Affordable Learning Georgia Affordable Materials Grants  
Transformation Grants Final Report

*(or Textbook Transformation Grants, if R17 or earlier)*

# General Information

**Date: 6/4/2025**

**Grant Round: 25**

**Grant Number: 705**

**Institution Name(s): Clayton State University**

**Project Lead: Benjamin Buckley**

**Team Members (Name, Title, Department, Institutions if different, and email address for each):**

**Todd Janke, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Humanities Department.** [**ToddJanke@clayton.edu**](mailto:ToddJanke@clayton.edu)

**Alex Hall, Professor of Philosophy, Humanities Department,** [**AlexanderHall@clayton.edu**](mailto:AlexanderHall@clayton.edu)

**Sanjay Lal, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, Humanities Department,** [**SanjayLal@clayton.edu**](mailto:SanjayLal@clayton.edu)

**Benjamin Buckley, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, Humanities Department, BenjaminBuckley@clayton.edu**

**Course Name(s) and Course Numbers: Critical Thinking, CRIT 1101**

**Semester Project Began: Summer, 2024**

**Final Semester of Implementation: Spring 2025**

**Total Number of Students Affected During Project: 323 students used the new textbook Spring 2025.**

# Narrative

Over the course of this grant, we created a new critical thinking textbook. We drew from four different OER textbooks, edited, remixed, and rewrote these chapters, and wrote new material. The resulting textbook is 11 chapters, covering different concepts in critical thinking. It is meant to be expansive enough to give instructors choices on how to teach the course. Due to the copyright of the source material this textbook is based on, it will be offered to the public under a CC BY-NC-SA license. Each of us has written a narrative about our experiences creating and teaching this book.

*Benjamin Buckley*

I think that the biggest challenge I faced is that I hadn’t counted on creating an entirely new textbook. I thought I’d be able to find OER logic books that covered the material I wanted to include, in the level of depth and detail I was looking for. I assumed material selection/creation would be the easy part of this project, and creating online and offline courses around it would be the bulk of the work.

Some of the chapters I found were near perfect. I edited them mainly for three things: accessibility, consistency with the rest of the textbook (both in formatting and voice), and getting rid of any problematic examples or language. Some of the chapters were basically good but missing material we wanted to include. For example, the fallacy chapter included only one kind of false cause fallacy; I included the two other types I like to teach. One chapter is brand new – the chapter on Causal Reasoning. I just couldn’t find a source that explored this concept in the depth I was looking for, and I was unwilling to give up teaching this important concept. I’m quite proud of the resulting book.

The textbook transformed my teaching and their learning in several ways. The most obvious way is that they had all had access to the book on the first day of class. I could count on students coming to class having a grasp of the material I was to lecture on, and discussions and questions were much more in depth than they used to be. Of course the no-cost aspect was a significant transformation as well. Students did not have to wait for financial aid or their next pay day to purchase the book. I always have some students every semester who just can’t afford the textbook – that obstacle has been removed for them. The cost obstacle of course affects different students to different levels, so a free book increases equity of teaching and learning.

An unexpected benefit was that the new book backs up and elaborates on my lectures in an understandable way. The previous textbook was, frankly, not always accurate and often inscrutable. Many students complained that reading the old book was confusing them more than it was helping. This semester, many students reported that it was very helpful to their learning and reviewing the material.

*Todd Janke*

Key Outcomes

Students were ready day one to work on the material and the exercises.  There was significantly less “catching up” this term.

Working together on the material was much easier and more meaningful as I could call on students to read from a text I knew all of them had while I worked at the board. Classroom discussions were significantly more lively and engaged this term.

With the old textbook I had to spend a lot of time altering and making additions to the material.  Since we selected and rewrote large parts of this one ourselves, I knew students were getting what I wanted them to get directly from the text itself. This freed up value time I could use giving more thorough explanations or going over more examples.

Students didn’t have to deal with the anxiety generated by having to come up with the money for an expensive text that they’ll only use once.  In the past that had been a stumbling block and hinderance to their education.

Lessons Learned

I learned that I wish we had done this years ago.

I would have started earlier working on writing the exercises.  I played catchup throughout the semester here and there.

