

# Intro Critical Thinking in the Humanities & Social Sciences

## Hum 100-1 B

Tuesdays - Fridays | 10:30am - 11:50 am

### Draft Syllabus<sup>1</sup>

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#### Teaching Staff

Instructor: **Lisa M. Del Torto**, She/Her, Please call me: *Prof. Del Torto or Dr. Del Torto*  
([L-torto@u.northwestern.edu](mailto:L-torto@u.northwestern.edu)), The Cook Family Writing Program

Classroom: TBD

Instructor Office Hours and Location: Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:00 - 2:20 pm | [555 Clark St](#), Room 204 OR Zoom <https://northwestern.zoom.us/my/deltorto>

Writing Mentor: **Jackson McGrath**

Writing Mentor Office Hours and Location: TBD

Instructor: **Chad Horne**, He/Him ([chad.horne@northwestern.edu](mailto:chad.horne@northwestern.edu)), Philosophy

Classroom: TBD

Instructor Office Hours and Location: Mondays & Wednesdays 1:00 - 2:20 pm | [Kresge Hall](#) 3347

Writing Mentor: **Dominique Codija**

Writing Mentor Office Hours and Location: TBD

Instructor: **Melissa Rosenzweig**, She/They ([melissa.rosenzweig@northwestern.edu](mailto:melissa.rosenzweig@northwestern.edu)),

Anthropology, Program in Environmental Policy and Culture

Classroom: TBD

Instructor Office Hours and Location: Tuesday & Wednesdays 1:00 - 2:20 pm | [1812 Hinman Avenue](#), Room 304

Writing Mentor: **Lauren Johnson**

Writing Mentor Office Hours and Location: TBD

Instructor: **Mérida M. Rúa**, She/Her/Ella, Please call me: *Prof Rúa* ([mrua@northwestern.edu](mailto:mrua@northwestern.edu)),  
Latina and Latino Studies Program

Classroom: TBD

Instructor Office Hours and Location: Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:00 - 2:20 pm | Crowe Hall 1-148

Writing Mentor: **Jalin Jackson**

Writing Mentor Office Hours and Location: TBD

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<sup>1</sup> This syllabus is a draft. We are making changes to this document as we continue to develop the course. The final updated syllabus will be available on Canvas in August.

## **Our Welcome to Hum 100-1**

Welcome, everyone! You're about to enter an exciting phase of your lives, and we— your Critical Thinking professors and writing mentors— are here to accompany you as you prepare for that phase. The intellectual focus of our course is to develop your critical-thinking skills; we'll do this by questioning and challenging a few dominant narratives that we have selected based on our academic interests.

This is also a course about getting anchored in your new life in a new place. We want you to see from the start that a college community is first and foremost about its human relations. We are all here in the same place, sharing overlapping challenges and aspirations, while coming here from different places and with different experiences. How do we discover what we have in common while respecting and learning from what we don't? We ourselves are still on this journey of discovery, and we'll be with you every step of the way during these few weeks of Bridge; we expect to learn from you as well as to guide you.

This is a course in critical thinking, which means many things. For example, we use critical thinking to question, examine, and interpret assumptions, behaviors, texts, arguments, and the world we operate in. We might use critical thinking to inform and justify our decisions and actions and even to imagine how things might be otherwise.

Our theme for the course is "questioning dominant narratives." We'll practice asking critical questions using topics of placemaking, environmental justice, language, and health— but the skills you practice here will apply across academic disciplines. We'll treat these as academic questions, but we'll also consider them as deeply personal questions affecting our common life together on the university campus. No question or topic will be off limits, though we'll also work to treat these issues--and each other--with respect and enthusiasm for our common enterprise. It takes a village to have an idea!

### **Land Acknowledgement #LandBack**

Northwestern is a community of learners situated within a network of historical and contemporary relationships with Native American tribes, communities, parents, students, and alumni. It is also in close proximity to an urban Native American community in Chicago and near several tribes in the Midwest. The Northwestern campus sits on the traditional homelands of the people of the Council of Three Fires, the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa as well as the Menominee, Miami and Ho-Chunk nations. It was also a site of trade, travel, gathering and healing for more than a dozen other Native tribes and is still home to over 100,000 tribal members in the state of Illinois.

