**Critical Thinking and Methods of Inquiry**  
*LDSP 250. 01, Spring 2013*  
*Prof. Joanne B. Ciulla*

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**Class:** Jepson Hall room 102  
**M/W 1:30-2:45**

**Purpose**  
We live in a society that mass-produces information. Since some of it is false or misleading, we need to critically appraise the quality of all the information that we encounter – whether it comes from the Internet, the media, or the classroom. The ability to think critically and solve problems is important for leaders, followers, and life in general. Critical thinking is a fundamental leadership competency. Leaders must often make decisions about things that are outside of their expertise. They must make good judgments the quality of experts, information, and arguments. Leaders must also know how to develop their own persuasive arguments and understand how to work in and with complex systems.

Critical thinking is about language, truth, logic, argumentation, and self-knowledge. Perhaps the most important feature of critical thinking is that it develops imagination and vision. 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. This course aims to teach students how to seek the truth, think, and communicate using persuasive well-grounded written and oral arguments.

**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  
- Anticipate and solve problems in complex systems  
- Reflect on their own world view  
- Develop disciplined methods of inquiry

**Course Description**  
The academic components of this course are critical reading, listening and writing, epistemology, informal logic, systems theory, and research methods. Students will analyze ideas in the leadership literature, critique and construct arguments, and apply systems thinking to real world problems. They will examine the ways that powerful groups and people sometimes shape our notions of truth.

**Required Texts**  
4. Blackboard Readings (BB)

**Requirements and Grading**

(10%) Exam I  
Feb. 4

(15%) Exam II  
Feb. 27

(15%) Exam III  
Apr. 15

(10%) Analysis I  
Jan. 30

(15%) Analysis II  
Feb. 25

(20%) Systems Research Paper  
Apr. 10

(5%) Presentation of Systems Analysis  
Apr. 17, 22, 24

(10%) Class Participation

**Policies for Participation in This Class**

Exemplary class participation consists of specific and insightful discussion of the readings, input from homework assignments, good questions concerning the class materials, and overall contribution to the class’s learning. It also includes integrity in the way that you do your assignments; how you work with project partners; adherence to class times, and other conditions and instructions laid out in this syllabus and the attached course assignments. You will be graded on participation for each class with a 1,2,or 3 (a zero if you do not attend).

All electronic devices must be turned off at the beginning of class. You may not use your computer in class, unless stipulated by the professor. Unless there is a pressing physical need to get up during class, students should not leave the room until the class is over. All of the above conditions will affect your participation grade. This syllabus should be regarded as a contract. Due dates for papers and exam dates are set, so please mark them down on your calendar. **Late papers will not be accepted, even if they are the result of computer problems.** This means do not do your assignments the night before they are due – stuff happens! Papers should be handed in hard copy unless you receive permission to email them from the instructor. Note that all of your grades will be entered as percentages. Final grades are not rounded up or down and all grades are non-negotiable. The values are as follows:

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Course Outline
*Note that only the basic readings are listed. There will be additional readings for many of the classes.

I. Thinking About Truth

Jan. 14   Introduction:
Left brain /right brain exercise

Jan. 16   The Nature of Truth
Read: René Descartes, “Meditation I,” From The Meditations, tr. John
Veitch, 1901. BB
On Bullshit by Harry Frankfort (2005) BB

Jan. 21   Theories of Truth  *MLK class time: 1:00-1:50
Good and Bad Reasoning I
Read: Cavender/Kahane 1-12 Do exercises 1-1, 1-2, & 1-3

Jan. 23   Good and Bad Reasoning II
Read: Cavender/Kahane 12-30 Do exercise 1-4 & 1-8

Jan. 28   How to Lie With Statistics
Read: Huff, 9-68

Jan. 30   How to Lie With Statistics
Read: Huff, 69-101

Analysis I due

Feb. 4   Exam I

II. Thinking Fallaciously

Feb. 6   Fallacious Reasoning I
Read: Cavender/Kahane 33-50

Feb. 11  Fallacious Reasoning I
Read: Cavender/Kahane 50-56 Do all of the exercises

