CRITICAL THINKING & METHODS OF INQUIRY
LDST 250-01/02: SPRING 2021
TUES./THURS. 11AM-12.15PM/12.45PM-2PM    JEPSON HALL 118
COURSE WEBSITE: HTTPS://BLOG.RICHMOND.EDU/CRITICALTHINKING/
COURSE SLACK: HTTPS://JOIN.SLACK.COM/T/LDST250BEZIO/SHARED_INVITE/ZT-CL2TGCIP-JPR6V1GZ_SB0p7DNFJODNw

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Appointments will be held on Zoom or Slack

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
There are no books required for this course. Instead, you will be given access to a variety of articles and chapters on BlackBoard. Research shows that hard copy reading is more likely to “stick,” so I strongly recommend you print out and keep all your readings in a binder (or two). It also makes it much easier to take notes in the readings or find things later.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation 10%
Weekly Response Blog, Homework Assignments, & Quizzes 15%
Research Project 40% Group Project 10%
Midterm Exams 10% Final Exam 15%

Participation (10%)
All students are expected to contribute to class discussions. Students receive points for participating in meaningful ways (not just “when is this paper due?”). There are three ways to earn participation points.
1. Speaking out loud during class OR typing questions into Zoom chat or Slack.
2. Writing a 300-word email response to the class discussion with their thoughts to be turned in before midnight following class.
3. Participate in or initiate a conversation outside of classtime in the designated class Slack discussion channel (#class-material-discussion)

Weekly Response Blog, Homework Assignments, & Quizzes (15%)
There will be periodic short assignments to accompany the daily readings which ask students to fill out “quizzes” online or to diagram arguments as preparation for class discussion.

Later in the semester, students will also be asked write a brief, informal reaction to the readings assigned for the week and to respond to other students’ reactions. 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. The blog assignment may be found here: http://blog.richmond.edu/criticalthinking/reading-response-blog-assignment/. This is also where entries will be posted.

Research Project (40%)
There will be a long research project in this course which will contain several short papers, and will culminate in one longer paper and a research webpage. All papers and assignments 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 should be turned in on BlackBoard (papers must be received by the due date and time and open properly to be considered acceptable). Papers will be graded using the Microsoft Word Reviewing tool and uploaded along with the grading rubrics to BlackBoard’s GradeCenter. The webpage will be hosted through UR’s blog site (and uses WordPress). To request your own page, go to http://blog.richmond.edu.

Late papers and assignments (including the website) will be penalized up to a full grade step for each 24 hours they are late (A to A-). Technical problems (computer or email) are not an acceptable excuse for lateness: back up files on Google Drive, Box, Dropbox, and/or an external jump drive, and save often. Students are responsible for knowing how to turn in files on Blackboard and must turn in all files as .doc or .docx files (.pages, .pdf, and links to Google Docs are not acceptable formats for assignments).
**Group Project (10%)**

There will be a group GivingGames project in this course which consists of a group research paper and individual blog posts. Students will be assigned to a group and tasked with researching the ethics and effectiveness of a chosen charity; over the course of the semester, students will research their charities, then write a group analysis of that charity with a recommendation for or against it. Papers will be circulated to the whole class for evaluation of the charities.

**Exams (25%)**

There will be two take-home midterms and a final exam. The second midterm will be optional. Students who elect not to take the second exam will have their first score doubled. Students who do take the second exam will have both scores contribute to their grade. Exams will be a combination of short- and long-answer and essay questions. All exams will be available on BlackBoard. Those needing accommodations should provide documentation to Dr. Bezio so that appropriate adjustments can be made.

**GRADE SCALE**

The points in this course are distributed to allow for a 5% scale between each letter grade (although students can expect letter grades to be awarded for similar quality work in other Jepson courses). The course as a whole is graded out of 2,000 points.

Grades will not be “rounded.” Students must reach the threshold for each grade in order to earn that grade (an A falls between 1900 and 1999.99, for instance). Some assignments will be graded with partial points. Grades for individual assignments can be determined by dividing by the total number of points for the assignment, with 5% between each grade (an A is 95% to 99.999%, an A- 90% to 94.999%, etc.).

Grades (and comments when appropriate) will be made available to students on BlackBoard when the assignment has been graded for the whole class (both sections). Feedback (when appropriate) will be provided via pdf attachments for papers and in BlackBoard’s comment sections for smaller assignments, exams, and quizzes. Blog and participation grades will be updated at the end of the semester on BlackBoard, but students may inquire with Dr. Bezio to find out where they stand at any point in the semester.

**CLASSROOM POLICIES**

During the continued COVID-19 pandemic, students are expected to **wear face coverings over their nose and mouth at all times in the classroom.** Students are discouraged from eating or drinking during class. Students will be asked to wipe down their seat using provided wipes at the door every class and are expected to maintain at least six feet of distance between themselves and their peers and professors at all times. Please see the University’s requirements for the different stages of pandemic response and abide by them while in the classroom.

If a student has been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or if a student is experiencing symptoms of illness, they must 1) not attend class in person (they are welcome to
attend via Zoom using the link in BlackBoard); 2) contact Student Health; and 3) contact their residential college dean’s office if they have not done so already.

University policy is that students who are feeling well and have not been exposed and are living in Richmond should attend class in person. Students who have symptoms or other extenuating circumstances are encouraged to attend via Zoom if appropriate (maintaining appropriate attire and etiquette) and to contact their residential college dean’s office for any additional needed support.

