Critical Thinking and Methods of Inquiry
LDSP 250, Spring 2016
Prof. Joanne B. Ciulla

Office: 244 Jepson Hall
Phone: 287-6083
Email: jciulla@richmond.edu

Class: Jepson Hall room 102
Office Hours: By Appointment

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, authorities, 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 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 their 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, speak, and write
• Separate bad information from good information
• Analyze arguments and construct cogent arguments
• Anticipate and solve problems in complex systems
• Reflect on their world view
• Develop disciplined methods of inquiry
• Use critical thinking to create new ideas

Course Description
The academic components of this course are critical reading, listening, and writing; and epistemology, informal logic, and systems theory. 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 shape our notions of reality and truth. To understand the role of logic in thinking and creativity, students will use argument fallacies to develop comedic skits.


**Required Texts**
Blackboard Readings (BB)

**Requirements and Grading**
(15%) Analysis  Feb. 3
(10%) Exam I  Feb. 15
(15%) Exam II  Mar. 16
(15%) Comedy Skits  Apr. 4
(20%) Systems Research Paper  Apr. 25
(15%) Exam III  Apr. 27
(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. 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 without permission from the instructor. 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.** 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.

I. Truth and Reason

Jan. 11  Introduction:
Left brain /right brain exercise

Jan. 13  The Nature of Truth
Read: René Descartes, “Meditation I&2,” From The Meditations, tr. John Veitch, 1901. BB

Jan. 18  Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Jan. 20  Theories of Truth
Good and Bad Reasoning I
Read: Cavender/Kahane 1-12 Do exercises 1-1, 1-2, & 1-3

Jan. 25  Good and Bad Reasoning II
Read: Cavender/Kahane 12-30 Do exercise 1-4, 1-6 & 1-8

II. Arguments Using Words and Numbers

Jan. 27  Writing and Criticizing Arguments I
Read: David R, Morrow and Anthony Weston, A Workbook for Arguments, 2011, 3-21. Do exercises 1.1, 1.2 & 1.4 BB.

Feb. 1   Writing and Criticizing Arguments II
Read: David R, Morrow and Anthony Weston, A Workbook for Arguments, 2011, 22-38. Do exercises 1.5, 1.7 BB
Writing Short Arguments BB.

Feb. 3   Induction and Deduction
Read: Cavender/Kahane 35-49, do exercise 2-2, 2 & 2-4
Analysis due

Feb. 8   How to Lie With Statistics
Read: Huff, 11-65

Feb. 10  How to Lie With Statistics
Read: Huff, 66- 99

Feb. 15  Exam I

Feb. 17  CIA Leadership Analyst Simulation
III. Fallacies and Funny Fallacies

Feb. 22 Fallacious Reasoning I
Read: Cavender/Kahane 51-67

Feb. 24 Fallacious Reasoning I
Read: Cavender/Kahane 68-74 Do all of the exercise questions

Feb. 29 Fallacious Reasoning II
Read: Cavender/Kahane 77-89

Mar 2 Fallacious Reasoning II
Do exercises: Cavender/Kahane, 90-95 Do all of the exercise questions

Mar. 4 Fallacious Reasoning III
Read: Cavender/Kahane 97-114

Mar. 7&9 Spring Break

Mar. 14 Fallacious Reasoning III
Do exercises: Cavender/Kahane 114-97 Do exercises 5-1, 5-2 & 5-3

Mar. 16 Exam II

Mar. 21 Comedy Readings TBA

Mar. 23 Comedy Readings TBA

Apr. 4 Skit presentations in class Skits due

III. Systems and History

Apr. 6 Systems Theory
In this class, you will do the reading and go to the library to find a topic for your systems paper.
Read: Dietrich Dörner, The Logic of Failure (1996) Ch. 1 & 2 BB

Apr. 11 Information and Models
Read: Dietrich Dörner, The Logic of Failure (1996) Ch. 4
System paper topics due in class

Apr. 13 A System Failure
Read: Jared Diamond, Twilight at Easter, from Collapse, (2011)

