with Readings*. For full credit, the reading and the assignments must be finished before the class session on which they are due. Assignments under the heading, "Week One," for instance, are due on the first day of class and submitted as hard copies. The student should NOT come to the first class without their homework done and assume that they will have until "Week Two" to do it. Late homework will only be considered for submission when there is a compelling reason approved of by the professor in advance.

3. Essays and essay revisions (400 points)

You will write four essays in this class. Each essay is worth 100 points.

4. Peer editing assignments (100 points)

You will receive a maximum of 100 points for successfully completing three Peer Editing Worksheets on the essays of your peer-editing partner. The first two reviews are worth 30 points each and the last one is worth 40 points. Any absence will result in 0 points for the peer edit for that week.

5. Timed in-class quizzes (100 points)

You will receive a maximum of 50 points for each of two the two quizzes given on the fourth and fifth weeks.

6. Final Essay and Critique (200 points)

The final essay, worth 150 points, is due one week after the last class. Along with the final, a critique explaining the writing process the student used for the final will be due at the same time and will be worth 50 points.

When the points you have earned are added together, you will receive a letter grade according to the following scale:

### STUDENT EVALUATION

<b>Percentages</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>GPA</b>
93-100%	930-1000	A	Exceptional	4.00
90-92.9%	900-929	A-		3.67
87-89.9%	870-899	B+		3.33
83-86.9%	830-869	B	Above Average	3.00
80-82.9%	800-829	B-		2.67
77-79.9%	770-799	C+		2.33
73-76.9%	730-769	C	Average	2.00
70-72.9%	700-729	C-		1.67
67-69.9%	670-699	D+		1.33
63-66.9%	630-669	D	Below Average	1.00
60-62.9%	600-629	D-		0.67
00-59.9%	000-599	F	Failure	0.00

### OPEN LETTER TO STUDENTS

Welcome to Critical Thinking and Writing for Ministry where you will sharpen skills that you have been using for most of your life. So relax and think of this class as chance to explore what you think and how you think. You will also be learning how to present your ideas in logical, well-supported essays, a format that translates easily into sermon and Bible lesson writing.

You may have not written in an academic setting for ten to fifteen years; therefore, it is important to remember that academic writing is different in some ways than writing in the professional world. Both kinds of writing should be focused and engaging. However, academic writing requires a unique research and presentation method. Students will be learning argumentation and MLA documentation, which are tools you will be using throughout the Ministry and Leadership courses.

This course begins with the basics of the writing process, allowing you to examine your writing patterns and to learn some new techniques. Next, students will learn to build thesis statements and construct arguments, both essential to academic writing.

Each week the material that presented in class will introduce skills and information that students are expected to demonstrate in homework assignments due the next class session. The instructor will provide supplementary materials as necessary.

A sizeable amount of time in class is also given to peer reviews. The peer reviews give you an opportunity to strengthen your critical reading skills. The peer reviews also help build a sense of community among writers.

Remember that a love of words and writing is caught as well as taught. If you come to class prepared and enthusiastic about your encounter with the material and the instructor, you will reap great educational benefits!

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS

### WEEK ONE

1. *Essay:* In order to write this essay, you will need to pretend that you are the senior pastor of a small Christian church. An eighteen-year-old woman in your congregation named Mary left home this fall to attend a large, secular, out-of-state university. At the university, Mary enrolled in a class entitled “World Religions.” The professor of that class recently said, “No religion holds a monopoly on salvation. Each religion—whether it’s Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, or Christianity—in its own way, leads you to God.” Troubled and confused by this remark, Mary has written you a letter asking you to refute the professor’s idea. Write Mary and give her reasons why you think the professor’s remark is right or wrong. Entitle your essay, “A Letter to Mary.”

Your essay should be two to three pages long, typed, and double-spaced. (“Two to three pages long” means not less than two full, typed pages and not more than three full, typed pages.) Format your essay according to MLA style. In a header, place your last name and the page number in the upper right corner of the second and subsequent pages. Because your essay will be graded for punctuation and grammar in addition to content, be sure to edit it prior to class.

