

HONORS 101A: SEMINAR IN CRITICAL THINKING CONFRONTING FEAR

FALL 2003
M - W 4 – 5:15, EC – 623

Professor: Clifford Roth
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Office Hours: 2:00pm – 3:00pm, Wednesdays or by appointment.
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REQUIRED TEXT

Trudy Govier, *A Practical Study of Argument*, Fifth Edition (Wadsworth, 2001).
Barry Glassner, *The Culture of Fear* (Basic Books, 1999).
The texts are available at the CSUF bookstore in Titan Shops.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

When you attend class, talk with your roommate, watch television, or surf the Internet, you face decisions about what to believe. Should you endorse a newspaper editor's claim that violence in the media is causally responsible for gun violence in the United States? Should you agree with a website's conclusion that Gulf War Syndrome is merely a metaphoric illness? Should you be persuaded by your roommate's claim that crack-use was the primary cause of homelessness in the 1980's? The answers to these questions depend on the quality of the arguments provided in each case. In this Honors seminar, you will learn how to identify, evaluate, and construct arguments. Our written assignments, oral presentations, and plenary sessions will focus on *Confronting Fear*. What are we afraid of? Are our fears justified? What generates them, and who benefits from them?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this course is to learn the foundational reasoning skills that are necessary for assessing the arguments of others and for constructing good arguments of our own. As critical thinkers, we are interested in believing what we ought to believe, and in convincing others to do the same. We will not be satisfied with the unsupported, or poorly supported opinions of our colleagues, however loudly they are expressed.

More specifically, the course should enable you to:

1. use appropriate evidence to support ideas and to persuade others.
2. evaluate the quality and sufficiency of evidence for a position.
3. revise arguments based on critical reflection.
4. compare and contrast the relative merits of opposing arguments.
5. present an oral message, using adequate supporting evidence.

I hope that you will use these skills throughout your tenure at CSUF and beyond.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

(1) EXAMS

You must take 2 exams. The first exam is on **Oct 13**. The second is on **Dec 1**. The exams will likely be composed of a combination of short-answer and essay questions, which will be similar in format to the homework assignments. They will ask you to apply the skills that you have learned from the readings. Though we will not have a final exam on Dec 17, we will use this time for presentations of final projects.

(2) SHORT PAPERS

There will be 3 short papers (2 – 3 pages each). The first will be on Chapter 1, 3, or 4 of *The Culture of Fear* (your choice). The second will be on the film *Bowling for Columbine* or Chapter 2 of *The Culture of Fear* (your choice). The remaining paper will be on Kellner's plenary session.

(3) EXERCISES

I will assign some short exercises from *A Practical Study of Argument*. I will also occasionally hand out short exercises to be done for homework.

(4) INTRODUCTORY ORAL PRESENTATION

The introductory oral presentation has 2 parts: (1) a written outline; and (2) a presentation (3 minutes). Presentations will be held on, and outlines are due on **Nov. 3, Nov. 5**. You will present a chapter of your choice from *The Culture of Fear*, excluding Chapters 2, 7, 9, and the chapter on which you wrote your First Short Paper.

(5) FINAL PROJECT

The final project also has 2 parts: (1) a written outline of your argument; and (2) a presentation of your argument (6 – 7 minutes). Presentations will be held on, and outlines are due on, **Dec 8, 10, and 17**. You will construct a persuasive argument on one of the topics discussed in *The Culture of Fear*. I encourage you to build on your previous presentation and papers.

(5) PLENARY SESSIONS

Will be held in H 123. Each student must attend 3 plenary sessions:

1. **Sept. 10** - Plagiarism
2. **Oct. 15** – *Bowling for Columbine*
3. **Nov. 12** – Kellner

GRADING

	<u>% of final grade</u>
First Exam	20
Second Exam	20
Introductory Oral Presentation	10
Three Short Papers	20
Exercises	10
Final Project	20

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

(1) OFFICE HOURS

Please attend office hours! If you need help with the reading or the assignments, visit me during office hours or make an appointment. Students who need note-taking or test-taking accommodations are encouraged to discuss this with me as soon as possible.

(2) ATTENDANCE

Attendance is required. You are responsible for notifying me in advance, if you are going to miss class. You are responsible for all information that was provided in your absence.

(3) MAKE-UPS

Exams

A student will be allowed to make up an exam if and only if: (1) she/he notifies me before the missed exam; and (2) she/he has a documented excused absence for the day of the exam. Proper documentation consists of an Official Absence from Health Services, the Dean's Office, or the Athletic Department. If you miss an exam, and you have not met both of the aforementioned conditions, you will receive a 0.

Introductory Oral Presentation/Final Project

Because of the compressed schedule, there will be no make-ups granted for the introductory oral presentation or the final project.