*Sanjay Lal*

I think, for the first time, I was really able to integrate the material in the CRIT 1101 course with broader themes in philosophy.  That, I found, had a way of better showing the importance of this course.  I'm glad, for example, to have discussed issues related to the "demarcation" problem in the philosophy of science.  It was a bit challenging though to cover all of the information in that chapter (since it covers so much).

I noticed also that my on-line students were much more interested in doing the practice work than they were before.  Additionally, I noticed that my in person students seemed to better grasp abstract concepts relating to statistics (e.g. standard deviation, confidence intervals) and causal reasoning (how the post hoc fallacy is different from the pro causa non causa one).

As far as lessons learned, I think in the future I will try not to include so much of the new textbook in my syllabus—I actually had to leave out a chapter at the very end of the term because the material is so broad.

*Alex Hall*

A. Describe the key outcomes, whether positive, negative, or interesting, of your project. Include:

Summary of your transformation experience, including challenges and accomplishments

· Transformative impacts on your instruction

· Transformative impacts on your students and their performance

Having not taught Critical Thinking in a decade owing to administrative responsibilities, the course almost amounted to a new prep for me. Adding in a new textbook that we were in the process of editing was likewise challenging. I adopted a flexible style of instruction, keeping tests relatively short and sending out practice exams, which we reviewed as a class. I instructed two courses. The final grades in both courses averaged out to 75%. What brought down the average was attendance issues as students balancing work, school and personal issues did not attend class. Overall, those who did attend regularly did fine.

Regarding transformative experiences, including challenges and accomplishments, the challenge was learning my way around a new textbook. Occasional misprints on exercises sometimes created difficulties, but I was happy to accept late work in order to ensure that the students who were using this new book were not at any disadvantage. I believe, though, that the largest challenge was developing exams and expanding on exercise sets. Our former text, Patrick Hurley’s Concise Introduction to Logic supplied test banks and copious exercises sets. Without this resource, I and the other instructors developed many assessments ourselves. A positive outcome of the project was the ability to craft the text itself. No logic text is perfect, each has its flaws. It was nice to customize the text to our liking with our students in mind. The students, likewise, were excited to take part in testing out the book and appreciated our effort to provide them a free text. Finally as regards transformative impacts on my students and their performance, I did not notice any. The average class score matches up fairly well with those of past Critical Thinking classes.

B. Describe lessons learned, including any things you would do differently next time.

The next time I teach the class, I plan to have a large supply of evaluation instruments, i.e. homework, exams and practice exams. These are invaluable for the students as they work to learn the material. Also, I ran out of time to teach everything that I wished to. At the end of the semester, we just finished up with the last chapter that I wished to teach. The next time I teach the class, I will prune some material.

# Quotes

*Provide three quotes from students evaluating their experience with the no-cost learning materials.*

* Having a free textbook definitely gave me financial relief, so I really appreciate it. All the material covered in the course was the same as the textbook so it was great to have it for studying and quizzes.
* This textbook is awesome! The way the material is broken down makes it so much easier to understand, and anyone who actually reads it like they are instructed is pretty much guaranteed to pass the course.
* I love the fact that we did not need to purchase a textbook for this course. It helped a lot not having to pay $300+ for a book that I would only be using for a few weeks. We need a break like this every once in a while because it saves money for students especially when we have households to upkeep/feed.
* I was most grateful for the ease of accessibility of this textbook. It is well written, easy to learn from and a great reference for assignments.

# Quantitative and Qualitative Measures

## Uniform Measurements Questions

*The following are uniform questions asked to all grant teams. Please answer these to the best of your knowledge.*

**Student Opinion of Materials**

**Was the overall student opinion about the materials used in the course positive, neutral, or negative?**

Total number of students affected in this project: \_\_\_323\_\_\_\_\_

* Positive: \_\_64\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_38\_\_\_\_ number of respondents
* Neutral: \_\_16\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_38\_\_\_\_ number of respondents
* Negative: \_\_\_21\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_\_38\_\_\_ number of respondents

**Student Learning Outcomes and Grades**

**Was the overall comparative impact on student performance in terms of learning outcomes and grades in the semester(s) of implementation over previous semesters positive, neutral, or negative?**