Note that there is no peer-editing exercise for Week One. However, bring to class an additional copy of each of your next three essays for your peer-editing partner during Weeks Two, Three, and Four.

2. *Reading and Exercises:* Read chapters 1, 2 and 6 in your textbook. Complete the following exercises:
  - Chapter 1 “Exercises” #2, pg. 29. You may use a topic listed or create your own topic following the pattern in the exercise, “. . . should . . .”
  - Answer the following “Topics for Critical Thinking and Writing”:
    - “Let’s Put Pornography Back in the Closet,” Susan Brownmiller, pgs. 57-61, # 1, 3, 6.
    - “On Racist Speech,” Charles R. Lawrence III, pgs. 61-66, # 1-3.
3. *Discussion Topic:* Bring to class a newspaper or magazine editorial you have recently read. Be prepared to discuss the editorial’s thesis and organization.

**WEEK TWO**

1. *Essay:* The Bible often uses earthy metaphors to describe God’s character and actions. Some of those metaphors describe God as a variety of workers common to the ancient world; for example, God is a shepherd (Ps. 23), a potter (Jer. 18:1-6), and a vineyard owner (John 15:1-2). Write an essay answering the question, “What modern worker is God like and why?” For example, is God a computer programmer? A UPS delivery person? Some other professional? The title of this essay is “God is like a \_\_\_\_\_” (insert the title of the modern worker to whom you are comparing God). Give detailed descriptions and examples to explain your metaphor.

Your essay should be two to three pages long, typed, and double-spaced. (“Two to three pages long” means not less than two full, typed pages and not more than three full, typed pages.) Format your essay according to MLA style. In a header, place your last name and the page number in the upper right corner of the second and subsequent pages. Because your essay will be graded for punctuation and grammar in addition to content, be sure to edit it prior to class.

**IMPORTANT:** Bring to class an additional copy of this essay for your peer-editing partner.

2. *Reading and Exercises:* Read Chapter 3 and 8. Complete the following exercises:

Answer the following “Topics for Critical Thinking and Writing”:

“Against the Odds, and Against the Common Good,” Gloria Jimenez, pgs. 116-119, #1-3.

“Just Take Away Their Guns,” James Q. Wilson, pgs. 124-128, #'s 1-5.

Your answers should be typed.

3. Create a good thesis statement for each of the following five topics (10 points):
  - country living
  - fast food
  - gang violence
  - airport security
  - gun control

Your answers should be typed.

**WEEK THREE**

1. *Essay:* Jesus commanded the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17-31 to “sell everything you have and give to the poor.” Does his command apply to modern-day Christians too? Write an essay entitled “The Rich Young Man and Modern-day Christians” in response to this question. Consult two commentaries on Mark 10:17-31, and incorporate a quotation from each commentary into your essay according to MLA format. Include a Works Cited page.

Your essay should be two to three pages long, typed, and double-spaced. (“Two to three pages long” means not less than two full, typed pages and not more than three full, typed pages.) Format your essay according to MLA style. In a header, place your last name and the page number in the upper right corner of the second and subsequent pages. Because your essay will be graded for punctuation and grammar in addition to content, be sure to edit it prior to class.

**IMPORTANT:** Bring to class an additional copy of this essay for your peer-editing partner

2. *Reading and Exercises:* Read Chapters 5 and 9. Complete the following exercises:

Answer “Topics for Critical Thinking and Writing”:

“Bring Back Flogging,” Jeff Jacoby, pgs. 192-195, #'s 1, 2, 5, 6

“Five Myths about Immigration,” David Cole, pgs. 689-693, #'s 1, 6, 8.

“Our Brave New World of Immigration,” Victor David Hanson, pgs 699-701, #'s 1, 4, 6, 7, 9

Your answers should be typed.

