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SSE 99

CHAMINADE UNIVERSITY
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Critical Thinking PH103-10 (Schofield)
Tuesdays / Thursdays 17:30-21:40

Description: Designed to be more than a study of non-formal reasoning methods, this course assembles approaches from analytic philosophy, literary theory and cultural studies, modeling the rhetorical dimension of language and discourse. The course is useful for those who want to think, write and speak in a clear and straight forward manner.

Textbook: *Becoming a Critical Thinker: A User-friendly Manual* by Sherry Diestler (Prentice-Hall 1994, 0-13-744335-8)



Course Objectives - Upon completion of the course, you will be able to do the following:

- to understand and be able to evaluate the structure, content and quality of arguments;
- to be able to objectively analyze print and oral communication;
- to be able to clearly communicate your positions about issues and to support your positions with solid evidence;
- to understand how critical thinking can be applied to decision-making in daily life.

Course Format: At each meeting, discussion and debate of the issues presented in Diestler's textbook will be complemented by lectures explaining important aspects of critical thinking. Students will read part of a chapter and do a few short written exercises, analyze current news articles and ads, participate in discussion and take a short quiz each class meeting.

Course Requirements:

- Attendance is necessary at each meeting in order to complete the course (unexpected conflicts such as hospitalization or deployment, will be excused on a case by case basis with proper documentation, according to Chaminade University policy as published in the university handbook). Students *must* contact the instructor by phone or e-mail as soon as possible for make-up work, submit the work and make up the quiz by the next meeting in order to maintain their grade.
- Make-up work for excused absences: students who miss a class must submit the exercises and take the quiz as soon as possible, to make-up for the missed class time they must also find an article or articles pertaining to the current topic and write up a 2-3 page analysis of the article(s) which will restore the 10% dropped from their grade (when contacting the instructor you will receive the assignment).
- Grading will be based upon quizzes and homework exercises throughout the term. Grading: ½ = average of chapter exercises and classwork (including video); ½ = average of quizzes (any extra credit research paper will be averaged with the quizzes).
- Optional extra-credit paper: 5 pages, 5 sources, on a topic before the Hawaii Legislature (see instructor for topic approval and due dates, there is a mandatory rough draft).

6 July 1999 Class 1: INTRODUCTION. What is Critical Thinking and what's it to me?

- Course Overview: Requirements, Quizzes, Textbook, Assignments (read whole chapter including articles, pay special attention to pages to "study", do only assigned exercises),

Introduction to Critical Thinking

- Critical reading and study
- Discussion : *Chapter 1. Foundations of Arguments: What is a Critical Thinker and When Do You Need to Be One?*

The Structure of Argument (three parts): The Issue 3 The Conclusion 7 The Reasons 9
Articles for Discussion: "Talk-Show Host Angers Disabled Community: Hand Deformity inherited from Mom Sparks L.A. Dispute" 16 ; "Radio Show on Rights of the Disabled: Crippled Woman's Pregnancy Debated" 18

- Practice quiz: Chapter 1

For next class: Read Chapter 2. Study pp. 37-42. Do exercises on pp. 29-30, 48.

8 July 1999 Class 2: What do we value? How does it effect critical thinking?

- What is at stake anyway? Why should we be more critical in reading, speaking and thinking?

- Discussion: *Chapter 2. Value Assumptions and Ethics: What Price Ethics and Can You Afford Not to Pay?* 23
 - Value Assumptions and Conflicts* 26
 - Ethics—An Important Dimension of Values* 37
 - Ideal Values versus Real Values* 46
 - Ethics in Argumentation* 49
 - Ethical Decision Making* 50

Group discussion: "It May not Be Plagiarism, But It's a Rip-Off" 58; "Music, to Wal-Mart's Ears, Should be 'Clean'" 61; "Student Markets Primer on the Art of Cheating" 64

- Quiz: Chapter 2

For next class: Read Chapter 3. Study pp. 86, 88, 92. Do exercises 78-80.

