

GSBGEN 202: Critical Analytical Thinking Autumn, 2014

General Syllabus

Course Description:

The Critical Analytical Thinking (CAT) course provides a setting for students to further develop and hone the skills needed to analyze complex issues and make forceful and well-grounded arguments. In this seminar we will think about, analyze, write about, and debate a set of issues that in various ways illustrate the types of problems managers must confront. In doing this, CAT will enhance your ability to identify critical questions when exploring challenging business and management issues. The emphasis will be on developing reasoned positions and making sound and compelling arguments that support those positions.

All CAT seminars, regardless of instructor, share the same learning objectives. While there will be some variation in teaching methods and materials used for illustrating concepts, every seminar, regardless of instructor, will cover the same core analytical topics and all students will be prepared to master course content and complete the same take-home final exam at the end of the term.

Course Readings:

Most of the readings and short video lectures for the course will be handed out in class as the quarter progresses and/or posted to Canvas, the GSB's online learning management system.

In addition to those handouts and video lectures, you may be asked to read other materials. Please check the class's Canvas website regularly.

What is a Seminar?

A seminar is different from a regular class, especially a lecture. A seminar usually has the following characteristics: (1) it involves a small group of participants; (2) it engages in advanced or intensive study, often based on self-guided study by the participants; (3) it meets on a regular basis; (4) it involves the exchange of information; (5) it achieves its objectives mainly through discussions that engage all the participants; (5) general guidance is provided by a leader or faculty member. A seminar is not a scripted class where the goal is to transfer an established body of knowledge from a faculty member or a text to students. A good seminar is exciting and fun, and will often go in unexpected directions. (In particular, there is no predetermined set of "takeaways" in a seminar, except of the most general kind.) And, while there is also no reason to expect that we will always arrive at a consensus on any issue, we should expect to come away with a better understanding of how and why different people might hold different opinions with respect to the issues being discussed. The success of any seminar, however, depends on the participants' preparation, their willingness to listen to others and to contribute ideas, and an atmosphere of open polite exchange and discussion.

We want to challenge each other to do our best work. You are taking a class in which you will be an integral part of an evolving group. The seminar experience can be vitalizing, but we will all have to work at it. What you say in class and the ways that you help energize the class with your presence and participation are important to everyone's learning. In recognition of its importance, classroom participation will be factored in as 40% of your final grade.

While we will share responsibility for providing contexts for the topics we study each week, the soul of any good class is discussion. Discussions are collective enterprises which, to function successfully, demand every member's preparation, attendance, and participation. Although students vary in their conversational styles, learning to participate in discussion involves social and intellectual skills that are an essential part of your GSB education. These skills include: listening to others and learning to absorb and synthesize their remarks; learning to respond thoughtfully and analytically to others' ideas; learning to develop and articulate positions of one's own; responding to criticism; and learning to modify or discard a position as one comes to see another, more satisfactory one. You should come to class eager to exchange ideas about the topics under study, ready to speculate and question, and willing to ask for explanations from one another when you feel confused.

Schedule of Class Sessions and Topics:

Each week every CAT section will focus on a specific CAT topic using a substantive issue or question as a way to explore and better understand that analytical topic. In each of the first six weeks of the course, every CAT section will be studying the same analytical topic and will use the same analytical readings (Teaching Notes) and analytical mini-lectures (on short pre-recorded videos), although they may use different application materials to illustrate the concepts. The *type* of assignment (memo, outline, etc.) will also be identical in the period, although the specifics of the assignment will vary across sections. In the final two weeks, individual instructors will be choosing different analytical topics and application materials. In total, each student in every section will submit two outlines or diagrams, and four 750-word memos. For the final CAT assignment, every instructor has the discretion to determine the topic to be addressed and the nature of his or her assignment, including no written assignment.