**WEEK FOUR**

1. *Essay:* The First Amendment guarantees freedom of religion and mentions the separation of church and state. What should be religion's impact on government? What should be government's impact on religion? Choose one of these two questions to address in an essay. You can't discuss every issue involved in the debate, so narrow your topic enough to cover it thoroughly in a short paper. Also, given the focus this week on Rogerian argument, frame your paper according to the dictates and strategy set down by the psychotherapist. Chapter 12 deals specifically with this kind of argument and offers a structure and checklist to consult to allow you to write your paper along these lines.

Your essay should be two to three pages long, typed, and double-spaced. ("Two to three pages long" means not less than two full, typed pages and not more than three full, typed pages.) Format your essay according to MLA style. In a header, place your last name and the page number in the upper right corner of the second and subsequent pages. Because your essay will be graded for punctuation and grammar in addition to content, be sure to edit it prior to class.

**IMPORTANT:** Bring to class an additional copy of this essay for your peer-editing partner

2. *Reading and Exercises:* Read chapters 7 and 12.
  - Write a one-page response to Rogers' essay in Chapter 12. Some suggested questions to answer include the following: What is he saying? Do you agree with him or disagree with him? Why? What are the advantages and disadvantages for you as a writer if you were to use his approach in your writing?

Your answers should be typed.

3. *Quiz 1:* Study your class notes from previous weeks, and be prepared to take a brief quiz at the beginning of this week's class. The quiz will test your knowledge of the functions of a thesis, the elements of an argument, and common errors in reasoning.

**WEEK FIVE**

1. *Quiz 2:* Study your class notes from Week Four, and be prepared to take a brief quiz at the beginning of this week's class. The quiz will test proper MLA documentation and research methods.
2. *Write:* Compose a list of 3 possible topics for the final argumentative/persuasive essay paper. The topics should be ones which require you to take a position and then argue and persuade the reader to do the same. Remember your lesson from Rogerian argumentation.
3. After an orientation by a library staff member you will be allowed to spend some time researching your topics for your final paper. It will be important to use this time to choose the topic which you find is the most researchable according to the assignments requirements.

## **TAKE HOME FINAL**

The final paper will be a five-page argumentative/persuasive essay based on either a topic in the text, or on a topic of your own choosing. If you choose the latter option, you must clear it with the instructor first. The paper is to contain 4 or 5 documented sources. At least three of the sources must be from outside research (other than your textbook). One of the sources must be located through the internet. MLA in-text documentation and a Works Cited page are required.

The critique is an essay of about 250 words (one page). It should include a discussion of your research process, your drafting process, and your revision process.

The final essay and critique are due in the office of the professor or a predetermined location seven days following the final session of this course.

**LOGISTICS CHART**

Hour	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
1	Introductions  Feedback on The Writing Process and Homework	Feedback on Essays and Homework	Feedback on Essays and Homework	Quiz 1  Feedback on Essays and Homework	Quiz 2  Quiz #2
2	Building a Thesis	Elements of an Argument	Deduction, Induction, and Fallacies	Quiz #1  Rogerian Argument	Course Evaluation
3	Break  Introduction, Body and Conclusion  Discussion of Readings	Break  Discussion of Readings	Break  Discussion of Readings	Break  Proper MLA Documentation And Plagiarism	Break  Library Research Orientation
4	Introduction of Next Week's Essay	Introduction of Next Week's Essay  Peer Editing	Introduction of Next Week's Essay  Peer Editing	Introduction of Next Week's Essay  Peer Editing	Library Research

# Appendices

## Worksheets and Additional Exercises

Logical Fallacies Exercise

Peer Review Worksheet

MLA Works Cited Page Exercise

## Logical Fallacies

Examine and identify the following logical fallacies.

