Purpose

The purpose of this course is to develop thinking skills. We live in a society that mass-produces information. Not all of it is true or well grounded in fact. The key challenge in an information age is to know how to judge the quality of the information, opinions, and arguments that we are exposed to on a daily basis. This includes the ideas, arguments and assertions that we see, hear or read in the news, in coursework, on the job and in all human relations. Critical thinking is a fundamental leadership competency. Leaders are often presented with information from a variety of sources and about areas where they have no expertise. They must know how to make good judgments about people, information, and arguments. Leaders also have to know how to present persuasive arguments. Some people become leaders because of their personality, desire, or “people skills.” Others become leaders because of their ideas and ability to create a vision, plan for the future, and anticipate and solve problems. Critical thinking is the foundational skill for of the Jepson School curriculum. It is not an end in itself, but a first step towards creative thinking and problem solving. The ability to think critically and solve problems is not only important for leadership, but for a life-long learning.

Course Objectives

In this course students will learn how to:
+ critically read, listen, and write
+ separate bad information from good information
+ analyze arguments and construct cogent arguments
+ develop intellectual and personal discipline

Course Description

The components of this course are critical writing, informal logic, and epistemology. Most of the course will use logic to improve student’s thinking skills. Students will analyze texts and other media, critique and construct arguments. They will also examine the ways that powerful groups and people influence notions of truth.

Required Texts

Other readings will be assigned in class and placed on blackboard (BB)
Requirements, Grading, and Participation

Late papers will not be accepted, even if they are the result of computer problems. If you are late for class on the day that a paper is due, you will lose $\frac{1}{2}$ grade on your assignment. You may not email papers unless you have permission from the instructor.

(20%) Analysis Paper due Jan. 25
(20%) Argument Paper due Feb. 24
(25%) Exam I Feb. 3
(25%) Exam II Feb. 22
(10%) Class Participation.

You will be graded on the quality of your participation. Exemplary participation consists of coming to the class having read the readings, exercises, or other assignments; offering specific and insightful comments on the readings; asking good questions; and contributing to the class’s learning. It also includes integrity in the way you do your assignments and class exercises. Students should be respectful of others in the class. This includes showing up on time and not getting up during class (except in the case of an urgent physical problem). All electronic devices must be turned off at the beginning of class. Attendance is mandatory.

Course Outline

I. Thinking About Thinking and Truth
Jan. 11 Introduction: Left brain/right brain exercise
Jan. 13 Truth and Knowledge
Read: Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America’s Suicidal Consumer Binge – And Why We Must* (Harper Paperbacks, 2000). (BB)
Jan. 18 Truth and Good and Bad Reasoning
Read: Kahane/Cavender Chapter 1
Jan. 20 Evaluating Extended Arguments
Read: Kahane/Cavender Chapter 8

II. Fallacious Thinking
Jan. 25 Psychological Impediments to Cogent Reasoning
Read: Kahane/Cavender, Chapter 6
**Paper 1 due**

Jan. 27 & Feb. 1 Fallacious Reasoning I
Read: Kahane/Cavender, Chapter 3

Feb. 3 **Exam I**

Feb. 8 & 10 Fallacious Reasoning II
Read: Kahane/Cavender, Chapter 4

Feb. 15 & 17 Fallacious Reasoning III
Read: Kahane/Cavender, Chapter 5
Feb. 22   Exam II

Feb. 24   The Nature of Systems

Assignments
(Note that Kahane/Cavender, Chapters 8&9 will help you with these papers.)

Paper 1: Analysis
Write a 1000-word (about 4 pages double-spaced) essay that critically examines the argument in an editorial on an issue related to leadership. Find an editorial from a major newspaper or magazine. Isolate the major premises of the author’s argument. Check (do some research) to see if the facts are correct or if there are other facts that make the premises doubtful. Assess the quality of the premises. Is there suppressed evidence? Are the premises true? Do the premises logically lead to the editorial’s conclusion? How does the author use language to persuade or mislead the reader? **You must include the editorial with your paper.** Failure to follow these instructions will result in a lower grade. **Papers are due at the beginning of class on January 25. Late papers will not be accepted.**

Paper 2 Argument
Write a 1000-word (about 4 pages double-spaced) editorial. The goal of this paper is to construct a cogent argument in the form of an editorial. Your arguments should be supported by with facts and examples that illustrate your arguments. The topic of the editorial should be some issue related to leaders or the policies of leaders that have been in the news since the beginning of 2010. **Papers are due at the beginning of class on February 24. Late papers will not be accepted.**