Week 1 Analytical Topic: Identifying and Building an Argument

Week 1 Assignment: Submit an outline or diagram of an argument

Week 2 Analytical Topic: Deductive Arguments 1

Week 2 Assignment: Write a 750 word memo

Week 3 Analytical Topic: Deductive Arguments 2

Week 3 Assignment: Submit an outline or diagram of an argument

Week 4 Analytical Topic: Inductive Arguments 1

Week 4 Assignment: Write a 750 word memo

Week 5 Analytical Topic: Inductive Arguments 2

Week 5 Assignment: Write a 750 word memo

Week 6 Analytical Topic: Experiments

Week 6 Assignment: Nothing written

Week 7 Analytical Topic: Open (TBD by Instructor)

Week 7 Assignment: Write a 750 word memo

Week 8 Analytical Topic: Open (TBD by Instructor)

Week 8 Assignment: Open (discretion of instructor)

Course Requirements:

All reading assignments should be completed prior to their treatment in class. Books, notes, videos, any other reading handouts, along with a copy of the assignment you submitted on Wednesday, should be brought with you to class on the day they are to be discussed.

Attendance at the seminar sessions is mandatory. If you find you must miss a session, you must send your instructor an email as soon as you know there is a problem, describing the problem. If you are excused, it will be without penalty. If your absence is unexcused, you will receive a zero for seminar participation that week. Similarly, if you fail to submit your writing assignment on time (without being excused), you will receive a zero for that writing assignment. And the penalties escalate: If the sum of unexcused absences and late-or-missing papers is two, in addition to getting zero for those weeks, your letter grade will be reduced by one level. If the sum is three or more, you will fail the course.

Written Assignments:

All assignments are due by 9:00 PM on Wednesday of each week, prior to our Friday seminar session. The assignments must be submitted to the online class website by 9:00pm Wednesday. See “Logistics and Honor Code” information below for more information.

While CAT is not a writing course, writing is essential in developing and clearly communicating your ideas. In choosing words and forming sentences, you decide—sometimes discover—what you think and agree to stand behind it. If you are unable to communicate your ideas clearly in your future work as managers and leaders, you will not be as successful as you aim to be. Assignments for the course will involve several kinds of writing, all designed to help you become more effective in formulating and communicating your ideas. In Week 1, for instance, you will create an outline or diagram of an argument. In Week 2, you will write a memo to the top management of Google. You will, of course, want to adapt your writing style to the intended audience for the thing you are writing. A business memo and an academic essay are not the same thing, and they should not be written in similar styles. That said, CAT instructors, and your future audiences, value writing that is clear and flows logically.

Academic Integrity and Grading:

All students and faculty members are bound by Stanford's Honor Code, and it is the responsibility of the student to become familiar with those standards and policies. The information below, "Logistics and Honor Code Guidelines for Critical Analytical Thinking (CAT)" provides more detailed information.

Written Work:

Communication Coaches are available to meet with you to discuss your papers and the comments you receive from your instructors. While you may consult with coaches while you are developing your papers or before you submit them for class, the ideas in the paper, and the writing itself, should be your original work.

Good papers will fulfill the objectives set up by the author while conforming in a larger sense to the assignment's general requirements.

The evaluation of your written work will count for 40% of your final grade.

Seminar Participation:

As mentioned above, valuation of your participation in the seminar will count for 40% of your final grade. When it comes to participation in seminar discussions, quantity is much less important than quality. Instructors will provide you with feedback on their perceptions of your class participation as the term progresses.

Final Examination:

There will be a common exam for all CAT students across all sections. It will be a take-home written exam that will ask you to do a number of things to demonstrate mastery of core CAT concepts.

Grades on written work and the final exam will be given on a 1-10 scale. Scores of 10 are typically hard to get.

Your final grade will be determined in the following manner:

Written Assignments	40%
Classroom Participation	40%
Take Home Exam	20%

At best, grading in a course like this is an inexact science. Your grade will reflect the quality of your overall performance, taking into account the difficulty of the assignment and a reasonable norm for the class as a whole. That standard can sometimes seem opaque, so please feel free to discuss the standards being used with your instructor.

