CRITICAL THINKING & METHODS OF INQUIRY
LDST 250-03: SPRING 2012
TUES./THURS. 1:30-2:45 JEPSON HALL 107

Dr. Kristin M.S. Bezio kbezio@richmond.edu
Office: Jepson Hall 233 Office Hours: Tues./Thurs. 10-12:30, and
by appointment
Office Phone: 804-287-6045

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The goal of this course is to help students develop critical thinking skills and provide an introduction to methods of research inquiry. In a society inundated with information from modern media – television, radio, movies, news, and the internet – it is crucial that we as responsible citizens be able to distinguish the good information from the bad, the truth from falsehood. Leaders are frequently required to make judgments about topics and in situations they know little about – critical thinking skills help them to assess what information they have in order to make good judgments about people, information, and ideas. It is also important for us – whether we are leaders, followers, or both – to be able to view the information and opinions with which we are presented from multiple standpoints, and to be able to assess and judge what we see and hear in context and with regard to our own ethics and mores. As members of a university, national, and global community, it is our responsibility to question not only what appears in the media, but the ideals and ideologies we already hold; as critical thinkers, it is important for us to bring these critical skills to bear not only in our examination of leadership and on the leaders we have chosen to follow, but also in our efforts to maintain life-long learning.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
In this course, students will learn the following skills:
- How to critically read, listen, and observe
- How to evaluate information and locate bias
- How to analyze arguments and systems
- How to anticipate problems and counterarguments
- How to construct an analytical and well-researched argument in writing and in speech
- How to reflect on their own views and biases

REQUIRED TEXTS
Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric: the use of reason in everyday life, edited by Nancy M. Cavender & Howard Kehane (Wadsworth)
Collapse by Jared Diamond (Penguin)
How to Lie with Statistics by Darrell Huff (Norton)

All texts available at the University of Richmond Bookstore. Additional readings will be provided on Blackboard (BB) or at Boatwright Library on Course Reserve (CR). All students will be required to view selected episodes of The Daily Show and The Colbert Report, available online for free at comedycentral.com or on Hulu at hulu.com (for those without cable).
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance/Class Participation 10%
Discussion Starter 5%  Weekly Critical Journal/Response 5%
First Paper 5%  Second Paper 10%
Group Paper 15%  Final Paper 25%
Midterm Exam 10%  Final Exam 15%

Attendance/Class Participation (10%)
All students are expected to attend classes regularly and to contribute to class discussions.

Weekly Response Journal (5%)
Each student is expected to write a brief, informal reaction to the readings assigned for the week or to respond to other students’ reactions. There will be ten of these collected throughout the semester. Students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the readings and to engage with them thoughtfully. Responses will not be graded on style or organization, only content.

Discussion Starter (5%)
Each student will be expected to start discussion once during the course of the semester. This is not a formal presentation; students are expected to bring five questions or problems to begin the day’s discussion. At least one question must relate to each assigned work for the day.

Papers (55%)
There will be four papers in this course. All papers are expected to be the students’ original work and follow the guidelines of the Honor Code. Papers should contain correct, formal language and a complete works consulted bibliography. Papers may be turned in via hard copy or email (email papers must be received by the due date and time and open properly to be considered acceptable). Papers received electronically will be graded using the Microsoft Word Reviewing tool and emailed back.

  First Paper: “Mistaken Logic” 1,000-1,500 words, due on Jan. 27th.
  Second Paper: “News & Advertising” 1,000-1,500 words, due on Feb. 17th.
  Third (Group) Paper: “Systems Failure” 3,000-4,000 words, due on Mar. 23rd.
  Final Paper: “The Big Picture” 2,500-5,000 words, due on Apr. 25th.

Late papers will be penalized one grade (A to A-) for each day they are late. Technical problems are not an acceptable excuse for lateness: back up your files on Netfiles and/or an external jump drive and save often.

Exams (25%)
There will be both a midterm and a final exam. Students are expected to be present for both exams during their scheduled time. Exams will be a combination of short and long answer and essay questions.
**CLASSROOM POLICIES**

Students are expected to be on time to class. Lateness will impact a student’s attendance grade. Students are expected to be attentive to and respectful of the professor and the ideas of their peers.

Laptops are permitted, but use of the internet (via laptop, cell phone, or PDA) during classtime is strictly prohibited. Violations of this policy will result in the prohibition of future laptop use in class. Please make sure all cell phones are silenced or turned off. Students will not be allowed to answer their phones during classtime.

All written work is expected on time. Assignments turned in late will be penalized one full grade for each day they are late. Technical difficulties are not an acceptable excuse for lateness, so save your papers often and in different places (jump drives, email, etc.). All assignments are expected to be the student’s original work. The Jepson School follows the provisions of the Honor System as outlined by the School of Arts and Sciences.

If emergency circumstances inhibit a student from attending class or completing an assignment, the professor should be notified as soon as possible (preferably before class or the due date of the assignment). Extensions and make-ups are given only at the discretion of the professor. Exams cannot be made up except under the most extenuating of circumstances. Students needing accommodations should speak to the professor.

