This course examines the definitional and contextual nature of social issues. It develops a "critical thinking" approach which integrates interdisciplinary principles and incorporates a comparative framework utilizing literary criticism, logic, argumentation, and persuasion to analyze and compare the content and validity of social problems. This course specifically explores how the media and scientific community collect, interpret, and report social data. Combining critical thinking techniques with the sociological perspective will help students to question the "taken-for-granted" assumptions that surround social phenomena and influence human behavior.

Purpose of This Course

Students will be provided the opportunity to learn how to think critically about printed statements on social problems and social issues written by journalists, sociologists, scholars and writers, members of vested interest groups, and the general public. Given the nature of our society, throughout one's lifetime s/he will encounter both written and verbal statements and claims about social problems and social issues. This course will aid students in their responsibility to participate as an informed citizen as well as one who will consider and assess the positions taken on various social problems and issues. This course is designed to help the student think critically about some aspects of social issues and social problems - written claims and verbal presentations that are made by journalists, social scientists and other.
informed and concerned writers. Students will have the opportunity to learn and demonstrate their skills concerning how to think about social problems and social issues, not what to think about them.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES**

1. To expose students to a conceptual thinking frame for use when critically analyzing and understanding social problems and social issues.
2. To practice learning of the thinking frame concepts while understanding and considering various societal problems and issues.
3. To enable students to identify important steps concerning how to think and analyze information presented in everyday life regarding social problems and issues.
4. Students will be able to locate the argument in a passage (this is many times identified by identifying the conclusion and/or main premise).
5. Students will be able to detect errors of reasoning (fallacies) and explain how the reasoning is in error.
6. Students will be able to evaluate evidence provided and make appropriate inferences from that evidence.
7. Students will be able to defend an argument in support of or in opposition to a proposition.
8. To provide an opportunity for students to fine-tune their individual critical thinking skills.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**


Reader from University Readers – You will have to order this directly from them.

**STYLE OF INSTRUCTION**

This course is designed to include a great deal of hands-on learning. This will occur both inside and outside of the classroom. There will be weekly assignments to complete and bring to class and/or submit to the instructor via D2L. There will also be many written & group assignments to be completed during class. There will be some lecturing, but very little when compared to other courses. Class time will be spent discussing readings, sharing assignments, and completing group didactic learning activities. There will also be time given to work on assignments required in D2L and to work on the controversy paper assigned. It is imperative that you read and come prepared to each class session.
As already mentioned, this course requires your active participation. Take risks even if the environment does not feel completely "safe." Testing our ideas and thoughts helps us learn and stretch our critical thinking skills. In order to enhance feelings of safety and to create a positive learning environment the following must apply:

1. You attend class & are prompt.
2. You have read the assigned materials.
3. You work to your fullest capacity.
4. You do not negatively criticize or ridicule others.
5. You take responsibility for understanding other’s positions even if you disagree with them.
6. You are committed to personal/professional growth and self-exploration.

**OVERVIEW OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirement</th>
<th># of Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2L Assessments (1 @ 50 pts ea.)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Post of 6 IRFs (10 pts. ea)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRF Feedback Forms (4 @ 15 pts. ea.)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking Paper 1 – or - Critical Thinking Paper 2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Critique/Analysis</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft ~ Debate Presentation Outline</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Meetings Log</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues Debate Presentation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate Presentation Outline &amp; Bibliography</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues Debate Individual Research Source Overview</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>675</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance [worth 50 points]:**
   - Attendance in class is very important due to this class being discussion oriented. In order to fully grasp concepts and ideas being presented in class it is imperative that you attend class, read the material prior to class for that week, and complete whatever assignments or papers have been assigned.
   - If you arrive late or leave early you will not be counted as present for the entire class session and this will affect your of absence accrual.
   - I understand there are times when we are ill or have a problem preventing us from attending a class session. You do not need to provide me with an explanation or reason for your absence, because in terms of learning from the class, an absence is an absence regardless of the circumstances.
   - If you are absent, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to find out what you missed from a fellow classmate.
   - Any student who misses 9 or more class sessions will be dropped from the course.
   - Being absent does not excuse you from anything that was discussed or due in class.
   - ALL assignments etc. must be turned in on time via D2L regardless of an absence.