Learning Concerns:

Students with Documented Disabilities: Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk--phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae>

Course Logistics and Honor Code Guidelines

General Course Logistics

1. Your CAT seminar consists of 18 students from your section. The CAT seminar groups have been constructed to be broadly diverse and representative of the class as a whole.
2. Each CAT seminar has a primary instructor. Several CAT seminars have second instructors—adjunct faculty members (lecturers) who are there to add their perspectives to the seminar discussions.
3. Every CAT student also has access to a Communications Coach.
4. CAT is based on a weekly cycle, oriented around an analytical *Topic of the Week*. Assignments will typically be posted on Canvas, handed out in class, or emailed to you by your instructor (or some combination of these methods), no later than Friday evening of the preceding week. Most weeks, there are background readings or viewings, which you should try to finish by Sunday evening. For most weeks, there will be a written assignment, but the nature of that assignment will vary from week to week. Your written assignments are due at 9 pm on Wednesdays, and must be posted electronically as described below in point 6. Your written submission will be read and critiqued by your instructor(s). Finally, on Friday, you meet in your CAT seminar with your instructor(s), for an oral discussion of the topic of the week. Note that with regard to the seminar discussion, your assignment may sometimes include questions for you to prepare for the seminar that are NOT part of the writing assignment; you will be expected at the seminar to have prepared all assigned questions. There will be eight such weeks of activity in CAT.

Deliverables

5. All assignments will be instructor-specific. This means that **YOU SHOULD NOT RELY ON OTHER STUDENTS FOR THE WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT**, unless they are in your CAT seminar section (Glenn Carroll's section 4B).
6. Your writing assignment is due at 9 pm on Wednesday, submitted electronically via Canvas. Please note that the 9 pm deadline is enforced rigidly across all CAT sections. If your submission is time-stamped 9:01, it will not be accepted without a compelling excuse. For instance, in a prior year a student was working on his paper until five minutes before the deadline and then went to submit it via a wireless connection, and (he said) lost his

connection, and didn't get it back until it was too late. This was not viewed as a "good enough" excuse. Also, students have submitted drafts before the deadline and then, a few minutes after, submitted a draft with what were described as minor changes. If the changes are minor, it isn't worth getting your instructor angry with you by submitting after the deadline. In general, the last draft you submit before the deadline is what counts. Free advice: If you think and work in terms of, say, an 8:30 pm submission deadline, you'll probably be okay.

7. The name of the file you submit should include your name and the week of the submission (Smith-J-Week-4.docx). You should also put your name and section in the header or footer of your assignment template so that it is clear which assignment is yours.
8. You may get your written assignments back before the seminar, or after. This may change from week to week, and may be specific to you instructor. But you should expect, each week, to get a grade and substantive written feedback from your instructor(s). Communications Coaches may also provide you with feedback if you request it, and you may use all of that feedback as you prepare and write the next week's assignment.
9. Active oral participation in seminar discussions is required. You should not try to dominate the discussions, but you should be a contributing member of your group. Oral participation, as evaluated by your instructor(s), counts for 40% of your total grade. (The balance will be based on your written arguments/assignments and the final exam.) In evaluating your participation, more emphasis will be placed on the quality of your contributions than on their quantity. During the term, you can expect feedback from your instructor on your participation in seminar discussions.
10. Submitting a paper late without an excused absence earns you a zero for that paper. Missing a seminar session without an excused absence earns you a zero for class participation that day. And, to make the punishments worse: If the total number of unexcused absences at the seminar sessions plus missed and unexcused submissions of papers totals 3 or more, you will fail the course. This is a standard enforced across all CAT sections and is not instructor-specific.
11. Unless indicated otherwise, your written assignments are limited to not more than 750 words, excluding footnotes and citations of sources. (See ***Honor Code Issues*** below for more.) Please use Microsoft Word with double spacing, at least 1½ inch margins on all sides, and 12-point font. (Double spacing gives your instructor room to grade by hand, if he or she so chooses. Note that we understand that this is NOT the standard format for most "business memo" formats, so in this regard we are deviating from what you will use later in your life.) We are serious about the length limits: Submissions beyond the limit will be truncated at the limit and graded accordingly. You are responsible for checking that you adhere to this limit. (MSWord makes it easy to see how many words you have, in the bottom left of your screen.)