**STUDENT RESOURCES**

If you experience difficulties in this course, do not hesitate to consult with me. There are also other resources that can support you in your efforts to meet course requirements.

Academic Skills Center (http://asc.richmond.edu or 289-8626) helps students assess their academic strengths and weaknesses; hone their academic skills through teaching effective test preparation, critical reading and thinking, information processing, concentration, and related techniques; work on specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.); and encourage campus and community involvement.

Career Development Center (http://cdc.richmond.edu/ or 289-8547) can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major, connecting with internships and learning experiences, investigating graduate and professional school options, and landing your first job. We encourage you to schedule an appointment with a career advisor during your first year.

Counseling and Psychological Services (289-8119) assists students in meeting academic, personal, or emotional challenges. Services include assessment, short-term counseling and psychotherapy, crisis intervention and related services.

Speech Center (http://speech.richmond.edu or 289-6409): Assists with preparation and practice in the pursuit of excellence in public expression. Recording, playback, coaching and critique sessions offered by teams of student consultants trained to assist in developing ideas, arranging key points for more effective organization, improving style and delivery, and handling multimedia aids for individual and group presentations.
Writing Center assists writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Students can schedule appointments with trained writing consultants who offer friendly critiques of written work: http://writing.richmond.edu

Boatwright Library Research Librarians assist students with identifying and locating the best resources for class assignments, research papers and other course projects. Librarians also assist students with questions about citing sources correctly. Students can schedule a personal research appointment, meet with librarians at the library’s main service desk, email, text or IM. Link to http://library.richmond.edu/help/ask.html or call 289-8669.
COURSE SCHEDULE, LDST 250-03

Tues., Jan. 10
Welcome to Critical Thinking – *Cogito Ergo Sum* – What is Critical Thinking? Why is it important to think critically?

UNIT ONE: FOUNDATIONS OF LOGIC
Thurs., Jan. 12
Reading: *Logic & Contemporary Rhetoric* Chapter 1: Good and Bad Reasoning
Ex. 1-2, 1-4, 1-8
*How to Lie with Statistics* Chapter 1: The Sample with the Built-in Bias
Shermer – “I am Therefore I Think,” *Why People Believe Weird Things* (BB)

*The Daily Show* (Tuesday night’s show)
Assignment: Journal 1 (Group A), Response 1 (Group B)

Tues., Jan. 17
Reading: *LCR* Chapter 2: More on Deduction and Induction
Ex. 2-1, 2-2, 2-3, 2-5
*HLS* Chapter 2: The Well-Chosen Average
*HLS* Chapter 3: The Little Figures That Are Not There
*HLS* Chapter 4: Much Ado About Practically Nothing

Thurs., Jan. 19
Reading: *LCR* Chapter 3: Fallacious Reasoning 1
Ex. 3-1
*LCR* Chapter 4: Fallacious Reasoning 2
Ex. 4-1

*The Colbert Report* (Tuesday night’s show)
Assignment: Journal 2 (B), Response 2 (A)
*Critical Thinking* Exercises 2.9 A (BB)

*Mon., Jan. 23
Watch the GOP Primary Debate on NBC (time TBD) & Livechat with the class (if you can’t chat, post/comment on the Discussion Board)

Tues., Jan. 24
Reading: *LCR* Chapter 7: Language
Ex. 7-2, 7-3
*LCR* Chapter 9: Writing Cogent (and Persuasive) Essays
Ex. 9-1
Aldhous – “CRAP Paper Accepted by Journal” (BB)
Philips & Kent – “Deconstructing Access Points” (BB – not required)

Assignment: Fix the sentences on p. 218 of *LCR* in Chapter 9
Draft Exercise (bring hard copy to class – turn in with final version)
Thurs., Jan. 26
Reading: *Critical Thinking: “The Scientific Method”* (BB)
Stern & Kalof – “Methods of Gathering Scientific Evidence,” *Evaluating Social Science Research* (BB)
Skinner – “A Case History in Scientific Method” (BB)
*The Daily Show* (Tuesday’s show)
Assignment: Journal 3 (A), Response 3 (B)

*Fri., Jan. 27
First Paper Due (“Mistaken Logic”) by 5:00p.m. (remember to turn in draft exercise with final version)

**UNIT TWO: MISLEADING MEDIA**
Tues., Jan. 31
Reading: *LCR* Chapter 11: Managing the News
   Ex. 11-3 #1, 7, 15
Frankfurt – “On Bullshit” (BB)
Postman – “The Medium is the Metaphor,” *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (BB)
Assignment: Find a report or article (not an ad) that contains a figure or graph that you feel is deliberately misleading and bring it to class or send a link.