   **You will earn the following points accordingly for attendance:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 1</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 or more</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Participation [worth 50 points]:**
   - I value each student's participation and contribution to each class session.
   - All students are expected to contribute to the discussion of class readings and materials.
   - Your participation will be evaluated NOT on the quantity of what you say, but on the quality of your contribution to class discussion.
   - If your contribution detracted from the course content or disrupted other's learning, points can be deducted from your accumulation for that day.
   - You will **forfeit 3 points** of participation for every class missed.

3. **D2L Assessment [worth a total of 50 points]:**
   - One D2L assessments will be submitted for grading.
   - This will be completed and submitted to the instructor via D2L by the due date indicated on the class schedule.
• Submissions will **NOT be accepted via email** or in any other area of D2L other than the corresponding assessment within D2L.

• This assessment will be comprised of multiple choice questions, short answer questions, and/or short essay application questions.

• **Late assessments will NOT be accepted.** Those who fail the assessment can request a re-take later in the semester, but it must be prior to the 13th week of the course.

4. **Posting of Interactive Reading Forms (IRF) of Assigned Readings [worth a total of 60 points]:**
   - It is expected that each student will complete an IRF form relative to the six (6) assigned readings on the course schedule during weeks 5 - 12.
   - Students are to post this in the respective **discussion area** in D2L on the due date.
   - Students are also expected to bring their printed IRF to class on the date indicated on the course schedule.
   - The form to be used for this is included in the **CT Course Pack** and is posted in D2L for electronic use. This **exact form must be used**, not any rendition or modified version of it. The form can be found for downloaded on the homepage of D2L as well as on my homepage on the Internet.
   - Submissions will **NOT be accepted via email** or in any other area of D2L other than the corresponding IRF article discussion area within D2L.
   - ALL **IRFs** must be **saved either with a “doc”, “pdf”, or “rtf” extension and submitted in that format**; **IRFs will NOT be accepted in any other format**.
   - **Late IRF postings will NOT receive any points** (see general class policies).

5. **IRF Feedback Forms/Reviews [four at 15 points each; worth a total of 60 points]:**
   - Each student will provide feedback to a classmate on **four (4)** of the six (6) assigned articles.
   - You are to select a student that has not already received feedback on their IRF in the discussion area and then use the IRF Review Guidelines for your feedback.
   - This is done by clicking on the “review” button for that student’s post.
   - Students are to complete this feedback form/review in D2L by the due date.
   - Submissions will **NOT be accepted via email** or in any other area of D2L.
   - **Late IRF Feedback Forms/Reviews** will receive a **1 point deduction for each day late**.

6. **Critical Thinking Papers [worth a total of 50 points]:** You can write both papers and have the lowest grade dropped or you can choose to only submit one of these papers. However you **MUST do one or the other**. Please refer to the course schedule for the due dates for each of these papers. Due to the choice of these, **no late papers** will be accepted.

   **Critical Thinking Paper 1:** Write an essay on how you would **define and explain** the concept “critical thinking”. Use information discussed in class, the Diestler text, and the CT Course Pack, and/or any other sources that you decide to incorporate. As you explain the concept of “critical thinking” be sure to address at least these two things: 1) why is it important to define this concept?; and 2) why should California State universities and colleges require all students to take a course in critical thinking? However remember you are to develop what you believe is a good way of defining and explaining the concept. Be sure to formulate your paper with an introduction, body, and conclusion.
Your paper should be approximately 3-4 pages in length and double-spaced. Be sure to save and submit your paper in D2L either with a “doc”, “pdf”, or “rtf” extension; papers will NOT be accepted in any other format. Late papers will have 5 points deducted for every day submitted late (see general class policies).

** OR **

Critical Thinking Paper 2: For this paper you are to select an issue discussed in class or a film/video viewed in class. You will be taking a personal position on the issue and identifying and developing reasons to support your position.

Develop your discussion to address the following (using these points as a guide for subheadings can help the organization of your paper):

a) Be sure to include a title for your paper at the top of your first page.
b) Provide an introduction to the issue and give some overall information about why this issue is important. You may also want to indicate in this section why you find this particularly interesting and selected it.
c) State your position and introduce in general your reasons for this position
d) Provide and develop at least three (3) reasons to support your position. You can give both moral and fact-based reasons. Use examples and evidence to strengthen your reasons. If you cite or pull information from any sources be sure to cite them using APA format.
e) Explore what opposing viewpoints exist in relationship to your position. For example, if you are against compulsory drug testing for athletes, state why someone might argue in favor of it. Discuss what might be valid and invalid to the support for these viewpoints.
f) Provide an integrative conclusion that revisits your position, overall reasons that you discussed, and how the opposing viewpoints relate to your stance.
g) Include a bibliography of sources in APA format.