12. You should submit .doc or .docx documents, readable by MSWord. For the purposes of CAT all faculty and writing coaches will be able to accept both kinds of files.

Honor Code Guidelines

The purpose of CAT is to help you improve your ability to reason and to communicate your reasoning to others. This will require hard work. It is generally true that the more you put into this, the more you will get out of it, but at times you may feel that, combined with everything else you are being asked to do (and want to do), we are demanding too much of your time. At those times, you may wonder what “time saving” mechanisms you might employ.

Also, when you are working through some of the complex issues we will attack, it can help a lot to consult with peers or, via the web (or otherwise) with experts. But this is a graded course, and there are both limits to how much aid is permitted and questions about when aid goes from something that improves your learning experience to something that defeats it.

Finally, this course deals in ideas, in so-called intellectual property (IP). You should get into the habit, if you aren’t already in the habit, of giving proper citation to others when you use their IP.

For all these reasons, in CAT (and in other courses you will take) there are rules about the aid that you are permitted to receive, and there are rules about acknowledging the IP of others. In general, you are honor bound not to receive or give unpermitted aid and to acknowledge properly your sources. That, in a nutshell, is the content of the Stanford Honor Code, with which you agreed to abide when you matriculated at Stanford.

This much is easy. What makes things harder is that, in general, instructors are allowed under the Honor Code to define for their own courses what falls under “permitted aid” and “unpermitted aid” and to give rules for acknowledging the IP of others. The Honor Code does specify rules that instructors must follow. But those rules give wide latitude to individual instructors, and the Honor Code says that you, as the student, must abide by the rules set by your instructor. The excuse “It was okay with Professor X” doesn’t work with Professor Y. One of the rules that instructors must follow is that they must be clear (in writing) what rules they establish (and on the next page, we’ll get to the rules for CAT). But any set of rules will have gray areas, and as a very general rule: If you are unsure in any specific situation what is and isn’t permitted, or what are your responsibilities under the Honor Code, your first instinct should be to ask your instructor.

With that introduction, here are the rules for CAT.

1. You are free, and even encouraged, to discuss the issue of the week with your peers. You are strongly encouraged to restrain yourself to discussion with members of your study group and particularly close friends, since if you discuss the issue of the week with everyone in your seminar group, Friday’s discussion is likely to fall flat. But there is no Honor-Code restriction on discussion.

