I. Administrative

A. Problem sets – PS#4 due today

B. Exam study sheet and key are up and ready for use

C. PS#3 key will be posted tonight or tomorrow morning

D. Thursday will be primarily a study session for the final, although we will finish the exercise we begin today during the initial part of class

E. Questions?

II. Putting It All Together

A. The point of a critical thinking class is to give you tools you can use to stay in control of your beliefs and actions – to keep you from becoming a tool of others, i.e., to enable you to be autonomous

B. Arguments come in all shapes and sizes

1. Format
   a. They can be fully explicit, presented completely in propositional form
   b. They can be partially explicit, with content delivered in a different form (e.g., visually) or left “between the lines”
   c. They can be almost completely implicit (e.g., the Macintosh commercial)

2. Goal
   a. They can aim to convince you to believe something
   b. They can aim to convince you to do something (e.g., buy something)
C. We have discussed a variety of tools:

1. A deeper understanding of language
2. Lexicon of terms and phrases used to indicate the presence of arguments (i.e., argument markers)
3. Standard form
4. List of rhetorical categories that contribute in various ways to arguments (e.g., assuring terms, discounting terms, evaluative language)
5. Introduction to different argument types (e.g., refutations)
6. Evaluative standards for deductive arguments
7. Evaluative standards for non-deductive (i.e., inductive) arguments
8. Fallacies (i.e., argument forms that you should remember because they often indicate shoddy reasoning)

D. Today I will work with you to put all of these together in evaluating an argument found in a particular text

III. The Art of Argument Analysis

A. As we have seen, critical thinking is just as much (if not more) *art* than *science*

1. There are systematic, objective characteristics that we can exploit when we think critically (e.g., validity, fallacy forms)
2. But there are also many debatable “judgment calls”
3. This doesn’t mean that anything goes
4. Experience is key here.
5. What you have learned should apply anywhere you are asked to think critically

B. There are three key stages to argument analysis:

1. Argument identification
2. Argument reconstruction

3. Argument evaluation

4. See: http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/crit_think/

C. Argument Identification

1. Here use the text you are given (or other representational elements) and determine if in fact it aims to modify your beliefs or your actions. If so, then you can presume that you are in the presence of an argument
   a. Use the argument markers to help guide you, i.e., reason and conclusion markers (Ch. 3)
   b. Use the categories of rhetorical devices that contribute to arguments: assuring, guarding, and discounting terms; metaphors, similes, and other figurative language; evaluative terms (Ch. 3)

2. Pay close attention to the context—that may be the biggest indication that there are arguments afoot

D. Argument Reconstruction

1. The goal here is to identify what the main point is, i.e., the conclusion, and what reasons are given to support that point

2. Argument markers and other rhetorical devices can help you sift through what is explicitly given.
   a. Be sure to note or write down the conclusion and the premises
   b. Are any of the conclusions premises for other conclusions? Be mindful of the fact that there are often multiple related arguments in a particular text
      i. These arguments can be *sequential*
      ii. Alternatively, they might be *nested*

3. When reconstructing the argument, think in terms of flow – i.e., is there an order to the premises where it is clear that some of them follow from others?
a. This could be due to content relationships among the steps – i.e., the topic is mentioned in this step and developed in the next

b. It could be due to the logical relationships among the steps

c. Think about whether this is a **deductive** argument or an **inductive** argument – this will constrain the form of the argument and determine the nature of the flow

4. Questions to ask:

   a. Are all the terms involved in the argument clear?

   b. Are all the steps explicit, or are some suppressed?
      
      i. Most arguments you find will involve suppressed premises

      ii. These are often innocent bits of common knowledge, e.g., contingent facts we all know, or linguistic or logical principles that are obvious

      iii. However, you can also be asked to take on board content that is objectionable in the form of suppressed premises

      iv. It is crucial in many cases that you identify what you are being asked implicitly to assume, since this is often what is doing the heavy lifting in the argument

5. Put the argument(s) in standard form

6. An important rule: *Be charitable!*

E. **Argument Evaluation**

   1. When you reconstruct the arguments, you will need to pay attention to whether they are deductive or inductive

   2. If the argument is deductive, ask:
      
      a. Is it relevant?

      b. Is it valid?
c. Is it sound?

3. If the argument is non-deductive, ask:
   a. What type of non-deductive argument is it?
   b. Does the argument meet the requirements to be a good argument of that type? (E.g., is it modest? Is it conservative? Are the premises true? Does it take into consideration an appropriate amount of data? Are the premises relevant?)