

# **RS204: RELIGION, LOGIC, AND THE MEDIA**

**Fall 2017**

**Monday/Wednesday: 9:30-10:45 SH 384**

**Fridays 2:00-4:45 SH 390**

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Office Hours: Monday 11:30-12:30

Friday 12:30- 1:30

**Course Description:** This course introduces students to the use and understanding of the basic concepts of logic and critical reasoning. Utilizing these concepts, students will gather, discuss, analyze, and critically examine material from broadcast, print, and Internet news sources on matters pertaining to religion. Our primary concern in logical analysis is not the truth of the statement, or personal opinions about it, but rather the analysis of the formal structure of the example itself. This course satisfies the "Critical Thinking" requirement in General Education. In addition, it is part of the Arts, Media, and Society General Education PATH program.

## **Class Schedule and Plan- BRING YOUR BOOK TO CLASS!!!**

Week ending Sept 1 : Syllabus and Introduction to Critical Thinking and Logic. Horne, vii-viii.

Overview of requirements, portfolio etc.

Week ending Sept 8 : Logical Definitions and Argumentation. Horne, 3-9.

Media Example. (NO Class Monday)

Week ending Sept 15 : Logical Argumentation: Identify Arguments and Indicators.Horne, 15-22.

Making Arguments Explicit: Diagramming, Validity, Soundness. Horne, 23-35.

Week ending Sept 22 : Elements of Non-Argument Persuasion. Horne, 39-43.

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Week ending Sept 29: Deductive Fallacies Part 1. Horne, 51-71.

Week ending Oct 6 : Deductive Fallacies Part 2

Week ending Oct 13 : Informal Arguments: Evaluating and Critical Examination. Horne, 75-81.

Week ending Oct 20 : Media Examples presentations from class!

Week ending Oct 27 : Formal Logic: Basic Symbols and Patterns. Horne, 89-97.

Week ending Nov 3 : Diagramming Categorical Claims and Syllogisms. Horne, 103-117.

Week ending Nov 10 : Formal Logic: Logical Derivation Proofs. Horne, 135-137.

( NO Class Friday)

Week ending Nov 17 : Logic in Everyday Life. Horne, 141-152.

Week ending Nov 24 Thanksgiving Break Nov 23-24

Week ending Nov 31 : Logic in Legal Reasoning. Plessy v. Ferguson, Brown v. Board of  
d Education, Horne, 147-151.

Week ending Dec 1 : Summary and Conclusions.

Week ending Dec 8 Final exam

It is recommended that students utilize the CSUN Writing Centers in the preparation and editing of all written essay assignments. Instructor may require students to use the Centers for any written work, especially if a student's writing needs to be strengthened. The LRC Writing Center is located in the Oviatt Library, Third Floor, East Wing, and can be reached by telephone at **(818)-677-2033** or e-mail at **[lrc@csun.edu](mailto:lrc@csun.edu)**. The website is <http://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/learning-resource-center/university-writing-center-and-freshman-tutor-lab>. The Pan African Studies Writing Center is in Sierra Hall 273; phone number for appointments is **818-677-2084**. The Chicano Studies Writing Center is in Jerome Richfield Hall Room 142; phone number is **818-677-7881**.

### **Student Learning Objectives:**

### **Course SLOs:**

This course is intended to enable the student to attain the following outcomes.

1. Explain and apply the basic concepts of deductive logic as a dimension of critical reasoning
2. Apply the principles of deductive logic to the critical analysis of statements made about religion in the news and entertainment media
3. Understand the historical and social contexts in which media misunderstand or distort statements made by or about religious groups or spokespersons

### **G.E. SLOs: Critical Thinking**

Goal: Students will analyze information and ideas carefully and logically from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

#### Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Explain and apply the basic concepts essential to a critical examination and evaluation of argumentative discourse;
2. Use investigative and analytical thinking skills to examine alternatives, explore complex questions and solve challenging problems;
3. Synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions;
4. Evaluate the logic and validity of arguments, and the relevance of data and information.
5. Recognize and avoid common logical and rhetorical fallacies.

### **Arts, Media, and Society GE PATH SLOs:**

A) Students will develop an understanding of the basic history, criticism and aesthetics of one or more of the traditional forms of artistic endeavor.

B) Students will have a basic knowledge of the history, development and theoretical debates surrounding issues of media and media and society.

C) Students will be able to write in the typical critical idiom and discourse regarding one or more art or media modes and practice.

D) Students will have a basic understanding of the debates and theories surrounding critical approaches to the relationship amongst art, media and society along with some of the histories of these debates and relationships.

### **Required Text:**

David Lawrence Horne, *Straight to the Point: A Primer for a Logical Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Pearson Custom Publishing, 2005).

Student selected and printed copies, brought to each class session, of current (within one month of date submitted in class) media examples on Religion from **credible** print or online news sources. (WIKIPEDIA IS NOT ACCEPTABLE AS A CREDIBLE SOURCE FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS COURSE). Sources must include stories or investigations about a *wide range* of religious traditions.

### **Course Requirements:**

\*Class Work: Careful Preparation for Class Sessions, Punctuality, Attendance, and Engaged Participation in Class Exercises, Discussion, and Arguments are a significant part of the course. All absences must be arranged **beforehand** via personal or e-mail contact with Instructor, or will be considered unexcused, and will have a negative effect on students' grades.

\*Hard-copy media example assignments are due regularly (see below). **NO LATE SUBMISSIONS ARE POSSIBLE.**

\*Numerous Quizzes will be administered throughout the semester.

\*Mid-Term Exam, given in class

\*Class Portfolios: Will be submitted as drafts, graded, and then resubmitted as a **Final Portfolio**, due on Fri April 29. This assignment entails the carefully organized presentation of media examples from class sessions, showing students' understanding of concepts of logic, deductive fallacies, forms of non-argument persuasion, evaluation of arguments, and analysis of contemporary religion(s) and religious issues. **NO LATE SUBMISSIONS ARE POSSIBLE.**

\*Respect for other students and the class environment. This includes placing all cell phones and other electronic communication devices in the **OFF** position before entering the classroom space.

### **Grading:**

Class Participation: 25%

Media Examples, with Analysis: 20%

Quizzes: 15%

Mid-Term Exam: 15%

Class Portfolios: 25%

Possible Websites to use for research and media examples:

**Los Angeles Times:** <http://www.latimes.com/>

**New York Times:** <http://www.nytimes.com/>

**Washington Post:** <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>

**Newsweek:** <http://www.newsweek.com/>

**Time:** <http://www.time.com/time/>

**NPR:** <http://www.npr.org/>

**Democracy Now:** <http://www.democracynow.org/>

**The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life:** <http://pewforum.org/>

**Big Questions Online:** <http://www.bigquestionsonline.com/>

**Blogs About Religion:** <http://www.beliefnet.com/News/2004/08/Best-Spiritual-Blogs.aspx>

**Religion News Service:** <http://www.religionnews.com/>

**PBS, Religion and Ethics Newsweekly:** <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/>

**The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life:** <http://pewforum.org/Religion-News/Religion-News-on-the-Web.aspx>

**The Independent of London:** <http://www.independent.co.uk/>