2. Anything you submit in writing, however, should be your own. You should have composed it; you certainly should not copy the work of others. A good rule of thumb: When you are ready to start writing, after discussions with your peers, start with a clean sheet of paper and without notes (except for your own).
3. Typically when you write something that will be read by others with a critical eye, you will want to have another person proofread your drafts to provide helpful feedback on grammar, structure, spelling, punctuation, etc. However, because boundaries in this sort of activity are hard to set and enforce, the rule in CAT is that you may not engage others in proofreading your work before you submit it. You alone are responsible for the quality of the final submission. Once you begin the writing process you are not to show your work to anybody else, except perhaps your Communications Coach. We admit this is a bit unnatural, but it's important that your work be truly your own, so your coach can best help you develop your writing abilities. If a friend or colleague has gone in and "fixed" your writing before you get feedback on it, you are then less likely to improve.
4. This course involves a fair amount of reading. Students are sometimes tempted to divide reading assignments among study group members. In CAT, the rules are that you should read everything that is assigned. It is fine, after you have read the material, to get together with peers to discuss the reading; this is covered by rule #1 above. But you must not allow others to do your reading for you.
5. On some topics, you may want to go beyond what is assigned. Unless in a specific assignment this is specifically forbidden, you are free to seek out further information on the topics and issues under discussion. However, if you do so and use that information in your work, you must let the instructor know by including in your written assignment a List of Source Materials. Books and articles should be properly cited; for information garnered over the web, URLs should be provided together with descriptions (titles, authors where there is an identified author, dates if available, etc.)
 - a. Your List of Source Materials need not include any assigned readings. However, if we tell you to read (e.g.) Chapters 1 through 4 of a book, you go on to read Chapter 5, and Chapter 5 is useful to you in what you write, you must include Chapter 5 of this book in your List of Source Materials.
 - b. In giving citations, please use the format of the Chicago Manual of Style, which can be found on the CAT Writing Website.
 - c. Suppose you find some material that is incredibly useful in doing the assignment. Can you share this source with peers? We allow this, to a limited extent. You can share this source with members of your study group and with your spouse/partner. But share no further, without permission of your instructor.
 - d. Your peers or other people you know may be experts in one of the issues we tackle. It is fine to treat those folks the way you would a book or article or web page — you can learn and use what they know, but you must include "Private Communication with..." on your List of Source Materials.

e. If we give you, say, a limit of 750 words, your List of Source Materials doesn't count against that limit — you can have 750 words of text with the List of Source Materials to follow.

6. Source material can be useful for general ideas and information. And it can be useful for specific information or arguments. As you get closer to reproducing in your written work the specific IP of someone else, you are increasingly liable to give very precise attributions. If you quote the words of someone else, you MUST acknowledge this (with quote marks) and give a precise footnote, complete with page numbers, etc., following the Chicago Manual of Style. If you quote a number or reproduce part or all of a table, a precise citation is required. In general, because this is academic work, you are absolutely bound by the academic rules governing plagiarism, which can be found at

<http://www.studentaffairs.stanford.edu/communitystandards/integrity/statements-plagiarism> ,

as well as some of the links given there.

7. There can be considerable gray area between general ideas you acquire in your reading and the reproduction of a sentence or two from some specific source. For instance, you may find an argument that is not only convincing, but whose structure you admire and want to reproduce in your own written work. You aren't going to copy sentences, but you are going to copy someone else's logical flow. In such cases, it is generally an excellent idea to err, if you err at all, on the side of citing the other person's work. A footnote "In this part of my argument, I follow the structure of the argument given by in [and then supply as precise a citation as you can, including page numbers]" can't hurt you.

Similarly, if you are going to put into your own writing anything that you think will be regarded as surprising by your reader, and if you learned this from some source, cite the source. When your instructor grades your paper and is surprised by what he or she reads, the comment "Where is this coming from?" is likely to appear if you haven't already answered that question. And that comment hurts your grade.

While you don't need to include assigned readings in your List of Source Materials, you should include citations to assigned readings when you think a citation is appropriate.

Footnotes are not commonly found in business memos, and some of your assignments will ask you to prepare a business memo. This is one place where the academic nature of this enterprise takes precedence; even in your business memos, we want you to include appropriate footnotes citing the IP of others.

Please use footnotes for this purpose, not endnotes. Also, please use footnotes for this purpose only. The only thing that should be in a footnote is a message to your instructor concerning the IP of another person that you are using. Footnotes will not count against you in word-count limits.

8. In rule #6, we said that except where explicitly forbidden, you can seek out source material freely. A general amendment to this rule is that you are not allowed to use any material,

however derived or obtained, that was prepared specifically for the CAT assignment or a closely related assignment (other than the materials that have been distributed by your CAT instructor or found in the course packet). This includes work prepared for CAT in prior years. (And if you encounter such materials, we would be grateful to be alerted to that fact.)

9. When in doubt, ask your instructor. And do this always, not only in CAT.