It is within Northwestern's responsibility as an academic institution to disseminate knowledge about Native peoples and the institution's history with them. Consistent with the University's commitment to diversity and inclusion, Northwestern works towards building relationships with Native American communities through academic pursuits, partnerships, historical recognitions, community service and enrollment efforts.

## **About Bridge**

Bridge is a five-week interdisciplinary program designed to welcome incoming first-generation and low-income students and prepare them to thrive during their time at Northwestern. Students tackle big questions in a variety of disciplinary formats and have multiple opportunities to hone or develop key academic skills. At the same time—and as importantly—every aspect of the program is calculated to foster students' sense of confidence and self-efficacy. In addition to providing opportunities for students to formulate and evaluate arguments, every Bridge class also incorporates discussions of time management, emotional health, help-seeking, and other aspects of what has come to be called the “hidden curriculum.”

## **Bridge Learning Objectives**

By the end of the program, students should be able to:

- Explain with confidence the ways scientists, social scientists, and humanists formulate questions, evaluate evidence, and draw conclusions;
- Manage their time effectively on both a daily basis and over longer periods;
- Study efficiently and effectively;
- Know when and how to ask for help.

## **Critical Thinking Course Learning Objectives**

**You will make gains in the following areas.**

College reading, writing, and discussion strategies, including:

- Engaging with, interpreting, and citing multiple kinds of texts e.g., academic journal articles, book chapters, popular news articles, documentaries, short videos, TED talks.
- Putting texts (e.g. readings, videos) into conversation with one another, with your life experience, and with observations of the world around you.
- Identifying and explaining critical questions about a text. Examples: What does a text leave out? What does it assume? What might be a counter-argument?
- Creating and organizing notes.
- Using structures in readings as a model for your own critical writing.
- Entering class discussions in a constructive way; communicating your thoughts and listening actively and empathetically.

Introduction to disciplinary methods, including:

- Comparing the approaches to issues and topics by scholars in various humanities and social science fields, including Latina and Latino studies, anthropology, philosophy, writing pedagogy, and linguistics.

How to navigate life at a university, including:

- Surveying important issues in life and on campus, and how scholars approach those issues.
- Organizing your time, anticipating the rhythm of the quarter system.
- Finding resources at Northwestern, from peer advising to counseling to student organizations.
- Determining how to find and develop peer and mentoring relationships.
- Seeking help and clarification.
- Learning how to stay healthy. (Hint: it's the key to a successful college experience, and it should be easy—but it's not!)
- Navigating Canvas, the online platform for all classes.
- Working collaboratively with fellow undergraduates, graduate student writing mentors, and professors.

## **Accessibility and Accommodations**

Northwestern University and your Critical Thinking teaching team are committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities.

- Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact AccessibleNU to move forward with the university's established accommodation process (e: [accessiblenu@northwestern.edu](mailto:accessiblenu@northwestern.edu); p: 847-467-5530).
- If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let us know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations.

Disability information, including academic accommodations, is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

We recognize that not all disabilities are documented and not all needs are fully accommodated (yet) by formal education systems. If any of that is the case for you or if you had helpful accommodations in high school that have not been formalized yet at Northwestern, please communicate with us about what might help you succeed in our class. To get a conversation like this started, you can email your professor and/or writing mentor or you can stop in to our open office hours. Please do this during the first week of the Bridge program if you can, but if something comes up later on in the program, please do not hesitate to start a conversation at any point.

## Academic Integrity

We, your Critical Thinking professors and writing mentors, trust that you come to our courses with a deep commitment to your own and your peers' learning and growth and with genuine questions, curiosity, and maybe even some uncertainty about academic expectations. One set of expectations that you might wonder about is academic integrity. When we at Northwestern talk about academic integrity, we're talking about a set of conventions and expectations regarding the exchange and presentation of ideas in academic settings.

We recognize that it takes time to observe, interpret, practice, and apply academic integrity conventions, and our Critical Thinking course is one site where you can begin that process. We'll have some discussions about academic integrity, and you can also bring us any questions or uncertainties you have – without judgment from us! Northwestern's [Academic Integrity: A Basic Guide](#) lays out various principles, rules, and resources that will be helpful for you to learn about.

