

English 7: Critical Thinking

Fall 2005

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:30-2:45 (Section 2, SH 414)
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:00-4:15 (Section 3, BBC 223)

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Area Goals: Students will demonstrate, orally and in writing, proficiency in the course goals. Development of the following competencies will result in dispositions or habits of intellectual autonomy, appreciation of different world views, courage and perseverance in inquiry, and commitment to employ analytical reasoning. Students should be able to:

- distinguish between reasoning (e.g., explanation, argument) and other types of discourse (e.g., description, assertion);
- identify, analyze, and evaluate different types of reasoning;
- find and state crucial unstated assumptions in reasoning;
- evaluate factual claims or statements used in reasoning and evaluate the sources of evidence for such claims;
- locate, retrieve, organize, analyze, synthesize, and communicate information of relevance to the subject matter of the course;
- reflect on past successes, failures, and alternative strategies.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of English 1A (or equivalent). English 007 fulfills General Education requirements for Critical Thinking (Area A3).

Course Goals: The goal of this course is to introduce students to the mechanics of rational analysis—recognizing, analyzing, evaluating, and engaging in effective reasoning—and to give them opportunities to practice such analysis on everyday as well as academic and professional topics.

Course Description: Critical thinking is the careful and deliberate determination of whether to accept, reject, or suspend judgment about a claim. As simple as this sounds, that process of determination can involve literally all we know about ourselves and society. The purpose of this course, therefore, is not only to familiarize you with critical thinking, but also to provide you with a systematic approach to its process and components. To these ends, we will pay particular attention to cultural and individual assumptions behind claims, the sorts of evidence which support claims, arguments and fallacies which contain claims, and the rhetoric and language used to express claims. Our study of critical thinking will be supplemented with readings and class discussions within a multicultural context, and written

assignments will deal not only with elements of critical thinking, but with their application in that context as well.

This course will combine conventional and experimental approaches to critical thinking. The mechanics of critical thinking will be covered in sections from the class reader drawn from a web site that also includes further exercises, practices quizzes, and supplementary materials. Though use of the web materials is not required, it is highly encouraged, and students who do no work online may be at a disadvantage.

Required Texts:

Course Reader (downloadable pdf file from website).

Course Web Site:

“Mission: Critical” at <http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/itl/7fall2005> .

Recommended Texts:

Dictionary, thesaurus, and composition handbook (from English 1A or the equivalent).

Reading Assignments: Students are encouraged to download, print out, and bring to class the reader (or the assigned section of it) daily. Vague references to the text during class discussion will not be counted as participation.

Assignments and Grading: Grading for this course is A, B, C, D, and F. By university policy, a grade of C- or less does not satisfy the GE requirement, though it will be recorded on your transcript, figure in your GPA, and count toward the 120 unit graduation requirement.

There will be three papers (500, 1000, and 1500 words), counting 5%, 10% and 15% respectively toward the final mark; three midterm exams, counting 10% apiece; an oral argument with outline, counting 10%; and a final examination counting 20% of the course grade. There will also be occasional in-class assignments and quizzes, which will help determine the remaining 10%, along with participation in class and the timely completion of readings and written work. All out-of-class work must be typed and double-spaced. Please keep a copy of any work you hand in, and retain graded work until the end of the semester. **Papers can only be submitted during class, by a student in attendance; do not submit papers at any other time or**

place, or come late to class in order to hand in a paper, except by prior arrangement.

Quizzes: There will be frequent short quizzes, and quiz grades will make up at least half of the 10% participation grade.

Note: If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment to meet with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours (listed at the top of this page).

