

HONORS 101A:
SEMINAR IN CRITICAL THINKING
CRITICAL CONSUMPTION
FALL 2004
MW 4 – 5:15, UH - 304

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REQUIRED TEXTS

Brooke Noel Moore and Richard Parker, *Critical Thinking*, 7th edition (McGraw Hill, 2004)
Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* (HarperCollins, 2002)

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 should 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

We will be using *Fast Food Nation* as a text which presents aspects of modern American consumer culture in a way which encourages a critical understanding of the hidden costs and difficulties which accompany our present way of life. The main function of this book will be a resource for presenting and analyzing arguments regarding these facets of our culture.

Learning Goals:

This course meets the **General Education** learning goals for category **I.C.—Core Competencies-Critical Thinking**—in the following ways:

1. By developing the ability to think, read, and write critically.

2. By developing the ability to identify what is necessary for successful decision-making and problem solving.
3. By developing the ability to clarify facts, concepts, and evidence involved in problem-solving.
4. By developing the ability to critically evaluate evidence used to support a position.
5. By developing the ability to revise arguments and conclusions based on critical analysis.
6. By developing the ability to recognize implicit and explicit features of communication.
7. By developing the ability to assess critically similarities and differences in points of view.
8. By developing the ability for critical self-evaluation.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

(1) EXAMS

You must take 2 exams. The first exam is on **Oct 11**. 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 15**, we will 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 one of the chapters in *Fast Food Nation* (your choice). The second will be on the film or a different chapter of *Fast Food Nation* (your choice).

(3) EXERCISES

The majority of assignments will be short exercises from *Critical Thinking*. They will be assigned in class. I may 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 (about 3 minutes). Presentations will be held on, and outlines are due on **Nov. 1 or 3**. You will present a chapter of your choice from *Fast Food Nation*.

(5) FINAL PROJECT

The final project also has 3 parts: (1) a written outline of your argument, (2) a 5-7 page paper presenting your argument, and (2) an oral presentation of your argument (7 – 10 minutes). Presentations will be held on, and outlines are due on, **Dec 6, 8, or 15**. You will construct a persuasive argument on one of the topics discussed in *Fast Food Nation*. I encourage you to build on your previous presentation and papers.

(6) **PLENARY SESSIONS**

Will be held in H-123. Each student must attend all three plenary sessions:

1. **Sept. 1** - Plagiarism
2. **Oct. 13** – *Supersize Me?*
3. **Nov. 3 or 8** – Eric Schlosser?

GRADING

	<u>% of final grade</u>
First Exam	20
Second Exam	20
Introductory Oral Presentation	10
Two 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. 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 at all sessions (including the final exam presentations). You are responsible for notifying me in advance, if you may 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 zero.

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 failure and expulsion. PLEASE turn off cell phones/pagers while in class.

WEEK 6: DEDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: VALIDITY

Sept 27	Validity/Invalidity and Truth Tables	CT, Ch. 9, 322-331
Sept 29	Validity/Invalidity (continued)	
	First Paper Due	

WEEK 7: DEDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS: PROOFS

Oct 4	Proofs	CT, Ch. 9, 322-348
Oct 6	More Proofs	

WEEK 8: FILM (or SPEAKER)

Oct 11	FIRST EXAM	
Oct 13	Plenary session?	

WEEK 9: CREDIBILITY

Oct 18	Assessing Content	CT, Ch. 3
Oct 20	Fast Food, Flavor, and Advertising	FFN, Ch. 2 & 5

WEEK 10: INDUCTIVE ARGUMENTS

Oct 25	Analogies	CT, Ch. 10
Oct 27	Sampling	

WEEK 11: INTRODUCTORY ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Nov 1	Introductory Oral Presentations	
Nov 3	Introductory Oral Presentations (or plenary session)	

WEEK 12: CAUSAL ARGUMENTS

Nov 8	Causal Reasoning (or plenary session)	CT, Ch. 11
Nov 10	Global Effects	FFN, 6 & 10, Epilogue
	Second Short Paper due	

WEEK 13: FALLACIES

Nov 15	Relevance and Rhetoric	CT, Ch. 4
Nov 17	Fallacies	CT, Ch. 6

FALL RECESS

WEEK 14: PREPARATION OUTLINES FOR FINAL PROJECTS

Dec 1	SECOND EXAM
Dec 3	Class Cancelled – Individual Meetings Final Project Outlines Due

WEEK 15: FINAL PROJECTS

Dec 6	Final Project Presentations
Dec 8	Final Project Presentations

FINALS WEEK

Dec 15	Final Project Presentations (5:00 – 6:50 p.m.)
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