Here are some key academic integrity guidelines and expectations for our course:

### Using, identifying, and citing sources of information and ideas

- Please identify any sources you use for any of your class assignments in those assignments. Sources include anything that you have not created yourself, such as someone else's published or unpublished writing, a peer's work, videos you find online, a professor's lecture slides, Wikipedia pages, other web resources, etc.
- Identify those sources with in-text citations and a list of references using the [Chicago Manual of Style](#).
- You are welcome to use automatic citation generators (e.g. Zotero, EndNote, Citation Machine) to create in-text citations and reference lists. The Northwestern Libraries offer free citation management software and helpful instructions and support [here](#).

### Using generative AI:

- Because generative AI is rapidly developing, different classes, instructors, and departments have different– and shifting– orientations to and policies on using AI for class work.
- We'll use generative AI together in class on occasion to explore current functionalities, benefits, and limitations.
- You may use generative AI to outline or organize your thoughts for writing assignments or in preparation for class discussions.

- However, do not use generative AI for ideas or information– it may provide information that is inaccurate, biased, or just entirely made-up! We ask that you generate ideas, text, images, video, and audio yourself without the use of generative AI, unless your professor and writing mentor specify otherwise for a particular assignment.
- Revision is a key learning strategy in this class. If you wish, you may use AI editing tools (e.g. Grammarly) for sentence-level edits, but we ask that you revise for content and organization based on peer and instructor feedback without using AI tools.

**If you have any questions, curiosities, or uncertainties about the academic integrity expectations in this syllabus, or questions about other expectations regarding citations, use of sources, and use of AI, you are always welcome to ask your professor or writing mentor during class, office hours, or via email!**

The Office of the Registrar at Northwestern asks that the following academic integrity statement be included in all course syllabi:

Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide". All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your written work may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern or to download the guide, visit:

<https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies-procedures/academic-integrity/index.html>

## Canvas

All the course readings, syllabi, assignments, and announcements will be available on [Canvas](#).

- The modules section on Canvas functions as a course schedule with readings, videos, and assignments listed for each day of class. Please complete all the materials and assignments listed for that day.
- Check Canvas daily to stay on top of any changes or announcements.

## Daily Schedule

You'll be placed in a section in a designated classroom with one of the 4 professors and one of the 4 writing mentors listed at the beginning of this document. You'll have the same instructor and writing mentor for the entire 4 weeks of this program. You'll get feedback and grades from that same pair throughout our 4 weeks together.

The Bridge Critical Thinking Course will meet from Tuesday, August 13 through Friday, September 6, 2024, on the following schedule:

- Tuesdays through Thursdays: Individual sections meet 10:30am -11:50am
- Fridays: Individual sections meet 10:30am -11:10am. Then all sections convene for a lecture from 11:10am - 11:50am.

We will engage in approximately 80 mins of daily class time with a mixture of discussion, group work, and directed individual work. Every Friday there will be a short, entertaining lecture from one professor about the **next week's** reading and assignments. These lectures fill in background information or give you tips about what to look for in upcoming assignments.

### **Office Hours & Required Conferences**

The Writing Mentors (TAs) will meet with each student weekly for one-on-one conferences. One-on-one conferences will be scheduled with you at the beginning of the course.

- You'll meet with your writing mentor at least once per week.
- These meetings are central to your learning process outside of class.
- During these meetings, you'll get feedback on your course assignments, synthesize any peer or other feedback you've received, and discuss your own impressions of your work to help you make decisions about and implement revisions.
- You'll discuss your learning progress and experience, as well as how you can maintain and improve the skills you'll need for your studies at Northwestern .
- You can also ask your writing mentor/TA about campus life and tips about being a college student.

Additionally, instructors will be available for office hours each week.

- You'll meet with your instructor ***a minimum of two times*** over the course of the program.
- During these meetings, we'll discuss your learning goals and progress and you can also bring up any questions you have about what to expect in a college classroom, how to navigate studying, how to interact with professors, what professors do,, what office hours are for, why we chose our fields, etc.
- These meetings are a good chance to practice approaching and interacting with your professors.

Office hours for instructors and TAs are listed above and on Canvas. Each TA and Professor will explain how to sign up/plan for office hours meetings. If no one explains this in the first session, be sure to ask! ;)

## Class Attendance

We will take attendance each day and hope everyone can attend every class session. If you need support or are experiencing illness, please let us know promptly and we can help you get the support you need. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence for Critical Thinking. This does not extend to the other classes you are taking for Bridge; be sure you know the attendance policy for those courses.