(4) IMPERMISSIBLE BEHAVIOR

It is impermissible to look at, copy, or consult the work of another student or one's books during an exam. It is impermissible to copy someone else's written work, or allow someone else to copy yours. Doing so constitutes plagiarism, which is punishable by expulsion.

Turn off cell phones/pagers while in class.

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- (1) Coming to class prepared to teach the material, raise questions for discussion, and answer your questions.
- (2) Grading and returning your assignments within 14 days of receiving them.
- (3) Promptly notifying you of any revisions in the course schedule, or my availability outside of class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(May be subject to revision)

Reading and written assignments are due on the day they are listed.

WEEK 1: WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Aug 25 Introduction. What is Critical Thinking?
 Aug 27 What is an argument? Arguments vs. Non-arguments.
Read *A Practical Study of Argument* (PSA) Ch. 1 p. 1-14.

WEEK 2: IDENTIFYING ARGUMENTS

Sept 1 Classes Canceled – Labor Day
 Sept 3 Arguments vs. Explanations.
Read *Culture of Fear* (CF), Introduction. Read PSA, p. 18 – 24.
Exercises due: PSA p. 15, exercise 1: part A.

WEEK 3: ANALYZING ARGUMENTS

Sept 8 Putting arguments in standard form.
Read PSA, Ch. 2, p. 29-46. Exercises due: PSA, p. 24, exercise 2: part A.
Find example of fear mongering in the media.
 Sept 10 **Plenary Session** – Plagiarism. H 123

WEEK 4: ANALYZING ARGUMENTS

Sept 15 Enthymemes
Read PSA, Ch. 2, p.51 – 61. Exercises due: PSA, p. 39 exercise 1: Part A
 Sept 17 Inductive vs. Deductive Arguments. ARG.
Read PSA, Ch. 3, p. 68-82, 92-94. Exercises Due: PSA p. 61, exercise 4.

WEEK 5: DEDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: PROPOSITIONAL LOGIC

Sept 22 Validity vs. Soundness
First Short Paper Due
 Sept 24 Symbolizing conjunction, disjunction, negation.
Read PSA, Ch. 8, p. 253-258, 266-270.

WEEK 6: DEDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: SYMBOLIZING ENGLISH

- Sept 29 Practice symbolizing ‘and’, ‘but’, ‘or’, ‘not’.
Exercises due: handout on conjunction, disjunction, negation
- Oct 1 Conditionals, Biconditionals. Practice symbolizing ‘if’, ‘only if’, ‘if and only if’, ‘unless’.
Read PSA, p. 270 – 273, 276 – 283.

WEEK 7: DEDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: TRUTH TABLE TEST FOR VALIDITY

- Oct 6 Showing validity/invalidity by using truth tables
Read PSA, p. 259 – 262. Exercises due: handout on conditionals.
- Oct 8 Practice using truth tables to test for validity
Exercises due: handout on truth table test for validity

WEEK 8: FILM: *BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE*

- Oct 13 **FIRST EXAM**
- Oct 15 **Plenary session:** *Bowling for Columbine* H 123
Read CF, Ch. 2 “Crime in the News”

WEEK 9: INDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: CAUSAL ARGUMENTS

- Oct 20 Causal Arguments and Mill’s Methods.
Read PSA, Ch.9, p. 298-301, 313 – 316, 318 – 324
- Oct 22 Mistakes in Causal Reasoning.
Read PSA, p. 335 – 336, 338 - 341.

WEEK 10: INDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS IN *THE CULTURE OF FEAR*

- Oct 27 Metaphoric Illnesses
Read CF, Ch. 7 “Metaphoric Illnesses”
Second Short Paper due
- Oct 29 Metaphoric Illnesses

WEEK 11: INTRODUCTORY ORAL PRESENTATIONS

- Nov 3 **Introductory Oral Presentations**
- Nov 5 **Introductory Oral Presentations**

WEEK 12: ACCEPTABILITY OF PREMISES

- Nov 10 When are premises acceptable/unacceptable?
Read PSA, Ch. 5, p. 138 – 165.
- Nov 12 **Plenary Session** – Douglas Kellner. H 123

WEEK 13: RELEVANCE

- Nov 17 Relevance and Irrelevance.
Read PSA, Ch. 6, p. 174 – 183.
- Nov 19 Fallacies involving Irrelevance.
Read PSA, Ch. 6, p. 187 – 211.
Third Short Paper Due

WEEK 14: CLASSES CANCELLED: FALL RECESS

WEEK 15: PREPARATION OUTLINES FOR FINAL PROJECTS

- Dec 1 **SECOND EXAM**
- Dec 3 Class Canceled – Individual Meetings with instructor – final project
 Outlines.

WEEK 16: FINAL PROJECTS

- Dec 8 **Final Project Presentations**
- Dec 10 **Final Project Presentations**

FINALS WEEK

- Dec 17, 5 – 6:50 **Final Project Presentations**