*Student outcomes should be described in detail in Section 3b.*

Choose One:

* \_\_\_ Positive: Higher performance outcomes measured over previous semester(s)
* \_x\_ Neutral: Same performance outcomes over previous semester(s)
* \_\_\_ Negative: Lower performance outcomes over previous semester(s)

**Student Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) Rates**

**Was the overall comparative impact on Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) rates in the semester(s) of implementation over previous semesters positive, neutral, or negative?**

*Depending on what you and your institution can measure, this may also be known as a drop/failure rate or a withdraw/failure rate.*

\_\_\_\_15\_\_% of students, out of a total \_\_\_323\_\_\_ students affected, dropped/failed/withdrew from the course in the final semester of implementation.

Choose One:

* \_\_\_ Positive: This is a lower percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
* \_\_\_ Neutral: This is the same percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
* \_\_X\_ Negative: This is a higher percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)

## Measures Narrative

We collected the DFW rates and grade averages for Fall semester 2024, which used the old textbook, to compare with Spring semester 2025, which used the zero cost textbook. We also administered a survey to give the students a chance to voice their opinion on the text, in Spring 2024 (old book) and Spring 2025 (new book).

The GPAs stayed roughly the same with the change of book: Fall 24 was 2.87, and Spring 25 was 2.83. The DFW rate was worse, though. Fall 24 it was 11%, and Spring 25 it was 15%. I’m not sure how to account for this raise in DFWs. I know we were all teaching the material for the first time, and refining it as we went; it’s possible the relative lack of polish could have contributed to this. We had all taught with the old textbook for over a decade, so our courses were highly polished. It’s also possible the change in DFW had a cause other than the change in textbook. I’d like to remeasure DFW rates in future courses using the book.

Much more obviously successful was the accessibility of the textbook, both in terms of ability to obtain, and the helpfulness of the textbook in teaching the material. The old book was often written in High Academic; we ensured the new book was consistently written in a style easily understandable to college freshmen, as most of our students are from this group. In comparing the survey results from Spring 2024 (old book) and Spring 2025 (new book): in 2024, 38% of student respondents first accessed their textbook in the first week of class, while in 2025, 77% did so. The students also found the new book much more helpful. When asked if the book was helpful for learning the material, in 2024, 60% of the respondents said it was either “extremely” or “moderately” helpful; in 2025, 90% said it was “extremely” or “moderately” helpful. A similar jump in appreciation is evident in the question asking how useful were the book’s explanations of key logical concepts. In 2024, 46% answered “extremely” or “very” useful; in 2025, 95% answered either “extremely” or “very” useful (which is a result that both shocked and gratified me; how often do 95% of students express positivity for anything, let alone a textbook?). And the final question, whether the student would be likely to recommend the textbook to others, in 2024, 36% answered positively; in 2025 64% responded positively.

Our goal through this grant project was not only to produce a free textbook for our students, but a better textbook as well. At least according to these surveys, we’ve succeeded. I’ve got to think that over time, it will also have a positive impact on their grades and the DFW rates of our courses.

# Sustainability Plan

*Describe how your project team or department will offer the materials in the course(s) in the future, including the maintenance and updating of course materials.*

The full-time faculty who teach critical thinking have all updated their courses to teach with the new materials; we will use this instead of the old textbook going forward. Our next step is to make the new textbook available to our adjuncts who teach this course as well. Everyone has the material in word documents, so it is easy to edit and update as necessary, and we plan on continuing to work together to keep the text fresh and as helpful as possible for our students.

# Future Affordable Materials Plans

*Describe any impacts or influences this project has had on your thinking about or selection of learning materials in this and other courses that you will teach in the future.*

It has been a lot of work, much more than I anticipated. However, the positive impact on our students cannot be overstated. I’m thrilled to be able to cut their textbook costs to zero for this class, and I am enjoying being able to edit the textbook to suit my teaching style. I am considering transforming my other classes to zero-cost materials as well.

# Future Scholarship Plans

*Describe any planned or actual papers, presentations, publications, or other professional activities that you expect to produce that reflect your work on this project.*

We don’t have any scholarship plans at present. We do intend to get the textbook out there as widely as possible, to benefit students beyond our own.