**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE**

**COURSE SYLLABUS: RST 204**

**RELIGION, LOGIC, AND THE MEDIA**

**Spring 2016**

COURSE SECTION: Fridays at 11:00am-1:45pm in Sierra Hall 384

PROFESSOR: R. C. Rodman, PhD

EMAIL: rrodman@csun.edu

CAMPUS OFFICE HOURS: Santa Susanna 418, x 6875, on MW 12:30-1:45 & F 9:00-10:45

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION and SLOs

**Course Description:** Whoa. It doesn’t really seem like these terms go together. You’ll be pleasantly surprised how great critical thinking (logic) and religion go together – the media offers plenty of test cases and interesting problems for us (though the media too will be thought about critically). In the first part of the class, students dive into each of these conceptual categories and revise and sharpen their ideas about what these are. The second part of the course examines the relationships and intersections of religion, critical thinking, and the media by examining case studies that highlight their intersectionality. Students will have the opportunity to develop a research project around a religious issue, problem, or question. This course satisfies the “Critical Thinking” requirement in General Education.

**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.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

**Goal:** Students will critically analyze complex concepts and ideas from multiple perspectives, gain skills in evaluating information, and gain critical thinking skills

III. TEXTBOOKS AND REQUIRED MATERIALS

**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 Moodle. THESE ARE REQUIRED READINGS.

IV. COURSE POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

**Familiarity with Moodle**: You must be able to access all course materials and technologies. I will be in touch with you about readings and assignments by email and you are expected to access the on Moodle. All work will be turned in on Moodle. Moodle. Moodle. Moodle. Everything will be available through Moodle. It is your responsibility to learn how to use Moodle. For information and instructions about Moodle, go to: http://www.csun.edu/it/studentmoodle-help/

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. The more absences you have, the lower your grade. Leaving during class and being tardy will also lower this portion of your grade.

* Showing up isn’t enough. You must be fully prepared for each class. All assignments must be read prior to the class they are assigned, and all readings must be brought to class.
* You must fully participate in the class by asking/answering questions, fully participating in discussions, and fully engaging in any other activity of the class.
* Please make sure you attend to your personal needs before or after the class. You may not leave during class. No cell phones, texting, or Internet use for anything other than class work.

**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 408, Bayramian Hall, 818-677-2033 or go to: <http://www.csun.edu/lrc/writing.html>.

**Deadlines:** Because due dates are stated at the outset, all papers/assignments must be turned in or posted on Moodle on the date listed. Late work will be dropped a full point or grade for every day late, beginning immediately after the work is due.

**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 no credit for the assignment and follow up with the Dean’s office.

**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 work with you on suitable accommodations.

**Contact with the Professor:** My office hours are posted above. I look forward to working with each of you in class and on an individual basis. Therefore, I urge you to take advantage of my office hours. I am happy to discuss any aspect of this course with you, and help you with the assignments. I especially urge you to contact me if you are confused about the course or an assignment. Really successful students ask questions! Please contact me by email, in class, or during office hours with your questions, comments, or requests.

V. ASSESSMENT

Point system

* Attendance & participation: 15 (0-2 = 15; 3 = 14; 4 = 13; 5 = 12; 6 = 11; 7 = 10; 8 = 8; 9= 5; 10 or more absences = 0). Again, I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences); you lose partial points for being late/leaving early; texting in class and not participating or contributing in class.
* Quizzes: 3 x 10 = 30
* Project Proposal & Presentation: 5
* Case study essay drafts: 3 x 5 = 15
* Case study essay portfolios: 35

**TOTAL = 100 points**

**Letter Grade Allocation**

* 95-100 A
* 90-94 A-
* 87-89 B+
* 83-86 B
* 80-82 B-
* 77-79 C+
* 73-76 C
* 70-72 C-
* 60-69 D

VI. SCHEDULE

**Week of Jan 25**

* Introduction to the Course

**Weeks of Feb. 1-21**

**Module 1 What is Religion? How and Why Do We Study It?**

*All the reading will be posted on Moodle*

* January 29 “10 Things Every College Student Should Know About Religion”
* Feb. 5th Russ McCutcheon, “What is the Academic Study of Religion?” and Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience*, Introduction
* Feb. 12 Mallory Nye, Religion, The Basics, Chap. 1 & 2
* Feb. 19th – NO CLASS – Online quiz will cover ALL the readings

**Weeks of Feb. 22-March 6**

**Module 2 What is an Argument? What Is Logic? What is Critical Thinking?**

* Feb. 26th Arguments and Reasoning – Diestler, 3-11; 75-97; 120-124
* March 4th What Makes Arguments Strong and What Weakens Them, Diestler
* March 11th Quiz will cover all the readings since the prior quiz

**Weeks of March 14-28**

**Module 3 Media Print, televised and film**

* March 18 Print media -- Language, headlines, content, photos, bias - Diestler

SPRING BREAK MARCH 21-27

* April 1 Television & film: framing, editing, lighting, setting, staging – Diestler, and “Film Analysis” reading posted on Moodle
* April 3 Online quiz due before midnight on all readings since the prior quiz

**Week of April 4**

**Module 4Group Projects**

* April 8 Group project on social media: proposals & presentations due

**Weeks of April 11-May 1**

**Module 5 Case Studies**

April 15 – Case Study #1 Print Media

* Read: John Cassidy, “Jeb Bush and the Return of Voodoo Economics,” *The New Yorker*, Sept. 10, 2015.
* Read: Jeffrey E. Anderson, *The Voodoo Encyclopedia*, introduction
* Read: TBA
* Draft essay on Voodoo Economics due before midnight on April 17

April 22 – Case Study #2 Televised media

* Watch: TBA
* Watch TBA

Draft essay on presidential candidates and religion due before midnight on April 24

April 29 - Case Study #3 Film

* Watch film TBA
* Watch film TBA
* Draft essay on film due before midnight on May 1

**Weeks of May 2-8**

**Module 6 Final Projects**

May 6 Writing workshop for polishing cases studies OR independent research/preparation

May 13 - Case Study #4 -- Group presentations (Last day of class)

**Portfolios due May 18th before 10AM to TurnItIn**

**OUR CLASS CONTRACT**

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| **What I Expect From You** | **What You Can Expect From Me** |
| You will treat everyone in class, including the professor, with respect and courtesy due all human beings. | I will treat you with the respect and courtesy due all human beings. |
| You will attend every class, give your full attention to the material, and conduct yourself in an appropriate manner. | I will attend every class, give my full attention to the material and conduct myself in an appropriate manner. |
| You will agree to do the work outlined in the syllabus on time. | I will return your work in a timely fashion. |
| You can ask for help. | I will assist you in any way I can, and make myself available to you via office hours. You can expect a response to email within 24 hours except in rare cases. |
| You will acknowledge that your perception of effort, by itself, is not enough to justify a distinguished grade. | I will not discriminate against you on the basis of your identity or your well-informed viewpoints. |
| You will prepare carefully for every class. | I will prepare carefully for every class. |
| You will not plagiarize, cheat, copy, double-dip, or steal the work of others. | I will pursue the maximum punishment for plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of academic integrity. |
| You will not make excuses for your failure to do what you ought; you will accept the consequences – good and bad – of your actions. | I will keep careful records of your attendance, performance, and progress. |