Your paper should be approximately 3-4 pages in length and double-spaced. Be sure to save and submit your paper in D2L either with a “doc”, “pdf”, or “rtf” extension; papers will NOT be accepted in any other format. Late papers will have 5 points deducted for every day submitted late (see general class policies).

7. Book Critique [worth a total of 100 points]:
   • Each student is required to write a coherent narrative paper, which critiques a book from the list provided in the syllabus.
   • Each paper must be double-spaced, at least 12 point font, and a minimum of 4-6 pages in length.
   • Each paper must cover the points below by using the Roman Numerals and their headings. A sample template for the paper is provided within D2L to help ensure coverage of all areas.
   • The paragraphs in each section of the outline are guidelines.
   • Note that the Development of Reasoning and Assessment & Evaluation sections have the bulk of the length of the paper attributed there. Therefore you will want to focus quite a bit of your attention to development and application of your critical thinking skills to those areas.
   • Submissions will NOT be accepted via email or in any other area of D2L other than the corresponding paper within the “assignments” section in D2L.
• ALL papers must be saved either with a “doc”, “pdf”, or “rtf” extension and submitted in that format; Papers will NOT be accepted in any other format.
• Late papers will receive a 5-point deduction for every day late it is submitted up to one week beyond the original due date.
• Use the outline below for your Book Critique

I. Bibliographic Reference
Cite the book in APA format.

II. Author’s Background (about 1 paragraph)
Provide a brief overview of the author’s background. What makes them an expert relative to the material they write about, what are their credentials, etc.?

III. Primary Issue Explored (about 1 – 2 paragraphs)
Identify the social issue primarily discussed by the author. Indicate what leads you to this understanding. Can you frame it in the form of a question and/or did the author do that for you? Be sure to reference to specific information and pages where applicable.

IV. Author’s Conclusion/Premise (about 1 paragraph)
Indicate what the authors overall premise is in the book. This may be a bit challenging, as we will have been dealing with articles throughout the semester. Be sure to indicate what leads you to identifying this as the author’s premise. Be sure to include citations where appropriate.

V. Development of Reasoning (about 3 – 5 paragraphs)
Identify how the author develops his/her reasons. This will require that you indicate what reasons the author points to in order to support his/her premise. This section is where you will provide facts, examples, reasons, sub-reasons, research, experiments, personal opinion, etc. that are provided by the author. Remember try to keep this focused on what the author provides. Be sure to give specific examples and cite appropriately.

VI. Assessment & Evaluation (about 3 - 4 paragraphs)
How well do you think the reasons and information presented by the author support his/her conclusion? Be specific in your discussion. Be sure to apply critical thinking skills we have been working with throughout the semester regarding clarity, validity, quality, fallacy identification (if there are any) etc. Be sure to provide support for your analysis and cite where appropriate.

VII. Personal Reaction (about 2 paragraphs)
Identify and state your position relative to the issue discussed by the author. Do you agree or disagree with his/her premise? Why or why not? Be sure to support your position clearly and logically. Discuss what the opposing side says in response to this argument and evidence and then rebuttal it to further support your position. Also address whether there are any fallacies in the opposing arguments.

VIII. Personal Application (about 1 – 2 paragraphs)
How can you apply and/or use the information you gained from this book? How do you intend to use this information in your professional and/or personal life in the future? Be specific.
8. Social Issues Debate [worth a total of 255 points]:
- The class will work in groups throughout the semester to prepare for a social issues debate during the last two to three weeks of the course.
- There will be eight (8) to ten (10) teams for the debate of four to five topics/issues.
- Group assignments will be made by the end of the fifth week of the semester.
- Each group should demonstrate thorough research of their topic (this should NOT be demonstrated with primarily internet sites but also journal/periodical and book citations in order to demonstrate a semester’s worth of group work related to research endeavors).
- The bibliography should have at MINIMUM three (3) substantive sources per person in the group; therefore a group with three people would have a minimum of 9 sources.
- It is expected that groups will have questions throughout the semester at which points they should turn to their instructor for direction.
- Groups will need to provide a status report via D2L as indicated on the class schedule to indicate the progress of the group. Not doing so could lower the group grade by one full letter grade.
- Each group will be graded on six (6) components for this aspect of the course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Manner of Submission</th>
<th>Points Allotted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submission of Draft ~ Debate Presentation Outline</td>
<td>Submit a hard copy of an outline that follows the sample provided in the syllabus to the instructor on the due date indicated.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of Final Debate Presentation Outline &amp; Bibliography</td>
<td>Submit one hard copy of the Final Outline and Bibliography as well as the Draft Outline with instructor mark-ups to the instructor on the date of the debate.</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Record of Group Meetings</td>
<td>A log that was kept throughout the semester will be included with the materials given to the instructor on the date of the debate.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate Presentation</td>
<td>All group members do not have to speak. This is a group decision. However all group members will receive the same grade for the presentation.</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues Debate Individual Research Sources Overview</td>
<td>Each group member is to submit this assignment in electronic format in the corresponding &quot;assignments&quot; area in D2L on the due date indicated in the course schedule.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 255

