

ACT #268

Articulation And Critical Thinking

Syllabus: Fall Quarter, 2019

MGT 268-1, MGT 268-2, MGP 268-2

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Introduction to ACT #268

Imagine yourself as an impressive speaker and a competent writer, if it's not the case already. Think of yourself as an excellent critical thinker as well, adept at analyses and strategies. This course will help you to become that person in the business world. Commit yourself to ACT #268 and you will...

- think more efficiently and critically;
- become a competent speaker in front of groups;
- write well, at a level expected of an MBA graduate.

This class is meant to be practical, and it is. Working professional MBA students can immediately apply what they are learning in the workplace. Full-time MBA students find ACT #268 immediately useful to secure and excel at internships. All graduates can use what they learn here throughout their careers.

Let's delve into the three subject areas raised above.

Critical Thinking

ACT #268 concentrates on *how* to think rather than *what* to think. You'll be noticing *how* you think—building arguments, identifying biases, and much more. You'll realize how your initial thoughts and feelings can be a hindrance. You'll train these skills by analyzing real-world examples and working through scenarios—you will be able to spot critical thinking flaws in others, and avoid making them yourself.

Writing

English writing skills vary greatly among the students in the GSM. Whatever your skill level at the start of class, six self-editing techniques will enable you to quickly

enhance your business writing. You'll also learn to evaluate C-level leadership writing from top companies in technology, finance, and other fields. What's good about this corporate announcement, supervisor's memo, or e-mail from a manager? What isn't? Your discerning eye will help you shape good business communications of your own.

Presentations

A competent public speaker displays eight basic skills. Students begin ACT 268 with strength in some of these skills, but a need to learn others. For instance, some students speak too quickly (and know it) because they're nervous. That can readily be fixed. You'll acquire all eight skills, with opportunities to develop a commanding presence, incorporate PowerPoint effectively, and learn other more advanced skills.

Required materials

A downloadable **TEXTPAK** at Study.net and a course pack at Harvard Business School Publishing are individually necessary. There is no textbook.

Read a relevant book?

While it isn't a class requirement, reading all of Malcolm Gladwell's **Blink** or especially Daniel Kahneman's **Thinking Fast and Slow** (we use a chapter of each in the course) would really enhance your critical thinking. The latter is particularly profound, according to past students.

If you're eager for more, the following books are also on point. Most are readily available in paperback: **Predictably Irrational** (Dan Ariely); **The Paradox of Choice** (Barry Schwartz); **Freakonomics** (Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner); **Outliers** (Malcolm Gladwell); **Everyday Bias** (Howard Ross).

[The Purdue Owl](#) is an excellent reference tool on grammar to place on your toolbar. For ESL students, you'll find special material and exercises devoted to verb tenses, the use of articles, and punctuation, which are often problematic.

Before you arrive at the first class, be sure these things have occurred:

- You've established ready access to the **Textpak** and the HBSP course pack for Articulation and Critical Thinking.
- You've done what's required for the Class 1 assignment.
- You have a name card for display in the classroom.

- You have read the [Academic Code of Conduct](#), also available in the class 1 readings on Canvas. It deals with plagiarism and integrity.

Your owner's manual for #268

- **CONTACT THE TA (email, or text if urgent):** Questions about assignments; notification of upcoming absence; need to take a particular class in another section due to scheduling problem; availability of grades in GradeBook.
- **CONTACT THE INSTRUCTOR (email, or text if urgent):** Personal matters that you consider sensitive; questions about discussion groups.
The instructor eagerly welcomes individual meetings before and after class, or at other times if suitable, to provide coaching or address any concerns.

The Highlights of Each Class

1st Class—We'll introduce necessary writing skills for a business leader. Also, critical thinking will be introduced. What is it, and why is it important?

2nd Class—To establish baseline presentation skills, half the class will give 90-second talks (without notes) from a lectern. More writing skills will be introduced. We'll also apply critical thinking to a case study: "How Much Is Sweat Equity Worth?"