13 July 1999 Class 3: What do we assume? How does it effect critical thinking?

- What is hidden in arguments, what are valid and invalid arguments, what is opinion and what is fact?
- Discussion: *Chapter 3 Reality Assumptions: It's Eleven O'Clock: Do You Know Where Your Assumptions Are?*
 - Reality Assumptions* 70
 - Deductive Reasoning* 82
 - Validity in Deductive Arguments* 84
 - Truth in Deductive Arguments* 91
 - The Uses of Deductive Reasoning* 93
 - The Premise of Contention* 97
- Game: *Valid or Invalid, Sound or Unsound* 100
 - Introduction to Inductive Reasoning* 102

Group discussion: "Just Walk on By: A Black Man Ponders His Power to Alter Public Space" 107; "Is This the Promised Land?" 112; "A Turn in the 'Asian Way'" 116

- Quiz: Chapter 3

For next class: Read Chapter 4. Study 132-133. Do exercises p. 129, 136, 147-152.

15 July 1999 Class 4: What is proof? How does it effect critical thinking?

- How can something be proven? What do statistics show, and what do they not show?
- Discussion: *Chapter 4. Inductive Arguments: Statistical and Causal Generalizations: Prove it to Me. What Are the Statistics?* 121
 - Statistical Evidence* 122 *The Use of Statistics* 123 *How the Research Is Done* 126
 - Using Surveys as Evidence* 133 *Statistical Generalization* 135 *The Reporting of Statistical Studies* 137
 - Causal Generalizations* 140 *Hume's Conditions for Cause and Effect* 141
 - Technical Causation* 143 *Mill's Analysis of Cause and Effect* 153
 - Using Difference and Similarity Together to Determine Cause* 154

Group discussion: "Black, White, or Other" 156; "Researchers Practice the Science and Art of Public Opinion Polling" 162

- Quiz: Chapter 4

For next class: Read Chapter 5. Study 172-174. Do exercises 181, 182, 193-194, 200-201.

20 July 1999: Chapter 5. What do studies and research prove? How do we critically examine them?

- Expert Testimony and Analogies: Who Said so? And Who Are They Anyway?* 171
- Research Design* 173
 - Criteria for Evaluating Research Findings. Controversy in Research Findings* 183
 - Use of Authority: Expert Testimony* 192 *Problems with Expert Testimony* 196
- Reasoning by Analogy* 206
- "Food News Blues" 211; "Study: Educational TV Truly Makes Kids Smarter" 218

- Quiz: Chapter 5

For next class: Read Chapter 6. Study 242-252. Do exercises pp. 227-8, 231, 233, 240, 241.

22 July 1999 Class 6: When does arguing go awry? What follow and what just doesn't?

- Separating out the facts from the fictions: how to proceed? What is simply not logical?
- Discussion: *Chapter 6. Reasoning Errors: I Know What I Think. Don't Confuse Me with Facts. Inadequate Reasons as Fallacies* 224
Fallacies That Mislead 242
- Game: *What's My Fallacy?* 253
- Group discussion: "*Ashamed of Strug's Sacrifice*" 255; "*Kerri Struggles and Wins*" 255; "*Keep Women Off the Streets*" 256 "*Who's to Say Who Earns Too Much? Do You Really Want Our Government Involved in This?*" 57; "*Sowell Column Gets It All Wrong: When Public Pays for Stadiums, the Whole Debate Changes*" 259
- Quiz: Chapter 6

For next class: Read Chapter 7. Focus on "Denotation/Connotation", "reference" and "ambiguity". Do exercises 267-268, 283-284, 289-290, 295-6 (find an ad in newspaper or magazine for 295)

27 July Class 7: The power and pitfalls of language: what do we mean and how do we say it?

- How does language get across "what we mean" and when and how can it fail?
- Discussion: *Chapter 7. The Power of Language: Talk is Not Cheap. So Who Pays for it?* 263
Denotation and Connotation 265
The Power of Connotation 268 *Reification: When Words Take on More Power than Reality Meanings Are in People* 274 *The Problem of Vagueness* 279
Ambiguity in Language 282
Articles for Discussion: "Federal Judge Orders Lawyer Not to Use Her Maiden Name" 285; "*Doublespeak, Including Weasel Words*" 287;
- Group discussion: "*'African-American' Is an Imprecise, Debatable Term*" 297; "*A Diplomatic Translation: Here's What the New U.N. President Should Have Said*" 299; "*Free-Range? Natural? Sorting Out the Poultry Labels*" 302
- Quiz: Chapter 7

For next class: Read Chapter 8. Study "kinds of suggestion". Do exercises 312, 318-319 and 328-329. For the exercise on 323 answer the questions for *one* TV commercial (best if recorded for repeated viewing). Bring a videotape with the commercial to class on July 30 and be prepared to analyze it for the class (using the criteria on p. 313, adapting it for ads rather than newsshow).