More detailed information is provided later in this syllabus and is posted in D2L.
**GRADING**

- **Grading Turn Around Time:** Papers, IRFs, assignments, and assessments will be returned either electronically or by paper depending on the form for which they were required to be submitted.
  - The turn around for papers, IRFs, and assessments will be done as quickly as possible and generally within **two weeks after the due date**.

- **Grading Criteria:** Where appropriate, the following criteria are used to evaluate assignments, IRFs, book critique, etc.:
  
  - **Effective use of knowledge:** the integration of concepts, theories, models, and information from readings, lectures, and class discussions is used in a way that demonstrates internalization.
  - Generalization of **ideas, observations, concepts, and experiences are carefully supported** with empirical data, conceptual work generated by authors, or researchers, and/or original thoughts.
  - **Organization:** thesis in introduction, smooth relationship between ideas and between paragraphs, and overall structure, integrative concluding section. Careful planning is evident in the organization.
  - **Clarity:** understandability, good style and form. Central ideas are concrete and clear.
  - **Grammar:** Correct syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Sentences and paragraphs are clear, unified, and coherent.
  - **Directions:** Demonstrates an understanding and adherence of the directions provided.
  - **References** in appropriate format (use of APA format). When references are needed.

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- If a student performs by demonstrating the minimum of what is requested across class requirements and/or in a specific paper, assignment, quiz, and participation a **C grade** will be earned.
- When a student demonstrates s/he is able to incorporate a great deal of the course material, class discussion, and moves his/her own thinking beyond what is being asked of the student a **B grade results.**
- An **A grade** results when a student demonstrates exceptional mastery of the subject matter being presented and presents that understanding in a coherent and thoughtful fashion.
- The **grade of D or F** is earned when a student does not demonstrate an understanding of the basic premises that are being presented through readings and class discussions.
Letter grades will be determined using the scale below based on a total of 894 possible points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>607 - 675</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>540 - 606</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>472 - 539</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>405 - 471</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>404 and Below</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below is a brief checklist to assist the student when preparing written work. It is expected that a well written paper, assignment, and outline will demonstrate incorporation of these tips.

**Students should review this checklist prior to submitting all written work.**
- ✓ Do not use contractions in your papers. It is not professional.
- ✓ Be sure to proof for spelling and grammatical errors.
- ✓ Be sure that your verb and noun tenses agree.
- ✓ Remember, one sentence does not constitute a paragraph. Paragraphs indicate a new idea and therefore should have at least two to three sentences to provide explanation and rationale for the idea set forth.
- ✓ Be sure you provided a conclusion to your discussion. Do not end abruptly.
- ✓ Be sure to follow the directions of the assignment versus making up your own because you do not understand (that is why the instructor is accessible in many venues in order to answer questions before a paper or assignment is due).
GENERAL CLASS POLICIES

Academic Honesty Policy: My interactions with students are based on the expectation of mutual trust and honor. You are required and expected to do your own work on all class assignments, papers, etc. Please do not give me any reason to be suspicious.

CRC’s definitions of academic dishonesty, cheating and plagiarism, are indicated below:

ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY
Cosumnes River College values academic integrity (honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility). It recognizes that individuals can achieve their maximum potential and contribute appropriately to the well-being of the larger community only if they recognize the ethical dimensions of decisions and actions. The college assumes all members of the academic community will exhibit academic integrity supporting student access, academic quality, academic rigor, innovation and collegiality.

Definition of Plagiarism: Plagiarism is defined as representing the words, ideas, or work of another as one’s own in any academic exercise. Plagiarism consists in taking the words or substance of another work and either copying or paraphrasing without giving credit to the source. Plagiarism is applicable to written, oral, and artistic work.

