

**HONORS 101A:
SEMINAR IN CRITICAL THINKING
CRITICAL CONSUMPTION
FALL 2004
MW 4:00 – 5:15, Humanities 530**

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REQUIRED TEXTS

B. N. Moore and R. Parker, *Critical Thinking*, 7th edition (McGraw Hill, 2004).
Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* (Perennial, 2002).
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 the fast food industry is responsible for the increasing rates of obesity in the United States? If so, should they be held legally responsible? Should you agree with a website's conclusion that the labor practices of the fast food industry and companies like Wal-Mart are wrong? Should you be persuaded by your roommate's claim that marketing to children is permissible? 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 consumerism and the fast food industry. What are the effects of the fast food industry? What, if any, problems does it cause, and what should we do to solve them?

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING GOALS

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) EXAM

You must take 1 exam. The exam is on **Oct 13**. The exam 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. 15, we will likely use this time for presentations of final projects.

(2) SHORT PAPERS

There will be 2 short papers (2 – 3 pages each). The first will be on an assigned topic from *Fast Food Nation*. The second will be on **either** of the following plenary sessions (your choice): *Supersize Me*, or Eric Schlosser.

(3) EXERCISES

I will assign exercises from Moore and Parker's *Critical Thinking*. I will also occasionally hand out 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. 1, and either Nov. 3 or Nov. 8** (TBA). The topic must relate to one of the suggested issues in *Fast Food Nation*.

(5) FINAL PROJECT

The final project has 3 parts: (1) a 5 page paper; (2) a written outline of your argument; and (2) a presentation of your argument (7 minutes). Papers are due on **Dec 6**. Presentations will be held on, and outlines are due on, **Dec 6, 8, and 15**. You will construct a persuasive argument.

(5) PLENARY SESSIONS

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

1. **Sept. 1** - Plagiarism
2. **Oct. 25** – *Supersize Me*
3. **Nov. 3 or Nov. 8** – Schlosser

GRADING

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

Grade scale: A: 90 and above. B: 80 – 89. C: 70 – 79. D: 60 – 69. F: 59 and below.

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. You must attend presentations on days that you are not presenting.

(3) MAKE-UPS

Exam

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 Dept. If you miss an exam, and you have not met both of the aforementioned conditions, you will earn 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) LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Late papers are penalized one full letter grade per day. I will not accept late exercises unless one has a documented excused absence.

(5) 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 10 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 dates they are listed.

WEEK 1: WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

- Aug 23 Introduction. What is Critical Thinking?
 Aug 25 What is an argument? Arguments vs. Non-arguments.
Read *Critical Thinking (CT)* Ch. 1 p. 1-19.

WEEK 2: ANALYZING ARGUMENTS

- Aug 30 Identifying Premises and Conclusions.
Read CT, Ch. 7, p. 226-229.
Exercise 1-3, p. 22-23.
 Sept 1 **Plenary Session** on Plagiarism. H 123.
Exercise 7-2, p. 230; and Exercise 7-4, p. 231-232.

WEEK 3: ANALYZING ARGUMENTS

- Sept 6 Labor Day - Classes Canceled
 Sept 8 Putting arguments in standard form. Finding missing premises.
Read CT, p. 241-245.

WEEK 4: ANALYZING AND EVALUATING ARGUMENTS

- Sept 13 *Fast Food Nation (FFN)*
Read FFN, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2.
Exercise handout putting arguments in standard form.
 Sept 15 Inductive vs. Deductive Arguments. Validity vs. Soundness
Read CT, p. 235-239.

WEEK 5: DEDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: SYMBOLIC LOGIC

- Sept 20 Symbolizing conjunction, disjunction, negation.
Read CT, Ch. 9, p. 306 – 314.
 Sept 22 Practice symbolizing ‘and’, ‘but’, ‘or’, ‘not’.
First Short Paper Due

WEEK 6: DEDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: SYMBOLIZING ENGLISH

- Sept 27 Conditionals, Biconditionals. Practice symbolizing ‘if’, ‘only if’, ‘if and only if’, ‘unless’.
Read CT, p. 314-320.
Exercises due: handout on conjunction, disjunction, negation

Sept 29 Showing validity/invalidity by using truth tables
Read CT, p. 322-329.
Exercise 9-2, p. 321

WEEK 7: DEDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: TRUTH TABLE TEST FOR VALIDITY

Oct 4 Common Valid Argument Forms. DS. MP. MT. HS. Simp. Conj.
 Common Invalid Argument Forms. Affirming the Consequent.
 Denying the Antecedent
Exercise 9-4, p. 330.
 Oct 6 Class canceled

WEEK 8: TRUTH TABLES AND EXAM

Oct 11 Practice using truth tables to test for validity
Exercise 9-15, p. 352-354; and Exercise 9-16, p. 354.
 Oct 13 **FIRST EXAM**

WEEK 9: INDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: INDUCTIVE GENERALIZATIONS AND ANALOGIES

Oct 18 Inductive generalizations.
Read CT, Ch. 10.
 Oct 20 Identifying and evaluating Analogies.

WEEK 10: INDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: CAUSAL ARGUMENTS

Oct 25 **Plenary Session** *Supersize Me*. H 123.
 Oct 27 Causal Arguments.
Read CT, Ch. 11.
Exercise handout on evaluating analogies.

WEEK 11: INTRODUCTORY ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Nov 1 **Introductory Oral Presentations**
 Nov 3 **Introductory Oral Presentations** or **Plenary Session** Schlosser. H 123.

WEEK 12: INDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: MISTAKES IN CAUSAL REASONING

Nov 8 **Introductory Oral Presentations** or **Plenary Session** Schlosser. H 123.
 Nov 10 Mistakes in Causal Reasoning.
Exercise 11-3, p. 403-405.

WEEK 13: FALLACIES

- Nov 15 Fallacies
 Read, CT Ch. 5
 Exercise 11-4, p. 406-407.
- Nov 17 Fallacies
 Read CT, Ch. 6
 Second Short Paper Due

WEEK 14: FALL RECESS: CLASSES CANCELED

WEEK 15: PREPARING FOR THE FINAL PROJECT

- Nov 29 Solutions proposed in *Fast Food Nation*
 Read FFN, Epilogue
- Dec 1 Class canceled – individual meetings with instructor to discuss final project

WEEK 16: FINAL PROJECTS

- Dec 6 **Final Project Presentations**
- Dec 8 **Final Project Presentations**

FINALS WEEK

Wed. December 15, 5:00 – 6:50 **Final Project Presentations**