Apr. 18 Historiography
Read: Anthony Brundage, Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing (2013). Ch.1 BB
Apr. 20    Autobiography and Biography

Apr. 25    Discussion of Systems papers and review for exam
           Systems Papers due

Apr. 27    Exam III

**Assignments**

1. Analysis
Write a 900-1000-word (about 4 pages double-spaced) essay that critically examines the argument in an editorial.
   1. Find an editorial in a major news source about one of the presidential primary candidates.
   2. Isolate the conclusion and the major premises of the author's argument. Check to see if the premises logically lead to the editorial's conclusion.
   3. Do some research to see if the premises are true or if there are other facts that are left out or make the premises false or the argument invalid.
   4. Create and argument for why you agree or disagree with the editorial. If you agree with some of the ideas in the editorial, make sure that you give reasons why you agree (add new information). You do not have to disagree with everything in the editorial.
   5. Make sure that you anticipate potential objections to your argument.
   6. When you use outside sources, cite them at the end of your paper.
   7. **You must include the editorial with your paper.** Failure to follow these instructions will result in a lower grade.
   8. **Papers are due at the beginning of class on February 3. Late papers will not be accepted.**

2. Comedy Skit
For this assignment you will write a comedy skit that uses logical fallacies in the dialogue to make the audience laugh. The play must be about leaders and/or followers.

Here are the parameters of the assignment:

- You will write the comedy in groups of four or five.
- Each person will be responsible for writing the lines of a different character.
- The total length of the text for your comedy will be about 2400 words for groups of 4. Each member of the group will write about 600 words of dialogue for their character (this will vary, depending on the characters, plot, etc.). For groups of 5, the length will be about 3000. The skits will be about 15 minutes long.
- The full play script is **due on April 4.**
• The class will vote on the best skits and these will be performed for faculty and students.
• The grade for your script will be based on:
  a. The effective use of logical fallacies for humor
  b. Overall quality of the script
  c. Overall quality of the writing
  d. Originality

Suggestions:
• Use Google Drive to create your script. It keeps the script up-to-the-second-accurate, and you can even chat online while you work on it.
• Use different colors or fonts for different people. That way you know who has written what in the stage directions, or who has made what suggestions on someone else’s lines. TURN IT IN THIS WAY. That will help ME when I have to grade it.
• You can work on this together in a room, and together online. You should probably do both – ideas are easier to communicate in a room, especially when brainstorming, but when it comes to write them down, it’s probably easier to NOT be in the same room.

If you have trouble finding an idea:
• Pick a TV show you all agree is funny. Watch some episodes and try to figure out what kinds of logic they’re defying.
• Run through a list of fallacies and try to think of silly examples for them. One or more might end up being useful.
• Look through your notes at the types of reasoning (If A, then...) and see if you can come up with silly examples for those, too.
• Pick a topic that you want to criticize or make fun of. Think about why you want to criticize it and how you can use logic to do so in a funny way.

3. Systems Analysis
Write a 10-page research paper on a systems problem. 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 April 11. 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 2 years and this has to have leaders who are making decisions in it.

After you have an approved topic, you will do research on it. Then, using the concepts from the readings in Dörner, 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?

3. You must use at least 10 references for this paper. The paper should be double-spaced, the pages numbered, and you should use footnotes or endnotes and include a bibliography. The format for the citations is Turabian/Chicago. This style sheet for Chicago is on BB. Failure to follow any of these instructions will result in a lower grade. This paper is due on April 25. Late papers will not be accepted.

Common Syllabus Insert

Awarding of Credit
To be successful in this course, a student should expect to devote 10-14 hours each week, including class time and time spent on course-related activities.

http://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html

Disability Accommodations
Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact their instructors as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams.
http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/disability-services/policies.html

Honor System
The Jepson School supports the provisions of the Honor System. The shortened version of the honor pledge is: “I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work.”
http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/honor/

Religious Observance
Students should notify their instructors within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance.
http://registrar.richmond.edu/planning/religiousobs.html