Definition of Cheating: Cheating is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means.

Any act of cheating or plagiarism will result in a failing grade for that assignment. Additionally, if you turn in an assignment that has been “lifted” from others, you will receive a failing grade for that assignment, without the opportunity to redo the assignment.

I will follow the policy outlined in CRC Policy regarding all occurrences and/or possible occurrences of cheating and/or plagiarism.

(refer to http://www.crc.losrios.edu/catalog/regulations.htm)

Written Quality: Written work must be mechanically and stylistically acceptable. Serious deficiencies in such areas as spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and coherent development and organization will result in lowered grades.

Incompletes: Students are expected to complete all the work by the last meeting of the class. Incompletes are not given automatically. A grade of incomplete may be assigned only in cases of illness, accident, or other catastrophic occurrences beyond the student’s control.
It is the responsibility of the student to obtain and fulfill the college’s policies and procedures for incompletes. Students who do not follow this policy will fail.

**CELL PHONES & PAGERS:** Students are expected to turn off **ALL** cell phones and/or pagers. If there is a reason to have a phone on (i.e., family emergency, on-call at work) please turn it to vibrate mode. Students should not be surfing the internet, emailing, playing games, or answering calls during class time. If a student is using their cell phone during class to surf the net, play games, text others he/she will lose attendance/participation points for that day.

**LAPTOPS:** The nature of this class is very hands-on and discussion oriented; therefore use of laptops creates more of a distraction than a course aid. In light of this **laptops are NOT allowed during class time.**

**OFFICE HOURS:** Office hours are listed on the first page of the syllabus. However, should they not be compatible with your schedule please call to make an appointment. Additionally, I am accessible via email for quick questions to clarify an assignment or course question. If you have a brief question this can be a great way to get it answered as well as seeing the instructor briefly before or after class. Messages can be left on my voice mail at 568-3100 x14015.

**SUPPORT SERVICES:** Should you have any physical, psychological, or cultural considerations that may affect your ability to learn in this course or complete course assignments, please see me immediately **during the first week of classes.** There are counseling and support services at CSUS that can help you succeed.

**D2L:** All students are required to enter their current email address into D2L. Additionally, all students will be required to attend a D2L workshop to ensure familiarity with D2L and the course information that has been put together for this course specifically on D2L. During the first week of the course the instructor conducts an orientation to D2L. However if a student misses this session and/or does not feel as acquainted with D2L as s/he needs in order to accurately submit IRFs/papers and assessments in D2L, it is the students’ responsibility to access the on-line materials located under “student services” within D2L, seek assistance from a computer lab Help Desk, and/or inquire with the Help Desk regarding further assistance that students can receive. All students are responsible for ensuring they understand how to correctly submit assignments, papers, and IRFs via D2L so that their submissions are received and are submitted by the correct due dates.
**EXTRA CREDIT:** The following are extra credit opportunities that any student can take advantage of by the end of the semester. There will also be campus events that will be indicated as extra credit opportunities throughout the semester. Each student can earn a maximum of 50 extra credit points. All extra credit must be turned in by the December 13, 2009 at midnight and is submitted through email to dwelkley@comcast.net with "extra credit" in the subject line.

1. Identify a minimum of three (3) advertisements (they can be written or from television) that you believe present a fallacy. In a short paper (about 2 pages), describe the ad and where one could find it. The bulk of your discussion should focus on indicating what is the fallacy presented as well as what makes it a fallacy. [5 points]

2. Watch a news program on television (i.e., Dateline, 20/20, 60 Minutes, This Week). Identify a main topic of an issue discussed, the primary arguments presented, and what evidence was presented to persuade viewers relative to one side or another. [5 points]

3. You can watch Fahrenheit 911 and/or Fahrenhype 911 and write a brief paper identifying the values as well as the main points presented. How do you feel the producer presented his case? What were the strengths, what were the weaknesses in the arguments/positions presented? [7 points]

An extra 5 points will be given if both presentations are watched. If you watch both, please compare and contrast both movies along the same lines.

4. You can watch What the Bleep Do We Know? Provide an overview regarding the main focus of this film and then what did you find most "enlightening" from the information presented? Did the information presented change your view of the world around you in any way? [8 points]

**NOTE** This outline is not a contract. It may be changed as the semester progresses. You will be given ample notice of any changes that occur.
**Book Critique Readings List**

Students can choose one of the books below for the book critique assignment required in the course. Please refer to the syllabus for additional information when writing your book critique.