1. The ship of state is like a ship at sea. No sailor is ever allowed to protest orders from the captain. For the same reason, no citizen should ever be allowed to protest presidential policies.
2. Ed Asner, Gregory Peck, and Jane Fonda are democrats. Therefore, it must be the case that all Hollywood stars are democrats.
3. Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy is not worth the paper it's printed on. Nietzsche was an immoral reprobate who went completely insane from syphilis before he died.
4. Mr. Rhodes is suffering from amnesia and has no recollection whatever of the events of the past two weeks. We can only conclude that he did not commit the crime of murdering his wife a week ago, as he has been accused of doing.
5. No one would buy a pair of shoes without trying them on. Why should anyone be expected to get married without premarital sex?
6. There are more churches in New York City than in any other city in the nation, and more crimes are committed in New York City than anywhere else. So, if we are to eliminate crime, we must abolish the churches.
7. Hydrogen is combustible; therefore, it burns.
8. Either we commit ourselves to massive increases in defense spending, or we will fall behind the Soviets in the ever-accelerating arms race. We certainly cannot afford to fall behind the Soviets. Therefore, we must commit ourselves to massive increases in defense spending.
9. On Friday I took Virginia out to dinner. She told me that if I wasn't interested in a serious relationship, I should forget about dating her. On Saturday I took Marie to a film. When we discussed it afterward over a drink, she couldn't understand why I wasn't interested in babies. Women are all alike. All they want is a secure marriage.
10. Either the government solicits oil leases in federally protected wilderness areas, or our country will remain subject to the whims of the Arab oil cartel.
11. During the time that General Grant was winning battles in the West, President Lincoln received numerous complaints about Grant's being a drunkard. When a delegation told him that Grant was hopelessly addicted whiskey, Lincoln is reported to have replied, "I wish General Grant would send a barrel of his whiskey to each of my other generals."
12. Nuclear freeze advocates argue in favor of an immediate halt to nuclear arms production. But the point is that we have always had wars. Even those most civilized of peoples, the ancient Greeks, fought wars. Why, the Peloponnesian war raged for a period of 27 years. Unfortunately, civilization will never be entirely free of wars.

### PEER REVIEW WORKSHEET

Author's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Editor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of the essay: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the author's thesis statement?

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Write out a simple outline for the essay, summarizing each paragraph in a phrase or short sentence.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

What did you like about the essay? What did the writer do well?

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What areas of the essay does the author need to revise? What can the author do to improve these areas?

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On your copy of the essay, mark misspelled words, grammatical errors, and instances of bad style.

Make an MLA Works Cited page using the following sources. You might not need all the information given!

1. Type: Book  
Author: Jane Wilson  
Title: A Guide to Church Growth  
Publisher: Random  
Date of publication: 1997  
Place published: New York
2. Type: Book  
Authors: Trudy Eldridge, Steven Berlin, and Thomas Greene.  
Title: The Need for Excellence  
Publisher: Norton  
Date of publication: 1981  
Place published: New York
3. Type: Article in a reference work  
Author: Raymond Wright  
Title of article: Assemblies of God  
Title of reference work: Encyclopedia of Denominations  
Editors: James Hoeg and Mark Finch  
Publisher: Scribner  
Date published: 1995  
Place published: New York  
Pages: 35-36.
4. Type: Magazine article from ProQuest Direct database  
Author: Chuck Scott  
Title of article: Deep and Wide  
Magazine: Christianity Today , volume 45, no.24  
Date of magazine: September 20, 2002  
Date you accessed the article: March 3, 2002  
URL: <http://www.umi.com/pdqauto/>  
Place you accessed the article: Vanguard University Library
5. Type: Journal article (hard copy)  
Author: James D. Dunn  
Title of article: Jesus and the Constraint of Law  
Journal: Journal for the Study of the New Testament, volume 35, no. 3  
Date: February 1985  
Pages: 10-18.

6. Type: Web page

Author/Editor: no personal author given; corporate author would be Assemblies of God

Title of page: Feminism and Appropriate Roles for Women

Site page is on: Assemblies of God USA

Date given on the site: only date given is copyright year, 2002

Date you accessed it: March 3, 2002

URL: [http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/contemporary\\_issues/issues\\_03\\_feminism.cfm](http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/contemporary_issues/issues_03_feminism.cfm)