30 July 1999 Class 8: Media—sound and fury without effect? How does media attempt to influence?

- Is the Media to blame for everything? What is it and what does it do anyway?
- Discussion: *Chapter 8. Suggestion in Media: is What You See What You Get? Do You Really Want it?* 309
Suggestion in Daily Life 311 *Televised Suggestion* 312 *Suggestion in Print Media* 324
The Power of Media to Shape Information 329
Subliminal Persuasion 335
- Analyze student selected, videotaped Ads
- Group discussion: "*When Movies Go to War, Pentagon Tags Along: Not Every Story Gets Military OK, but Some Need the Assistance*" 341; "*Survey Comes Clean About Sex on Soap Operas*" 344; "*Prelude to Vegas: Neil Postman Gets Interviewed*" 346
- Quiz: Chapter 8

For next class: Read Chapter 9. Focus on "kinds of ego defenses" and study the "precautions for listening". Do exercises 367-368, 371.

3 August 1999 Class 9: Fair! Unfair! Why be critical anyway?

- What is fairness anyway and why is anyone concerned about it?
- Discussion: *Chapter 9. Fairmindedness: It's You and Me, Kid, and I'm Not so Sure About You* 355

How we Defend Our Egos 359
Areas Where we Have Trouble Being Rational 366
Antidotes for Points of Logical Vulnerability 368
Actively and Accurately Listening: Developing Empathy 372
The Art of Listening Well 373 *Precautions about Active Listening* 380

- Group discussion: "It Happened: To Deny That the Holocaust Occurred Is to Set the Precondition for Another One" 382
 - Quiz: Chapter 9
- For next class: Read Chapter 10. Examine 404-406 concerning a well-organized outline. Make an original outline on a topic of interest to you, following the format on these pages. Do the two exercises on 416-417.

5 August 1999 Class 10: Speaking persuasively. Applying critical awareness to speaking/writing.

- ~~Last Meeting: All work must be in, all quizzes taken (grading closes August 5 for this class).~~
- ~~How to put to work everything learned in Critical Thinking~~
- Discussion: Chapter 10. *Persuasive Speaking: What's Your Point? How Do You Sharpen it?* 397
Being an Advocate of Ideas: Communicating Publicly 398 *The Best Ways to Deal with Fear of Public Speaking* 399 *Audience Analysis* 400
The Three Elements of a Persuasive Argument: Ethos, Logos, and Pathos 403
Sample Speech Outline 407
"Mandatory AIDS/HIV Testing in Sports" 407
Monroe's Motivated Sequence 411
Problem-Solution Format 412
Pathos: Emotional Appeal 413
- Group discussion: "Speak for Yourself" 418 "Changing a Man's Mind" 421 "I Have a Dream" 423
- Quiz: Chapter 10

End of course

Critical Thinking

What does *critical* mean? Critical: 1. a: inclined to criticize severely and unfavorably; b. consisting of or involving criticism; c. exercising or involving careful judgment or judicious evaluation; d. including variant readings and scholarly emendations. 2. a. of, relating to, or being a turning point or specially important juncture; b. crucial, decisive; c. indispensable, vital; d. being in or approaching a state of crisis; 3. Characterize by risk or uncertainty; 4. a. of sufficient size to sustain a chain reaction; b. sustaining a chain reaction. [The various derivations of the English word "critic", trace back to the Greek word *krinein* meaning able to discern or judge.] (Source: *Webster's Dictionary* © 1984)

Critical thinking involves exercising careful judgment or judicious evaluation of information one hears or reads. The care taken in evaluating the information involves asking a number of questions about the information: what exactly is being said (how is it presented, why, to what purpose)? By whom (what is their relation to the information, do they have a vested interest in the reader/hearer's reception and acceptance of the information)? How can the information be verified or falsified? Is it credible (do I believe it, doubt it, suspend judgment until later)?

Thinking critically allows one to better understand information, for example, studying a textbook critically enables the student to see the order and content of the work better, making understanding and remembering the material much easier. It can also allow one to judge the truth or falsity of the information being presented. This skill is important not only in individual study but will also help one to better discuss issues with others and to make decisions in complex situations. It also helps one to formulate one's own arguments for oral or written presentation.