Students are expected to be on time to class. Students are expected to be attentive to and respectful of the professor and the ideas of their peers. Please make sure all cell phones are silenced or turned off. Students will not be allowed to answer their phones during classtime. Students using laptops are asked to maintain focus on class materials and not be on social media 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 work 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 University.

If emergency or extenuating 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 at the discretion of the professor (and typically only if requested prior to 24 hours before the due time). Exams cannot be made up except under the most extenuating of circumstances. Students needing accommodations should speak to the professor.

Finally, be patient with yourselves, your professor, and each other. This pandemic sucks and we’re all feeling it.

**JEPSON SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP STUDIES COMMON SYLLABUS INSERT**

**Expectations Regarding In-Person Attendance During the Pandemic**

We are facing a challenging situation in which all of us are called on to make a good faith effort to be flexible and to make decisions in the best interest of the community, including staying home when sick. Students who are sick should not attend class, will not be required to provide formal documentation from a health care provider, and will not be penalized for absences.

However, students must:

- Notify instructors in advance of the absence if possible. Contact the Student Health Center if sick.
- Keep up with classwork and attend online class sessions if able to do so.
- Submit assignments digitally on time whenever possible.
- Work with instructors to try to reschedule any missed assignments.
- Stay in close communication with instructors.

This attendance policy puts everyone on their honor. It requires that faculty trust the word of their students when they say they are ill, and it requires that students report the reason for their absence truthfully. Falsely reporting a reason for an absence is an honor code violation.
Integrity with Class Recordings
Students shall not:
• Disclose, share, trade, or sell class recordings with/to any other person, organization, business, or institution;
• Post/store these recordings in a location accessible by anyone other than the student, including but not limited to social media accounts.

Students must also comply with any instructions or directions from their faculty regarding the use of such recordings. Students are required to destroy any recordings that were made when they are no longer needed for the student’s academic work. Failure to abide by this policy will be a violation of the Standards of Student Conduct; such issues will be sent to the appropriate University Conduct Officer.

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. 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. disability.richmond.edu/

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.” studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/the-honor-code.html

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

Addressing Microaggressions on Campus
Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.¹ Recent research has found that, when professors do not address microaggressions in class, microaggressions foster alienation of marginalized groups.² Furthermore, both students and faculty that are exposed to microaggressions more often are more likely to have depressive symptoms and negative affect (a negative view of the world).³ A comfortable and productive environment where meaningful learning happens can be collectively created through actions, words, or environmental cues that promote the inclusion and success of marginalized members, recognizing their embodied identity, validating their realities, resisting sexism, ableism, and racism.⁴

The University of Richmond is committed to building an inclusive community. To do so, the following resources are available to support our students: Spiders Against Bias (an anonymous peer to peer support network that aids microaggression and bias incident survivors in connecting to different resources) and the Bias Resource Team.⁵ Additionally, this semester students are leading a series of workshops, Not So Slight: Combating Microaggressions, for students to learn how to recognize microaggressions and how to have meaningful conversations around difficult topics in an aggression-free environment.

With this in mind, as a community member at the University of Richmond, I pledge to address microaggressions in the classroom by holding myself, other students, and faculty accountable for what is said
and being receptive to criticism when perpetuating these slights, snubs, or insults.


5https://commonground.richmond.edu/contact/bias-incidents/index.html

**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** ([asc.richmond.edu](http://asc.richmond.edu)): Assists students in assessing their academic strengths and weaknesses; honing their academic skills through teaching effective test preparation, critical reading and thinking, information conceptualization, concentration, and related techniques; working on specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.); and encouraging campus and community involvement. Tutors will be available virtually. The on-call peer-tutors available for these appointments are listed in the Box file: [On-Call Online Tutors](https://richmond.box.com/s/dpe37chr2zodr3o1amtij8omjk72v2ktb). **Email Roger Mancastroppa** ([rmancast@richmond.edu](mailto:rmancast@richmond.edu)) and **Hope Walton** ([hwalton@richmond.edu](mailto:hwalton@richmond.edu)) for appointments in academic and life skills to request a Zoom conference.

**Boatwright Library Research Librarians:** ([library.richmond.edu/help/ask/](http://library.richmond.edu/help/ask/) or 289-8876): Research librarians help students with all steps of their research, from identifying or narrowing a topic, to locating, accessing, evaluating, and citing information resources. Librarians support students in their classes across the curriculum and provide library instruction, tutorials, research guides, and individual help. All research support will be provided online or by appointment and students can contact a librarian for help via email ([library@richmond.edu](mailto:library@richmond.edu)), text (804-277-9ASK), chat, or Zoom (by appointment).

**Career Services:** ([careerservices.richmond.edu](http://careerservices.richmond.edu) or 289-8547): Can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major or course of study, connecting with internships and jobs, and investigating graduate and professional school options. We encourage you to schedule an appointment with a career advisor early in your time at UR.

**Counseling and Psychological Services** ([caps.richmond.edu](http://caps.richmond.edu) or 289-8119): Assists currently enrolled, full-time, degree-seeking students in improving their mental health and well-being, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include brief consultations, short-term counseling and psychotherapy, skills-building classes, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.
Disability Services ([disability.richmond.edu](http://disability.richmond.edu)) The Office of Disability Services works to ensure that qualified students with a disability (whether incoming or current) are provided with reasonable accommodations that enable students to participate fully in activities, programs, services and benefits provided to all students. Please let your professors know as soon as possible if you have an accommodation that requires academic coordination and planning.

Speech Center ([speech.richmond.edu](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. Remote practice sessions can be arranged; we look forward to meeting your public speaking needs.

Writing Center ([writing.richmond.edu](http://writing.richmond.edu) or 289-8263): 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.