

RELIGION, LOGIC, AND THE MEDIA (RST 204)
ONLINE
Fall 2017

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OFFICE HOURS: Chat on Canvas Tuesday evenings 8-9pm

What is this class about?

At first it doesn't really seem like "religion," "logic," and "the media" go together. But in an era of fake news and alternate facts, of sharp cultural divides and mis-education about religion, it is really important to be able to think better (i.e., more logically and analytically) about the way religion is represented in the media. By examining stories about religion in print, video, film, and social media, you will learn to:

- Distinguish between an opinion and an argument;
- Understand the components of an argument;
- Recognize and avoid mistakes in critical thinking;
- Discern bias and spin in the presentation of ideas;
- Avoid stereotyping;
- Analyze complex concepts;
- Adopt other perspectives;
- Evaluate the validity of information;
- Cultivate sensitivity about the choice of images and words used in the presentation of material.

How will this course help you succeed in college and beyond?

What you learn to do in this class is to think, read, and write better and more critically – about anything, not just religion and the media. Those are transferable skills that you can take with you and use in other college courses. Later, after you graduate, you will find these same skills put you head and shoulders above other job applicants. Plus, this course satisfies the "Critical Thinking" requirement of your General Education requirements.

How will I succeed in this course?

The key to success in this course, and any other online course, is simple. Be consistent about checking in every week. Make sure you do the assigned reading and don't miss weekly deadlines. It is so easy to de-prioritize online classes – don't fall into this trap!

Here's how the class looks in terms of points:

- Assignments (4 x 10) = 40
- Discussion Board Postings (8 x 5) = 40
- Exams (2 x 10) = 20

TOTAL: 100

Letter Grade Allocation (PLEASE NOTE! DO NOT ROUND UP AT THE END OF THE TERM)

- 93-100 A
- 90-92.99 A-
- 87-89.99 B+
- 83-86.99 B
- 80-82.99 B-
- 77-79.99 C+
- 73-76.99 C
- 70-72.99 C-
- 60-69 D

Text for Purchase

- Sherry Diestler, *Becoming a Critical Thinker: A User Friendly Manual*, 6th Ed. (Boston: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2012).

- Other materials made available for download on Canvas.

SCHEDULE (This is an outline – many more details are on our Canvas page)

Week of August 28

Course Introduction

- Read materials online
 - Post your bio and answer the posted question
 - Familiarize yourself with the course
 - Purchase the textbook

Week of Sept 4th

What Is An Argument? Part I: The Issue and the Conclusion

- Read Diestler, pp. 2-11
- Discussion Board Posting due

Week of Sept 11

What Is An Argument? Part II: The Reasons

- Re-read Diestler pp. 2-11
- Readings on Canvas
- Assignment 1 due

Week of Sept 18th

Value Assumptions & Ethics

- Read Diestler, pp. 36-56
- Readings on Canvas
- Discussion Board Posting

Week of Sept. 25th

Reality Assumptions & Deductive Reasoning

- Read Diestler Chap. 3, pp. 74-93
- Readings on Canvas
- Discussion Board Posting

Week of Oct 2

Stereotypes

- Read Diestler Chap 3, pp. 93-113
- Readings on Canvas
- Assignment 2 due

Week of Oct. 9

Inductive Reasoning: Statistics and Causes in arguments

- Read Diestler 120-156
- Readings on Canvas
- Discussion Board Posting

Week of Oct 16

- Mid-Term

Week of Oct 23

Generalizations

- Read Diestler pp. 171-203 focusing especially on pp. 193-201
- Discussion Board Posting

Week of Oct 30

Fallacies

- Read Diestler pp. 224-255
- Assignment 3 due

Week of Nov 6

The Power of Language

- Read Diestler 275-302
- Discussion Board Posting

Week of Nov 13

Suggestion in Media (Televised)

- Read Diestler Chap. 8, pp. 320-332
- Discussion Board Posting

Week of Nov. 20-26: DUE TO ACADEMIC MEETING AND THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS THIS WEEK AND NO OFFICE HOURS

Week of Nov. 27

Suggestion in the Media (Print)

- Read Diestler, Chap. 8, pp. 333-345
- Assignment 4 due

Week of Dec 4

Set up for Final exam

- Discussion Board posting

Week of Dec 11

- Final exam

The Fine Print

Student Learning Outcomes for RS 204: This course is intended to enable the student to attain the following outcomes:

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

Student Learning Outcomes for General Education Requirement/Critical Thinking:

- Explain and apply the basic concepts essential to a critical examination and evaluation of argumentative discourse;
- Use investigative and analytical thinking skills to examine alternatives, explore complex questions and solve challenging problems;
- Synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions;
- Evaluate the logic and validity of arguments, and the relevance of data and information.
- Recognize and avoid common logical and rhetorical fallacies.
- Familiarity with Canvas: Since this is a fully online class, you must be able to access all course materials and technologies. Everything will be available through Canvas. It is your responsibility to learn how to use Canvas. For information and instructions about Canvas, go to: <http://www.csun.edu/it/studentCanvas-help/>

Participation: Online course appeal to many students because they don't have to come to class, but can work from home. While this offers advantages, one potential pitfall is the tendency to ignore or neglect your online course. You are expected to check in twice a week (I track this), to fully engage in discussions, and to take advantage of online office hours.

Written Work: Your writing must meet basic scholarly standards appropriate for university level work. Not only

does this include proper grammar, punctuation, and syntax, but also serious reflection on your topic. There are many sources to help you with your writing assignments. The most important is the Writing Program at CSUN's Learning Resource Center, Room on the third floor of Oviatt Library, 818-677-2033 or go to:
<http://www.csun.edu/lrc/writing.html>.

Deadlines: Because you have flexibility regarding when you turn in your discussion postings (any time you wish during the week of the assigned discussion, before midnight on Sunday), no late postings will be accepted. No late papers/assignments will be accepted without prior authorization.

Plagiarism/Cheating: Any evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade, certainly for the item plagiarized, but also for the course. Plagiarism is one form of cheating, but not the only one. Other examples include "borrowing" stealing, buying or otherwise procuring papers and exams, or having someone else take an exam or write an essay for which you take credit. All instances of cheating will result in no credit for the assignment and will be reported to the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs.

Special Accommodations: If you have a documented learning disability and/or a physical disability and need special accommodations in order to complete course requirements, please make sure the instructor is informed. I will happily cooperate with you through [the DRES office](#).

Contact with the Professor: PLEASE take advantage of my online office hours. I don't bite, and it isn't even a video call. Just type your questions in our Canvas course Tues. evenings between 8-9pm, and I will respond.