			Text	Readings	Major Assignments
Aug	25	Th	Introduction		
	30	T	Statements, p. 3-5		Brain Teasers, p. 78
Sep	1	Th	Statements and Syllogisms, p. 6-8	Euthyphro, p. 154	
	6	T	Premises, Identifiers, Validity, p. 9-13		
	8	Th	Conjunctions, Options, Vagueness, p. 14-16	Crito, p. 164	
	13	T	Review		First Essay Assigned
	15	Th	First Exam		
	20	T	First Exam Returned	A Scandal in Bohemia, p. 80	
	22	Th	Fallacious Appeals: Misdirected, p. 18-21	Red-Headed League, p. 94	
	27	T	Fallacious Appeals: Emotional, p. 21-24		First Essay Due
	29	Th	Ad Hominem Attacks, p. 25-26	A Case of Identity, p. 107	
Oct	4	T	Fallacious Generalizations, p. 27-328		
	6	Th	Discussion of First Essay	The Five Orange Pips, p. 117	
	11	T	Miscellaneous Fallacies, p. 29-35		Second Essay Assigned
	13	Th	No class	The Man with the Twisted Lip, p. 128	
	18	T	Review of Fallacies	The Blue Carbuncle, p. 142	
	20	Th	Second Exam		
	25	T	Second Exam Returned	W.E.B. Du Bois, p. 175	Oral Arguments Assigned
	27	Th	Induction and Causal Arguments, p. 37-40		Second Essay Due
Nov	1	T	Deduction and Conditional Arguments, 41-44	Declaration of Independence, p. 171	
	3	Th	Discussion of 2nd Essay	Measure C, p. 185	Oral Arguments
	8	T	"Only" and Chain Arguments, p. 45-47	Prop 209, p. 190	Orals & 3rd Essay Assigned
	10	Th	Universal and Non-Universal Syllogisms, 48-50	Prop 227, p. 199	Oral Arguments
	15	T	Review of Arguments	Special Election Materials	
	17	Th	Third Exam		
	22	T	Third Exam Returned	Special Election Materials	Oral Arguments
	24	Th	No class		
	29	T	Statistics, p. 54-56	Special Election Materials	Oral Arguments
Dec	1	Th	Averages, p. 57-59	Special Election Materials	Oral Arguments; 3rd Essay Due
	6	T	Studies and Experiments, p. 60-62	Special Election Materials	Oral Arguments
	8	Th	Review; Third Essay Returned		
	12	M	2:45-5:00 Final Exam for 3:00 class		
	15	Th	12:15-2:30 Final Exam for 1:30 class		

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the official SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C = average; D = below average; F = failure. Courses graded according to the A, B, C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC, for No Credit, shall replace D or F. In A, B, C, No Credit courses, NC shall also substitute for W (for Withdrawal) because neither NC nor W affects students' grade point averages.

In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

This statement shall be included in all Department of English syllabi or "greensheets."

The "A" essay will be well organized and well developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment. It will incorporate research materials effectively and correctly, as appropriate to the assignment. It will show the student's ability to use language effectively and to construct sentences distinguished by syntactic complexity and variety. Such essays will be essentially free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors.

The "B" essay will demonstrate competence in the same categories as the "A" essay. The chief difference is that the "B" essay will show some descriptably slight weaknesses in one of those categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.

The "C" essay will complete all tasks set by the assignment, but show weaknesses in fundamentals, usually development, with barely enough specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. The sentence construction may be less mature, and the use of language less effective and correct than the "B" essay.

The "D" essay will neglect one of the assigned tasks and be noticeably superficial in its treatment of the assignment—that is, too simplistic or too short. The essay may reveal some problems in development, with insufficient specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. It will contain grammatical, mechanical, and/or usage errors that are serious and/or frequent enough to interfere substantially with the writer's ability to communicate.

The "F" essay will demonstrate a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and/or usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

Turnitin.com: Students will submit all formal writing assignments for this class to Turnitin.com via the Internet for evaluation, as well as being printed out and handed in to the instructor.

Academic Dishonesty: Academic integrity is essential to the mission of San José State University. As such, students are expected to perform their own work (except when collaboration is expressly permitted by the course instructor) without the use of any outside resources. Students are not permitted to use old tests, quizzes when preparing for exams, nor may they consult with students who have already taken the exam. When practiced, academic integrity ensures that all students are fairly graded. Violations to the Academic Integrity Policy undermine the educational process and will not be tolerated.

It also demonstrates a lack of respect for oneself, fellow students and the course instructor and can ruin the university's reputation and the value of the degrees it offers.

We all share the obligation to maintain an environment, which practices academic integrity. Violators of the Academic Integrity Policy will be subject to failing this course and being reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action, which could result in suspension or expulsion from San José State University.

Cheating: At SJSU, cheating is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means. Cheating at SJSU includes but is not limited to:

Copying in part or in whole, from another's test or other evaluation instrument; submitting work previously graded in another course unless this has been approved by the course instructor or by departmental policy; submitting work simultaneously presented in two courses, unless this has been approved by both course instructors or by departmental policy; altering or interfering with grading or grading instructions; sitting for an examination by a surrogate, or as a surrogate; any other act committed by a student in the course of his or her academic work which defrauds or misrepresents, including aiding or abetting in any of the actions defined above.

Plagiarism: At SJSU plagiarism is the act of representing the work of another as one's own (without giving appropriate credit) regardless of how that work was obtained, and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements. Plagiarism at SJSU includes but is not limited to:

The act of incorporating the ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, or parts thereof, or the specific substances of another's work, without giving appropriate credit, and representing the product as one's own work; and representing another's artistic/scholarly works such as musical compositions, computer programs, photographs, painting, drawing, sculptures, or similar works as one's own.

All students are responsible for knowing and observing University policies regarding academic dishonesty. See University publication: "Academic Dishonesty and its Consequences."