

Essay #1: Critical & Creative Thinking in *12 Angry Men* (Consult syllabus/schedule for due date)

In the first few weeks, we will watch the film *12 Angry Men*. The film explores the complex process of distinguishing factual information from unwarranted bias in the jury trial system. It is a classic study of proper argumentation and thorough critical thinking. We will also view several *TED Talks* about the nature of the brain, the complex relationship between critical and creative thinking, and how emerging research in hemispheric science sheds some light on how we understand ourselves and the world around us. We'll then read some articles on similar and related topics. Finally, we will review some of the basic material on how arguments are evaluated in academic contexts (by exploring the Greek model of *Logos*, *Pathos*, & *Ethos*). Then in your essay, please address the following:

How are the principles of critical and creative thinking displayed in the film *12 Angry Men*?

- With quotes and references to the film, the *TED Talks*, class readings, and your own research and experience, please discuss what we are learning about the nature of **critical and creative thinking** and how we must use the two in conjunction for collaborative design and problem solving. (HINT: This should be the lens through which you generate your primary thesis statement. In other words, use this as the frame by which you choose what you will focus on with regard to the nature of the brain, critical thinking and argument, and how all of this is demonstrated in the film.) **The next several bullet points should be engaged only if they are appropriate to the topic and thesis you have chosen.**
- If appropriate to your thesis, discuss how the emerging research in **brain hemispheric science** influences our understanding of the critical and creative thinking processes and how this is demonstrated in the film.
- If appropriate to your thesis, discuss how evidence-based approaches to argument (**Logos**) are central to properly developing, analyzing and understanding the arguments presented in the film.
- If appropriate to your thesis, discuss how authority-based approaches to argument (**Ethos**) are central to properly developing, analyzing and understanding the arguments presented in the film.
- If appropriate to your thesis, discuss how emotion-based approaches to argument (**Pathos**) are central to properly developing, analyzing and understanding the arguments presented in the film.
- If appropriate to your thesis, what is the importance of cultivating **intellectual humility** and avoiding the panic often associated with “being wrong” in the process of becoming strong critical and creative thinkers?

Remember, an essay is an “attempt” to interact meaningfully with concepts that require careful, thoughtful reflection and exploration. Think of this assignment as a conversation between yourself and the speakers about the substantive issues the sources address and how they manifest through the debates in the film.

Assignment Details:

- **You must take your first essay to the Writing Tutors to receive full credit for this assignment. Subsequent essays receive extra credit for confirmed use of tutoring.**
- 3-4 pages, double-spaced, 12.pt font. MLA format.
- Present your main idea in a clear thesis statement in the Introduction.
- Support your claim or focus with evidence and examples from the *TED Talks*, course readings, and some more external research of your own.
- Present one major point (in a topic sentence) per paragraph and explain it fully, with detailed support and examples, before you move on to your next point/paragraph.
- Wrap up your essay with a conclusion that revisits your overall thesis.
- 3-5 sources consulted in the essay and listed on a Works Cited page.
- Remember to include an “in-text” citation following each source you quote, summarize or paraphrase.
- We have pages posted [here](#) on Blackboard in **The Writing Process** page that deal with proper MLA documentation. Please refer to them.
- Consult the MHCC databases for relevant articles related to your research.
- Submit your essay by the due date on the schedule in the appropriate place in the week’s lesson module. Follow the submission instructions there for uploading your essay.

Sample Topics:

Intellectual humility, **grounding critical thinking in sound reasoning and authoritative, relevant support**, and **being curious & asking the right questions** are essential elements in how justice is served in the film *12 Angry Men*.

Importance of being wrong, **withholding judgment until enough evidence is gathered**, and **considering multiple perspectives** allows for the change of perspective experienced by the jurors in *12 Angry Men*.

Critical and **Creative** Thinking. What each is and how they work together to promote the pursuit of equitable justice in the film *12 Angry Men*.

Left and **Right** Hemispheres. What the new research shows and how this influences our understanding of the critical and creative thinking processes on display in the film *12 Angry Men*.

Memory and the **pitfalls** and **opportunities** it presents when engaged in **critical** and **creative** thinking processes on display in the film *12 Angry Men*.