

# A MUSICAL, SOME MOVEMENTS & A TRIO OF GROUP PROJECTS

One Critical Thinking Seminar Journey

Presented by W. Kirby Player, Ph.D.

Instructor for

AGED 4160/6160 - Ethics and Issues in  
Agriculture and the Food and Fiber System

## **A CT SEMINAR JOURNEY: AGED 4160/6160**

- Inaugural offering Spring 2015 w/Tom Dobbins
- 2015 & 2016 Spring offered as a general class
- Kirby Player attended institute in June 2017
- 2017 syllabus/class received CT seminar overhaul
- Enrollment for 15-17 were between 30-40.
- 2018 enrollment had to be limited to 50.
- Evaluations provided qualitative evidence of the impact of class enhancements.
- Consideration of offering two sections with 36 undergrad & 4 Grad seats in 2019.

## A CT SEMINAR JOURNEY: THE CT OVERHAUL

- Completely reworked the syllabus.

AG ED 4160/6160 Spring 2018  
Ethics & Issues in Agriculture  
& The Food and Fiber System 3(3,0)

Class meetings/day/time/Location:  
T, TH 9:30AM – 10:45 AM; Poole Agricultural Center C-127.

Professor: W. Kirby Player  
Thomas R Dobbins (Teaching Assistant)

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Office hours: by appointment

**Dr. Player's Desire and Goals for this Course and you as a student:**

*"It is my greatest desire is to make a difference in your life!" - Kirby Player*

**The arching question for this course is:** What are the challenging/controversial issues facing agriculture and the natural resources locally and around the globe? Subsequently what are the claims of pros and cons for competing ideas and thus what are potential solutions? Finally, what do you personally believe on varying topics and how do you as a leader impact your current and future circles of influence.

Be ready to think more than you expected and be ready for interesting speakers and activities that will challenge you.

This class was so helpful to me in seeking out more career-paths within my major and also making me more aware of the many issues present within agriculture.

A lot of different speakers so the topics bounce around one theme to another. And theater Thursday is the best thing on the PLANET.

Quotes from former AGED 4160 students when asked: How would you describe this class to someone who might be interested in taking it in the future?

This is class is a class worth taking. There is a lot of information learned in this class that you cannot get from any book or class. It is worth the time to hear and experience what agricultural issues are around us and this is the class to learn all that information. It was very interesting and worth coming to each day.

### Course Objectives, Descriptions and Student Learning Outcomes:

**Course Description:** This course explores ethical theories, concepts of critical thinking, and the challenges facing American agriculture as well as global Agriculture. The major social, political, economic, and environmental issues that arise in connection to the "food and fiber system" are examined and potential solutions considered.

**Critical Thinking Seminar:** This class is part of the Clemson Think2 initiative. "Clemson University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), is an ambitious experiment in critical thinking through the use of a variety of learning and teaching through second-year Critical Thinking (CT) Seminars, a cohort of students, faculty development, rigorous assessment, and scholarly research." (CT2 Website)

In this CT2 seminar, this course will use a variety of tools for instruction and assessment that will enhance critical thinking skills and create CT Student Learning Outcomes.

#### CT Assessments:

1. Each student will complete a pre and post critical thinking assessment test during the course.
2. Each student will complete a series of assigned written essays that demonstrate critical thinking skills but not limited to, identification; compare and contrast; evaluation; analysis; problem-solving; cross-context application and summarization.
3. Students will engage with experts on related topics and prepare reflections that demonstrate critical thinking skills regarding the experts identified topic.
4. Working in assigned groups, students will research and explore a relevant, instructional agricultural or natural resources issue. A group oral presentation will be given in which students engage fellow classmates in thinking critically about the assigned topic.
5. Each student will prepare a personal critical thinking report that identifies five or more skills the student has learned and used to navigate the class. The report will cite student's artifacts from the semester that demonstrates using each of the identified skills.

#### Critical Thinking Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will explore complex challenges and issues within agriculture, natural resources, and the global food and fiber system.
2. Students will analyze the multi-dimensional problems and issues facing agriculture today and in the past identifying arguments and reasons from varying points of view.
3. Students will extrapolate from one conceptual context to others in regards to issues within the class context.
4. Students will develop and communicate creative solutions to the complex agricultural issues introduced in the class and discovered through self-research.
5. Students will effectively communicate the various issues and views and possible solutions to complex topics considered in class.



**Aspirational Instructional Goal:** Through enthusiastic classroom and individual engagement, information transfer, exposure to topic experts, instruction in critical thinking and ethical theory, assignments and exercises involving reflection, writing and oral communication, my goal is that you will aspire to be an "AgEvangelist" who earnestly seeks to fulfill The Grain Commission:

### *The Grain Commission of the AgEvangelist*

As a graduate of Clemson University, South Carolina's Land Grant Institution, you have been given a knowledge, ethos and inspiration to go therefore and make agriculturalists of all people, influencing them in the name of the Thomas Green Clemson, Frank Lever, E. M. Tiffany and a host of past and present AgEvangelists.