Students who do the best in Bridge (and college) consistently attend class; you'll benefit from the social experience of processing and questioning information as a community. For this Bridge course, it will be beneficial to process and navigate difficult, interesting, and sometimes scary questions about dominant narratives in collaboration with your peers, professor, and writing mentor.

## Assignments + Evaluation (Grades)

Together, we are going to practice an assessment approach that focuses on engagement and growth. Because we grow as learners, writers, researchers, readers, students, and scholars through regular practice, interaction, and reflection, you will be graded based on your engagement with those tasks and your individual growth along the dimensions of our course learning objectives. You will NOT be graded on some measure of the absolute quality of your work, but on the quality and quantity of your engagement and growth with it.

While you won't get letter or number grades on individual assignments, you will get a complete or incomplete for all assignments on Canvas. Anyone who completes assignments roughly on time, with academic integrity, making progress from one draft to the next, applying lessons from our discussions and readings, and contributing to the intellectual and social community in our class, will earn "completes" for those assignments. Additionally, you'll get lots of feedback from your professor and writing mentor throughout the program. You'll also get feedback from your peers each week. And, just as important, you will reflect on your own growth and learning.

In calculating your course grade, your coursework will be weighted as follows:

1. Daily preparation assignments: 10%
2. Weekly Friday writing assignments: 20%
3. Final portfolio: 30%
4. Conferences with instructors and writing mentors and related tasks: 20%
5. Class Attendance and Engagement: 20%

Here is a more detailed description of the above grade elements:

### 1. Daily preparation assignments: 10%

- a. These daily assignments include questions and reflections to help you form ideas before class discussion.



- b. You will be asked to submit some of these assignments on Canvas, while others will have no Canvas submission but we ask you to bring them to class. In either case, we'll ask you to share and build on these assignments in class, so please complete these before class to prepare for our daily class discussions and activities.
  - c. Additional information about these assignments will be available on the Canvas page for each course meeting.
- 2. Weekly Friday writing assignments: 20%**
- a. **These assignments are due on Canvas before class each Friday (i.e. by 10:30 AM).**
  - b. These assignments ask more in depth questions about the course materials and build on one another. These will take more time and energy to complete, so ensure you make time for these assignments over the weekend and throughout the week.
- 3. Final portfolio assignment: 30%**
- a. **This final assignment is due on *Tuesday, September 10th 11:59 pm.***
  - b. Your final portfolio will consist of the following elements:
    - i. *Two* weekly writing assignments of your choice from earlier in the course, revised in light of the comments you received from your TA and your instructor.
    - ii. A one-page revision memo, explaining your revision process: what changes did you make to your previous writing assignments and why? How did you incorporate feedback from your TA and instructor?
    - iii. A one-page reflection on a theme or thread that ties your two revised writing assignments together
  - c. More details are available on Canvas.
- 4. Conferences with instructors and writing mentors and related tasks: 20%**
- a. As explained above (under "Office Hours and Required Conferences"), you are required to meet with your writing mentor once per week to receive feedback on your weekly writing assignments. You are also required to meet with the instructor twice over the course of the program. We will provide a sign-up sheet for these meetings on Canvas.
  - b. You will also be asked to complete certain small assignments related to these conferences, such as an individualized learning plan and self-reflections. Completing these tasks will also figure into this portion of your final course grade.
- 5. Class Attendance and Engagement: 20%**
- a. Please come to class each day and to be an active participant in our discussions and other activities. As noted above, each student is entitled to one (1)

unexcused absence during the program.

- b. This portion of your grade is not a mere attendance grade! This is a chance to learn about and practice expectations for active participation in small college classes, so we ask that you regularly contribute to class discussion and other class activities to get that practice.

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## **Course Schedule in Brief**

**See Canvas modules for daily class prep materials and assignments.**

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### **WEEK 1: August 13-16**

Questioning dominant narratives about PLACEMAKING

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### **WEEK 2: August 20-23**

Questioning dominant narratives about CLIMATE

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### **WEEK 3: August 27-30**

Questioning dominant narratives about LANGUAGE

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### **WEEK 4: September 3-6**

Questioning dominant narratives about HEALTH & HEALTH DISPARITIES

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### **WEEK 5: Tuesday, September 10**

Final Portfolio due on Canvas by 11:59 pm