3rd Class—Yahoo's former CEO, Marissa Mayer, famously introduced a controversial policy change several years ago that disallowed working remote for all employees. Similarly, in the classic case "McGregor Ltd. Department Store," its CEO will cause disruption by changing the employee discount plan. The class will critically analyze the options in McGregor and write a tactful announcement. Also, the remaining students will present 90-second baseline talks.

4th Class— Everyone will give a second talk, one that begins with a personal anecdote to pull in the audience. The topic will be a healthcare policy or medical practice that in your eyes warrants change. We'll also delve into common biases and logical fallacies.

5th Class—Everyone will assume an authoritative style in the third talk. Using data wisely, you will expose a misguided common viewpoint or policy (your choice) that has a logical fallacy or misleading bias within. Afterward, we will analyze a real-world ethical dilemma of a type that front-line managers often face.

6th Class—How can corporate social responsibility and maximizing profits co-exist ethically? We'll look at the nearly 200-year history of "maximizing eyeballs" in order to grow profits, ending with our current national debate about privacy concerns and

monetizing customer data. Also, we'll take a hard look at critical decision making when veteran expertise is in play.

7th Class—Student pairs will give engaging presentations of several minutes, using a minimum of six PowerPoints. The teams of two will choose topics that entertain and inform under the umbrella subject of “Money.”

8th Class—Students will individually respond to a fast-moving challenge in a Harvard single-player simulation called “Judgment in a Crisis.” The company, Matterhorn Health, has high expectations for its new product, a blood glucose monitor, but the launch goes awry. The class will also analyze a traditional business case, “In Search of a Second Act.” Finally, we'll discuss the elements of a persuasive talk.

9th Class—Half the students will give their final oral presentations of the quarter. It calls for a business development or sales presentation closing with a strong “ask” of listeners. We'll also agonize with a conscientious CEO who needs to cut off a supplier when that might not survive.

10th Class—Those who did not present last week will do so. Also, the class will tackle “Thomas Green: Power and Office Politics.” Green, a talented but brash young renegade, must write a very diplomatic self-assessment to his superiors in order to save his job.

Final Exam.

Grading

A 200-point basis will be used for grading to allow greater discretion with the individual assignments. Critical thinking, speaking and writing will figure equally into your grade. Finally, your participation grade will reflect, but not be limited to, the quality of your participation in your discussion group, attentiveness in class; active participation in class to move discussion ahead, and attendance.

Speaking

The first two presentations are not graded.

Third presentation (authoritative talk): 20 points

Fourth presentation (PowerPoint talk with partner): 20 points

Fifth presentation (persuasive): 20 points

Writing

Only the assignments below are graded.

McGregor: 20 points

Social responsibility v. “maximizing eyeballs”: 20 points

Second Act: 20 points

Thomas Green: 20 points

Important: Active Participation!

Use your laptop or other electronics only if needed for educational purposes, and always only have course-relevant material open (no routine email or browsing, please). Laptops should remain physically closed when students are giving talks, out of courtesy.

Final Exam

40 points – Your discussion group will critically analyze a topic identified to the class weeks before exam time. During the exam period, you will be able to use your group discussion notes and conduct further research online, BUT with absolutely no real-time communication with any individual. The challenge? Write an in-depth business communication about a challenging matter, deploying your knowledge, critical analysis, and writing skills.

On Attendance

This class is an interactive experience. Attendance is vital. Important learning will occur in your group discussions and during the three hours of every class. Every effort should be made not to miss a class or group discussion. Moreover, missing a class equals no participation for that week, and missing a group discussion will matter as well. You should email the TA prior to class explaining why you will miss a class. It is important to do all the necessary reading and other requirements leading up to group discussions and the weekly classes, even if you are not present.

Notice of the Code of Academic Conduct

Students are expected to conform with the code of academic conduct, which can be found here: <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/cac.pdf>