Feb. 13  Fallacious Reasoning II
Read: Cavender/Kahane 59-72

Feb. 18  Fallacious Reasoning II
Do exercises: Cavender/Kahane, 73-77 Do all of the exercises

Feb. 20  Fallacious Reasoning III
Read: Cavender/Kahane 79-94

Feb. 25

*Fallacious Reasoning III*
Do exercises: Cavender/Kahane 94-97 Do exercises 5-2 & 5-3

*Analysis II due*

Feb. 27

**Exam II**

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**III. Thinking About Systems**

Mar. 4

*The Nature of Systems*
Read: Dietrich Dörner, *The Logic of Failure* (1996) Intro and Ch. 1 BB

Mar. 6

*No Class*

Mar. 11&13

*Spring Break*

Mar. 18

*Systems*
Read: Diamond, Chapter 2

Mar. 20

*Systems*
Read: Diamond, TBA

Mar. 25

*Why Do Some Societies Make Disastrous Decisions?*
Read: Diamond, Ch. 14

*System paper topics due in class*

Mar. 27

In class systems game “The Settlers of Catan”

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**IV. Thinking About Methods of Critical Inquiry**

Apr. 1

*Method in the Social Sciences and Science*
“What is Science?” “Facts,” and “Where do Hypotheses Come From?” by Martin and Inge Goldstein from *How We Know*, 1978. BB
The Charms of Wikipedia, by Nicholson Baker BB

Apr. 3

*Method in the Humanities*
Read: TBA

Apr. 8

*Cultural Criticism*
Read: Mood Disorders from *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America’s Suicidal Consumer Binge – And Why We Must* by Kalle Lasn BB

Apr. 10

*Review for Exam III*
Systems Research Paper due

Apr. 15    Exam III

Apr. 17    Systems Paper Presentations

Apr. 22    Systems Paper Presentations

Apr. 24    Systems Paper Presentations and Conclusion

Assignments

Analysis I
The topic for this paper will be handed out in class. **It is due on January 30. Late papers will not be accepted.**

Analysis II
The topic for this paper will be handed out in class. **It is due on February 25. Late papers will not be accepted.**

Systems Analysis

This project will be done in pairs. You may either pick your partner or be assigned a partner. The project includes a paper and a class presentation of the paper.

1. Find your topic and have it approved by me, either via email, in class, or in my office. The most difficult and important part of doing this assignment is finding a topic. You must have your paper topic approved by the instructor on or before March 21. In this paper, you will have to find a case where, as Dörner says, “things went wrong.” This may be the case of a misguided public policy, an accident, a decision made to improve something that actually made it worse or created another problem, or a well-intended but disastrous leadership decision. You may not use a decision from history. It has to be an event in the news that has occurred in the last 5 years and this has to have leaders who are making decisions in it.

2. After you have an approved topic, you will do research on it. Then, using the concepts from the book The Logic of Failure, you will discuss the following:

I. Description
What were the details of the problem that was being addressed?
Who were the people involved in making the decision?
What was the decision-making process?
What was the climate of the organization, group, individual, etc. like when the decision was being made?

II. Analysis of the Failure
What made the decision or policy fail? What were its unintended consequences?
In retrospect, what was wrong with the planning and decision process?
What was wrong with the way that the way people framed or modeled the problem? What was wrong with the way that the way people framed or modeled the solution? What if anything, was wrong with the decision makers’ state of mind? What if anything was wrong with the information they used? What issues or variables did they fail to take into consideration?

III. Discussion of How the Failure May have been prevented
Use the material from the book to put together a plan that would have prevented or anticipated the failure. (This part can also be integrated into your discussion in II.)

3. Papers should be 10-12 pages long. You must use at least 10 references for this paper. The paper should be double-spaced, the pages numbered, and you will include footnotes or endnotes. The format for the citations is Turabian/Chicago. This style sheet is on BB. If you use a reference that is not cited in the footnotes, please include your bibliography. Failure to follow any of these instructions will result in a lower grade. This paper is due on April 10. Late papers will not be accepted.