Teaching these new agriculturalists to be tillers and keepers of the land, informed consumers and citizens, and inspiring them to practice self-care and demonstrate concern for their neighbors, next door and around the globe.

And in unity, faith, hope and love – we AgEvangelists, in conjunction with agriculturalists, can employ stewardship, critical thinking and ethical theory, and an enthusiastic work ethic to face the challenges of the future and advance our professions. And behold, with grace and blessings, we will feed, clothe and supply food and fiber for all the world till the end of the age."

(Adapted in humility from Matthew 28:19-20 – The Bible)



## Musicals & Media as a Critical Thinking Teaching Medium:

### Theater Thursdays Purpose:

- Exposing the CAFLS student body to art & the process of art appreciation/interpretation as a form of critical thinking and a history lesson of an original American art form.





## Musicals & Media as a Critical Thinking Teaching Medium:

### Theater Thursdays Purpose:

- Musical exert introduces a concept/issue.
- Past/current issues in agriculture are linked.
- Class engages in discussion & CT pairings.
- Reflection/CT Movement paper is assigned.



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## Musicals & Media as a Critical Thinking Teaching Medium:

### Theater Thursdays Examples:

- Oklahoma – Western Expansion
- The Music Man – Marketing & Advertising
- Newsies – Ag Labor Issues
- Little Shop of Horrors – Genetically Modified



## Critical Thinking Written

### Assignments:

### CT Movements Papers:

- An effort to truly evaluate if the student comprehends critical thinking in writing.
- Self-identification of critical thinking writing movements through review in word or parenthetical description.
- Greater emphasis placed on critical thinking structured execution than content.
- A series of sources for research are provided.





## Critical Thinking Written Assignments: Reflection Exercises

- Based on a topic/issue addressed during class.
  - Expert lecture
  - Theater Thursday
  - Group project presentation
- Mentor document provided to demonstrate quality.
- Students respond to three questions based on this structure:





## Critical Thinking Written Assignments: Reflection Exercises

- **New knowledge/experience:**  
State new knowledge or experience you gained from class regarding XXXXXXXX.
- **Reflection from your past:**  
Share a story from your past that was triggered by this new knowledge/experience. Make it vivid (describe scents, colors, people, etc.) Transport your reader back in time with you.
- **Resulting actions/wisdom:**  
Think about the new knowledge and the past experience you have shared. Now, what will you do differently (or not)? Why? Use “I” in this concluding section. Include specific actions



## Critical Thinking Written Assignments:

### White Paper Assignment

- Based on a topic/issue addressed during class.
  - Expert lecture
  - Theater Thursday
  - Group project presentation
  
- The structure, purpose, use and attributes of a traditional white paper are discussed extensively in class.
  
- Mentor document provided to





## A Trio of Group Projects: Try, Try & Try Again

- Years 2015 & 2016
  - Group class presentation on selected hot topic X vs. Y.
- Year 2017
  - Group Social Media projects based on approved group generated idea.
- Year 2018
  - Discussion Meet format for hot topic.



## A Trio of Group Projects: Hot Topic Presentation:

- Was simply one more Power Point report to a class.
- Created a binary view of a topic of X vs. Y.
- Ultimate goal was to report or propose a solution.
- Required classroom engagement.
- Often was at its core a research report.





## A Trio of Group Projects: Social Media Project:

- AN ADVENTURE.
- We learned as much from mistakes as success.
- Developing an actual working rubric was challenging.
- Bulk of work could fall on the tech savvy students.
- Some projects lacked depth of exploration for current issues.



## A Trio of Group Projects: Discussion Meet:

- Requires group members to fulfill specific roles.
- Exposes entire group to all sides of an issue.
- Wild card offers an opportunity for creativity.
- Creates group dynamic during class room presentation.
- Discussion as a committee vs. debate.

# A MUSICAL, SOME MOVEMENTS & A TRIO OF GROUP PROJECTS: WHAT I HAVE LEARNED ON THIS JOURNEY

- Be willing to adjust, change and alter any aspect of the class until you are convinced your pupils are grasping CT.
- Becoming familiar with aspects of each student's biography helps to assess their status and progress through the class.
- Politely ask & request from peers to BEG, BORROW & STEAL.
- Utilize Dr. Knox and his team.
- Assess and seek extra evaluations from your students.
- Never stop exploring and learning about CT personally.

**Please share your**

**Questions and Comments**