

## 9. Warring with Words: The Art of Argumentation and Creative Thinking

**Instructor: Mr. Vinay  
Kambipura**  
**Duration: 60  
hours**

### Introduction

This certificate course introduces students to the art of argumentation and creative thinking. The premise of the course is that argumentation and thinking go hand-in-hand and that they are a part of our everyday life in a democracy. Arguments are the end result of a process of thinking, but ‘to argue’ is a continuous process of thinking, a verb denoting action. To argue is to be in relationship with the external world and with oneself. Argumentation comprises both, the arguments and the process of arguing. This course hopes to explore the idea of argumentation and thinking as an art form and uses philosophy, literature and literary theory as inspiration to find novel ways of learning this art form.

### Modules:

1. Socratic Method - The art of critical inquiry (10 hours)
2. Dialogic Imagination - The many voices within (10 hours)
3. Narrative Argument and Narratives as Arguments (10 hours)
4. Metaphorical and Analogical Reasoning (10 hours)
5. Thinking through Thinkers (10 hours)
6. Project – Public Debate and Creative Work (10 hours)

### Assessment:

Formative Assessment: **50 marks** (10 marks each for the first five modules)  
Summative Assessment: **50 marks** (for the sixth module)

### Module One: Socratic Method - The art of critical inquiry

*Is asking meaningful and relevant questions an art? How does introspection lead to the art of critical inquiry? Is there a victory or defeat in argumentation?*

Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, had a unique method of confronting his intellectual opponents. Instead of putting forth his own ideas he would critically examine the accepted notions of his opponents by asking a series of questions. Unable to answer the questions his opponents would concede their defeat and accept their lack of knowledge. The Socratic Dialogues are an interesting resource to learn the art of critical inquiry into our accepted beliefs, notions and perspectives.

**Learning:** In this module students will be introduced to the dialectical method of argumentation of the Greek antiquity that uses logical reasoning to carry out a debate. It will also examine other notions of dialectic pertaining to the understanding of history and social processes.

**Assessment:** Students will engage in a critical dialogue with each other on various topics and capture the conversation either through writing or video. Students will be assessed on their ability to critically examine the statements,

perspectives and beliefs of the fellow conversationalist.

#### Module Two: Dialogic Imagination - The many voices within

*How to accommodate multiple opinions in a democracy? Should one be confrontational when faced with a contrary opinion?*

Our opinions and beliefs are not rooted in a singular thought. There are always multiple voices both within and outside which are competing with each other in order to gain dominance in our minds. The establishment of a singular ideology on everyone is a result of snuffing out the multiplicity of viewpoints, either through the use of force or through propaganda. However, literature, through its dialogic imagination, accommodates many voices and allows them to have a dialogue with each other.

**Learning:** In this module the students will be introduced to the art of entering into an imaginative dialogue that allows for plurality of perspectives and beliefs.

**Assessment:** Students will be presented with a discourse and then asked to identify the multiplicity of voices in the given discourse. They will be assessed on their ability to identify differing viewpoints and the creative methods they employ to initiate dialogue between those viewpoints.

#### Module Three: Narrative Argument and Narratives as Arguments

*Is logical reasoning the only form of thinking? Can I reply to an argument with a narrative?*

It has been assumed that logical reasoning is the only way of constructing and presenting arguments. Most debates proceed with an established pattern in which a set of data is used as evidence in support of a statement. Within the legal system and academia this is considered to be an authentic form of debate. However, historically, human beings have engaged in another form of argumentation: creating and disseminating narratives and counter-narratives. Narratives have worked in the form of arguments and have been able to persuade people into accepting a particular perspective – usually the perspective of the narrative voice.

**Learning:** In this module students will be introduced to identify and utilize elements of narrativity into constructing arguments and also to weaving narratives that can act as arguments.

**Assessment:** Students will be assessed on their ability to identify narrative arguments that are part of everyday public discourse. They will also be assessed on their ability to create a narrative that can act as an argument.

#### Module Four: Metaphorical and Analogical Reasoning

*Do I follow the path of a butterfly or an ant?*

The art of comparison and substitution in language is as old as language itself. Metaphors are not just figures-of-speech used for ornamental purposes, instead, they are fundamental to how

we think and express ourselves. A metaphor not only changes the meanings of words and images but also alters entire categories of knowledge. Metaphorical thinking implies the kind of thinking that enables us to create new metaphors. This is fundamentally different from logical reasoning, in the sense that this involves imagination and creativity to look for patterns and connections between disparate ideas. It could even be argued that metaphorical thinking is the foundation to all logic.

**Learning:** In this module students will be introduced to the art of metaphorical thinking through an engagement with poetry and fiction.

**Assessment:** Students will be assessed on their ability to identify and use methods of metaphorical thinking in building their arguments/creative work.

#### Module Five: Thinking through Thinkers

*How does one think/create? Whom should I imitate? Who should be my inner voice?*

Thinking is never original. It has been said that the entire Western philosophy is nothing but a footnote to Plato, the Greek philosopher. Every age produces its own thinkers who act as a mirror to its society and helps it to engage in intellectual discourse and creative pursuits. Individual thinkers and artists both embrace and reject their masters and through such dialectics new ideas are born. Shakespeare took stories from the ancient past and presented it in an utterly transformed English language that made the viewers of his plays look at the world differently. Modern day artists used the most ancient of all arts – painting, to create a new art form all together – the Graphic Novel.

**Learning:** In this module students will engage with a thinker/creator by reading/viewing their texts. Students will attempt to identify the method that the thinker/creator uses to come up with new and creative ideas/works of art. Students will also attempt to form a new idea/work of art by working through the text/work-of-art of a thinker/creator.

**Assessment:** Students will be assessed on their extent of engagement with a thinker/creator and their creative attempts at forming new ideas/works of art.

#### Module Six: Project – Public Debate and Creative Work

*I own this, yet it's not my own.*

Students will engage in an extended public debate on a topic of their interest/exhibit a creative work by making use of the learnings from this course.

**Assessment:** Students will be assessed on their ability to make use of ideas learnt through the course and the creativity they display in their project work.