Thurs., Feb. 2
*The Colbert Report* (Tuesday’s show)
Assignment: Journal 4 (B), Response 4 (A)

Tues., Feb. 7
Reading: *HLS* Chapter 9: How to Statisticulate
   *HLS* Chapter 10: How to Talk Back to a Statistic
Anderson – “Marketing, Scientific Progress, and Scientific Method” (BB)

Thurs., Feb. 9
Reading: *LCR* Chapter 10: Advertising: Selling the Product
   Ex. 10-2, 10-6
Second Thoughts Chapter 12: Desire and Illusion: Analyzing Advertising
   (BB – BOTH PARTS – pay attention to ads and stories)
*The Daily Show* (Tuesday’s show)
Assignment: Send a link to ONE advertisement (image or video) by 9am Wednesday.
   View all the ads before class (avail. By 5pm Wednesday). Apply Ex. 10-4 #1 (*LCR*) to one ad.
   Journal 5 (A), Response 5 (B)
Tues., Feb. 14
Reading: Druckman – “The Power of Television Images” (BB)
Rushkoff – “Presidential Campaigning,” Media Virus (BB)
Assignment: Visit Living Room Candidate (link on BB) and watch the commercials for the year you’ve been assigned and be prepared to discuss them in class.

Thurs., Feb. 16 Midterm Exam in Class

*Fri., Feb. 17 Second Paper Due (“News & Advertising”) by 5:00p.m.

UNIT THREE: SYSTEM FAILURE
Tues., Feb. 21
Reading: Collapse “Prologue”
Collapse Chapter 2: Twilight at Easter

Thurs., Feb. 23
Reading: Collapse Chapter 6: The Viking Prelude and Fugues
The Colbert Report (Tuesday’s show)
Assignment: Journal 6 (B), Response 6 (A)

Tues., Feb. 28
Reading: Collapse Chapter 10: Malthus in Africa (A)
Collapse Chapter 12: China, Lurching Giant (B)
Assignment: Come to class prepared to explain Diamond’s reasoning for why your group’s civilization collapsed – and to compare it with what the other group noticed.

Thurs., Mar. 1
Reading: Collapse Chapter 14: Why Do Some Societies Make Disastrous Decisions?
Assignment: Journal 7 (A), Response 7 (B)

Tues., Mar. 13
Reading: Collapse Chapter 15: Big Businesses and the Environment
Collapse Chapter 16: The World as a Polder

UNIT FOUR: WAR ON REASON?
Thurs., Mar. 15 – Beware the Ides of March
Reading: LCR Chapter 6: Psychological Impediments to Cogent Reasoning
Shermer – “How Thinking Goes Wrong,” WPBW (BB)
The Daily Show (Tuesday’s show)

*Mon., Mar. 19 GOP Primary Debate on PBS (time TBD) – Livechat or post
Tues., Mar. 20
Reading: Second Thoughts Chapter 13: Web Sight: Critical Thinking and the Internet (BB – BOTH PARTS)
Fisher & Wright – “On Utopias and Dystopias” (BB)
Baker – “The Charms of Wikipedia” (BB)

Thurs., Mar. 22
Reading: LCR Chapter 12: Textbooks: Managing Worldviews
Ex. 12-1, 12-2
How to Think About Weird Things Chapter 1 (BB)
The Colbert Report (Tuesday’s show)
Assignment: Journal 8 (B), Response 8 (A)

*Fri., Mar. 23
Group Paper Due (“System Failure”) by 5:00 p.m.

Tues., Mar. 27
Reading: Jacoby – “The Way We Live Now: Just Us Folks,” AAU (BB)
Pierce – “Dinosaurs with Saddles,” Idiot America (BB)
Shattuck – “Foreword,” Forbidden Knowledge (BB)
Cheney & Lair – “Elevating Dissent,” Dissent and the Failure of Leadership (BB)

Thurs., Mar. 29
Reading: Pierce – “The War on Expertise,” IA (BB)
Jacoby – “Junk Thought,” AAU (BB)
The Daily Show (Tuesday’s show)
Assignment: Journal 9 (A), Response 9 (B)

Tues., Apr. 4
Reading: Scott & Branch – “Evolution: What’s Wrong with Teaching the Controversy” (BB)
Web Articles – Evolution (BB)
Van Court – “The Case for Eugenics” (BB)

Thurs., Apr. 6
Reading: Roach – “The Little Man Inside the Sperm, or Possibly the Big Toe,” Spook (BB)
Shermer – “Through the Invisible,” WPJWT (BB)
Hollander – “Unexplained Weight Gain Transients at the Moment of Death” (BB)
The Colbert Report (Tuesday’s show)
Assignment: Journal 10 (B), Response 10 (A)
Tues., Apr. 10
Reading: *Critical Thinking* Chapter 10: Moral Arguments (BB – BOTH PARTS)
Gould – “Nonmoral Nature” (BB)

Thurs., Apr. 12 – Class Cancelled

Tues., Apr. 17
Reading: Spiegelman – Selections from *Maus* (BB)

Thurs., Apr. 19
Reading: Watch *Anonymous*
Stewart – “To Be or Not To Be Shakespeare” (BB)
Shapiro – “Shakespeare,” *Contested Will* (BB)
Idle – “Who Wrote Shakespeare?” (BB)

*Wed., Apr. 25
Assignment: Final Paper Due (“The Big Picture”) by 5:00p.m.

Final Exam: Monday, April 23rd, 9am-12pm OR Friday, April 26th, 7-10pm JPSN 107